2022

Administrators' Perceptions of Challenges in Supporting Elementary Teachers' Efforts to Teach Literacy

KorTasia Evans
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

KorTasia K. Robinson-Evans

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Robert Flanders, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Cheryl Bullock, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Mary Lou Morton, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Administrators' Perceptions of Challenges in Supporting Elementary Teachers' Efforts to

Teach Literacy

by

KorTasia K Robinson-Evans

EDS, Henderson State University, 2021

MSE, Henderson State University, 2016

BSE, Henderson State University, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2022

Abstract

Elementary students at a Title 1 school district in a south-central state in the United States have scored significantly low on the state assessment, leading to the state's warning of a district takeover due to little progress in reading scores. This basic qualitative study aimed to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills. This study's conceptual framework used Hallinger's model of instructional leadership, which conceptualized instructional leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and processes. The chosen methodology used data collection through Zoom for virtual semi-structured interviews with seven district and building-level administrators guided by two research questions. The guided questions focused on how elementary administrators describe practices, processes, and procedures used to improve teachers' instructional literacy skills and their perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies. The data analysis process included open coding and a three-pronged analysis process to analyze interview transcripts. Key findings revealed that various processes, practices, and procedures come with challenges, including time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports. Recommendations derived from the study included conducting additional research on how teachers respond to the different forms of support, viewpoints of different stakeholders, and a larger participant group. The findings of this study can help guide social change by informing the development of school-level or district-level policies and standards regarding support provisions for teachers as they implement literacy instruction strategies.

Administrators' Perceptions of Challenges in Supporting Elementary Teachers' Efforts to

Teach Literacy

by

KorTasia K Robinson-Evans

EDS, Henderson State University, 2021

MSE, Henderson State University, 2016

BSE, Henderson State University, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandmother and late uncle, Verlean Hooper and Lyndrell Hooper, who have inspired me to continue my educational journey. For my husband, you have always stood by my side and encouraged me in my weakest moments. This dissertation is dedicated to parents Angela and Kenneth Byrd, who have always believed in me and seen my potential when I could not. To my beautiful daughters, Londyn and Khloe Evans, I pray my drive and dedication for success will motivate you to go after your dreams.

Acknowledgments

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

I would like to thank my first and second chairs, Dr. Alberto Gonzales, Dr. Robert Flanders, and Dr. Cheryl Bullock, whose expertise was invaluable in formulating the research questions, methodology, and revision process. Your insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher level.

In addition, I would like to thank my parents for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear. You are always there for me. Finally, I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of my husband, Ryan Evans. You provided stimulating discussions as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study allowed administrators to reveal a potential social change in their instructional leadership skills by finding ways to successfully support teachers' instructional strategies in literacy while addressing the gap in practice. Educators are expected to captivate students according to their cultural backgrounds while implementing instruction and providing opportunities to develop their language proficiency and literacy abilities. Learning to read during the early elementary years is central to school success (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018). While being a competent reader is critical in setting students on track for appropriate reading development, it requires foundational literacy skills, such as phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, print concepts, and fluency (Barzillai & Thomson, 2018). Vernon-Feagans et al. (2018) further explained that if a student does not develop solid reading comprehension, a child's chances of graduating from high school or college are greatly diminished. Literacy is the acquisition and practice of reading and writing, laying the foundation for students' early language proficiency and literacy abilities (Roessingh & Bence, 2019). Also, literacy instruction teaches students to apply knowledge independently as readers and writers (Dyson, 2020; Vaughn et al., 2020). As a result, effective reading instruction in early elementary school is critically important for all children to close the achievement gap (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018). This study may be beneficial in helping to lessen the achievement gap of students' literacy skills.

Children enter kindergarten with experiences and knowledge from their families, childcare, and prekindergarten environments. These experiences vary by race and family

income and can contribute to an achievement gap due to many children entering school lagging behind their peers (Gallagher & Chingos, 2017). In the United States, education policy shifts, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), were efforts to reduce the achievement gap among students, particularly between White students and Students of Color (Hung et al., 2020). Hung et al. (2020) explained that an achievement gap exists when students significantly outperform other student groups on average in their educational achievement.

Although many teachers understand that students do not learn in the same way and that their needs are wide-ranging, only a small number make the necessary change to accommodate these differences into their teaching practices (Gaitas & Alves-Martins, 2017). Differentiated instruction is a student-centered teaching strategy that accommodates a wide range of students with different learning and scaffolding needs (Gaitas & Alves-Martins, 2017). Gaitas and Alves-Martins (2017) explained that differentiated instructional strategies are essential when designing teacher training programs. Ignoring student diversity in the classroom may lead to a loss of motivation and poor outcomes for the classroom student (Gaitas & Alves-Martins, 2017).

This study was needed because it built on previous research related to administrators' impact on challenges to support teachers' use of instructional strategies that may help students' literacy skills to facilitate future learning. Again, the study allowed administrators create positive social change with their instructional leadership skills by finding ways to successfully support teachers' instructional strategies in literacy while providing relevance to the gap in practice. Roberts et al. (2018) explained that

school administrators play an essential role in teaching and learning while being the second most crucial factor in students' learning after classroom teachers. At the same time, an administrator's impact is indirect and is mediated through the practices delivered by classroom teachers (Roberts et al., 2018). The administrative climate can support all students' quality of educational contexts (Roberts et al., 2018).

Background

The selected articles below are related to administrators' leadership practices, support, and professional development (PD) improvements. Scholarly literature is essential for a doctoral study because the goal of the document is to address a specific, defined, and applied education problem that addresses a gap while building on basic or applied research (Salter et al., 2017). Scholarly literature helps articulate implications for educational practice in the researcher's field and the impact on social change.

Leadership Practices

Feedback is a vital support strategy when an administrator is considering leadership practices. Rigby et al. (2017) examined that feedback given to teachers is necessary. Administrator observations and feedback are widespread yet understudied as they relate to changes in teacher practice. Current policies that mandate administrators to spend substantial time in classrooms are unlikely to improve the quality of instruction. In contrast, meaningful resources are invested in supporting leadership skills, such as self-development, team development, strategic thinking and acting, ethical practice and civic-mindedness, and innovation (Graduate Programs Staff, 2019). Ifediorah and Okaforcha (2019) mentioned that teacher support services in public secondary schools and private

schools in a state were limited to impact teachers job commitment in schools. One recommendation was that the state government should set up additional policies that will improve teachers working conditions and teacher support services (Ifediorah & Okaforcha, 2019). Likewise, programs would ensure that administrators actively maintain positive and open climates. Teacher support services, adequate supervision, and regular staff meetings are needed to determine teachers' areas of need to improve their commitment to work in their schools for positive outcomes (Ifediorah & Okaforcha, 2019).

Moran and Larwin (2017) examined the role of building administrators (BAs) in the perceived level of classroom teachers' empowerment. The study was designed to contribute to the lack of current research on teacher empowerment, thus informing school leaders on the importance of teachers' practice and what variables can moderate attempts to legitimize educators. Moran and Larwin suggested that school administrators become knowledgeable of empowerment practices in the school environment to enhance school leaders' methods of helping teachers improve their literacy instruction.

Wenner and Campbell (2017) revealed that teacher leadership focused on roles beyond the classroom by supporting peers' professional learning, influencing policy/decision-making, and ultimately targeting student learning. According to Ingersoll et al. (2018), teacher leadership and teacher influence in the school decision-making process are independently and significantly related to student achievement. Uysal and Sarier (2019) explained that teacher leadership was central in achieving improvement by increasing the leadership capacity of teachers who are expected to support the school and

student success through coaching, mentoring colleagues, improving the learning environment, and modeling effective teaching.

Administrators' Support

Young and Bonanno-Sotiropoulos (2018) explored administrative factors supporting teachers and contributing to all students' success. Researchers mentioned that school leaders need to nurture environments that genuinely support teaching and learning through adequate training and continuous support. Young and Bonanno-Sotiropoulos further explained that highly effective teachers are not just made; in turn, they must be supported, nurtured, and recognized for their hard work and devotion to the profession.

Administrators' support of behavior management increases teacher retention and improves student academic achievement; consequently, campus-level, district-level, and principal preparation personnel need to understand how to prepare principals to support teachers (Johnson, 2020). Castillo and Hallinger (2018) described individual administrative efforts to support teachers in mentoring, staffing support, course assignment changes, PD enhancement, meaningful and constructive evaluations, workload reduction, discipline/rule enforcement, and improving parental support. Providing a nurturing environment allows administrators to support teacher retention and improve student achievement.

Professional Development

Effective PD provides practical ways to teach educators literacy instruction, the importance of supportive administration for teachers, and accountability in coaching and observation (Spear-Swerling, 2019). Effective PD can influence teaching behavior

changes that lead to optimizing student outcomes. Spear-Swerling (2019) mentioned the importance of administrative structure because teachers are faced with the challenge of implementing instruction. Spear-Swerling further explained that structured implementation of language and literacy practices is effective.

Bressman et al. (2018) explored mentoring as a central approach to supporting experienced educators' PD. Experienced teachers have different PD needs than those teachers new to the profession. Therefore, understanding the interests, desires, and challenges veterans face challenges questions about how to help support a continuum of teacher learning in ways that respect both years of experience and accumulated professional wisdom. The above articles are related to administrators' leadership practices, support, and PD improvements to help articulate implications for educational practice in my field and the impact on society.

Problem Statement

This study addressed the problem that elementary school administrators in a south-central state school district in the United States were challenged to support teachers' use of instructional strategies to help students' literacy skills and address low achievement. Researchers note that five literacy areas help develop students' reading skills: vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonics, and phonemic awareness (Garwood et al., 2017). One of the primary reasons students struggle with understanding reading passages is that they have difficulty knowing the meaning of new vocabulary words, regardless of whether they know how to pronounce them (Harmon et al., 2018). If learners experience reading challenges, they are less likely to have the background

knowledge base and vocabulary necessary to read and comprehend grade-level texts in content-area courses (Zebroff & Kaufman, 2017). Kaefer (2020) explained that reading experts had concluded that background knowledge is essential for reading comprehension, as it pulls prior knowledge compared to newly represented information. This study's focus was to address the problem of elementary school administrators' challenges to support teachers' use of instructional strategies that may help students' literacy skills.

According to Spear-Swerling (2019), it becomes challenging for teachers to implement what they have been taught unless there are administrative structures and context for implementing language and literacy practices. Implementing structured language and literacy practices will be more effective with most students (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018; Spear-Swerling, 2019). Such was the case at a south-central state elementary campus, where the state assessment results led to the state's warning of a district takeover due to little progress in reading scores. School assessment reports revealed that 74% of fifth grade students scored in need of support or close compared to the state's average of 59% and the nation's average of 63% during the previous school year (MAP Growth, 2019). In comparison, administrative meeting minutes revealed that 77% of fifth grade students scored in need of support or close during the current school year (MAP Growth, 2020). Students who scored in need of support scored below the required score for their grade level. Students scoring in need of support had a hard time during class instruction and required additional academic support. The additional support included small group instruction, Response to Intervention, or special education services.

Students who scored close also scored below their grade level, but their scores were not a significant concern at the time of testing (American College Testing, INC, 2019). Students scoring close meant that the student's score is on or right below the targeted score and may have required additional small group time.

Principals are expected to create positive school environments that can help make teachers committed. Principals are expected to encourage teachers to exhibit such behaviors that influence their work in the classroom (Ifediorah & Okaforcha, 2019). In the local setting, administrators' classroom observations revealed that teachers can use additional supports in setting instructional outcomes, designing readable instructions, and engaging students in learning (assistant principal, personal communication, January 22, 2021). In essence, administrators often gave feedback about basic instructional practices, such as expressing clear expectations for student learning, monitoring student engagement, or (less commonly) reviewing teachers' questioning strategies (Rigby et al., 2017). Rigby et al. (2017) further explained that most administrators are compliance monitors, attending only the most fundamental instructional practices. In this study, I aimed to understand administrators' challenges to support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills.

According to Kiral (2020), there was a gap in understanding leadership practices and behaviors for ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes. Administrators must actively engage as literacy leaders who are advocates for literacy, continuous professional learners, and responsive leaders (Sharp et al., 2020). However, the literature base for literacy leadership was narrow and does not specifically provide how administrators

address standards improving students' academic performance (Sharp et al., 2020). A literacy leader is a professional who holds an administrative (e.g., principal) or quasi-administrative (e.g., literacy coach) position (Pollitt, 2016; Sharp et al., 2020). An administrator's responsibilities indirectly positively influence student achievement and academic performance (McCarley et al., 2016; Meyers & Hitt, 2017). These responsibilities directly affect the school environment, including teacher perspectives of leadership practices, leading to increased or declined student achievement (Anderson, 2017; Mendez-Keegan, 2019). Walker (2020) explained that through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), enacted in 1965, and the ESSA of 2015, the public has demanded that school systems raise their standards for improving the academic performance of all students. However, a gap in practice remains that administrators have provided little direction to effectively address standards for improving students' academic performance (Pollitt, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of challenges supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. I used semi-structured interviews to investigate the perceptions of elementary administrators as they supported teachers. I used an open coding process by sorting common themes to understand similarities and differences presented in the study's findings. Ontology concerns the nature of being or reality (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2016) further explained that researchers, participants, and readers have differing realities, and a goal of qualitative

research is to engage with, understand, and report these multiple realities. The research questions considered what is, what exists, what it means for something or somebody based on the administrators' perceptions, which is the essence of ontology (Dietz & Mulder, 2020).

Literacy instruction is a complex process that involves interactions among word features, context, child characteristics, and instructional features (Elleman et al., 2017). Current literature reports that primary-grade readers begin to acquire a significant literacy foundation from various texts (Dickinson et al., 2019; Kirchner & Mostert, 2017). Students are taught how to read at an early age, specifically between kindergarten and third grade; primary teachers focus on the essential reading structures, which serve as the foundation for students' literacy knowledge (Capin & Vaughn, 2017; Coch, 2016). According to Slusser et al. (2018), educators must build and maintain effective practices to support student success with rigorous and cohesive instruction that ultimately results in college and career readiness by connecting various essential standards that students need to master.

The school administrator's role has evolved, and school leaders now engage in supportive practices of empowering and inspiring their teachers to excel in the profession (Stein, 2016; Young & Bonanno-Sotiropoulos, 2018). Following Bressman et al. (2018), mentoring is rarely offered for experienced educators once the induction years are over. Administrators' influence on the teacher and student outcomes plays a significant role in adopting, implementing, and sustaining teachers' efforts to address literacy needs (Sadan & Alkaher, 2021). As a result, frustration, cynicism, early attrition, and "burnout" occur

(Bressman et al., 2018). Administrative support increases teacher retention and improves student academic achievement (Johnson, 2020). Overall, administrators' support for teachers is crucial for improving their legitimacy and overcoming teacher resistance (Mahaffey et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Due to the nature of the study, this research study focused on ontology. Ontology concerns the nature of being or reality (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). An ontological assumption is not a single truth or reality (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers, participants, and readers have differing realities, and the goal of qualitative research is to engage with, understand, and report these multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This study's purpose was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of challenges supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative study:

RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by Hallinger et al.'s (1983) model of instructional leadership. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) conceptualized instructional leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and leadership processes.

The leadership functions include framing and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, developing high academic standards and expectations, monitoring student progress, promoting PD, protecting instructional time, and developing incentives for students and teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). The leadership processes include communication, decision making, conflict management, group process, change process, and environmental interaction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Hallinger and Murphy further explained that an administrator must use group process, environmental interaction, and communication skills if school-wide goals are to have the desired effect of mobilizing teachers and parents towards an expected end. This study's research questions and analysis explored instructional leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and leadership processes.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) instructional leadership model conceptualized the study related to the research questions. Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model helped to understand administrators' leadership functions and leadership processes to support teachers' literacy strategies. Wieczorek and Manard (2018) expounded that research on effective leadership is evolving. A comprehensive review of leadership effectiveness can reveal multidimensional instructional leadership (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Furthermore, a basic qualitative design was chosen, so that data collection and analysis of the study's research questions could be responsive to real-time learning (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A more thorough discussion of the Conceptual Framework can be found in Chapter 2.

The study's purpose focused on perceptions of elementary administrators, to collect and analyze data about challenges. Instructional leadership is emphasized to assert that practicing school leaders can affect student outcomes by as much as 20 % (Hui & Singh, 2020). The way participants make sense of leadership functions and processes was central to this study. How individuals view their roles in student development was central to the study and informed by the instructional leadership theory, which directly informed Research Question 1. Drawing from the perceptions of elementary administrators by using Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) instructional leadership theory primarily allowed the concept of a two-dimensional construct, which directly informed Research Question 2 (Hallinger et al., 1983).

Administrators' challenges to support teachers' instructional strategies to help students' literacy skills is the focus of this study. The Hallinger et al. (1983) instructional leadership model supported the current research by allowing administrators to understand and reflect on their current development as instructional leaders implementing change focused on literacy instructional teacher skills. According to Mahaffey et al. (2020) and Wenner and Campbell (2017), substantial research has revealed how administrators communicate with teachers is crucial for improving their legitimacy and overcoming teacher resistance. Understanding the leader's role behavior in this area is incomplete unless both dimensions are considered: leadership functions and processes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Administrators' abilities to effectively carry out their various functions as instructional leaders are often limited by their ability to manage the process of change and create a productive work environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Nature of the Study

I conducted a basic qualitative study on elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district.Ravitch and Carl (2016) described a basic qualitative research design as a dynamic, systematic, and engaged planning process for depth, rigor, and data contextualization. This basic qualitative design was chosen so that data collection and analysis of the study's research questions could be responsive to real-time learning (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Real-time learning allowed participants' responses to be immediate and beneficial to the study because the issue was simultaneous to the study. Researchers found that administrators' practices more greatly affect students' academic success and experiences that produce academic results compared to the literacy areas of vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonics, and phonemic awareness (Dickinson et al., 2019; Kirchner & Mostert, 2017). Primary research is motivated by an intellectual interest in a phenomenon and extending knowledge (Babchuk, 2017).

For this study, the data collection method I used was semi-constructed interviews. I collected data from 10 administrators using semi-structured interviews from a south-central state elementary school to determine their perceptions of administrators' roles in providing teacher support with student literacy skills. I transcribed the semi-structured interviews by using the content analysis to analyze the collected data. Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication from a set of texts, which can be written, oral, or visual (Scribbr, 2020). In this basic qualitative study,

I explored administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills.

Definitions

This section includes educational terms that were used throughout the study:

Achievement gap: Achievement gaps occur when one group of students (e.g., students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (i.e., larger than the margin of error; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Instructional leadership: Instructional leadership is any activity undertaken by school administrators to enhance the success of teaching and learning and school development (Abdullah et al., 2019; Hallinger et al., 1983).

Instructional leadership practice: Instructional leadership practices are behaviors that communicate the vision of the school's purposes and standards, monitor student and teacher performances, recognize and reward good work, and provide effective staff development programs (Glanz et al., 2017).

Professional development: Professional development involves opportunities that help educators enhance their knowledge, abilities, and effectiveness in the classroom (Borko, 2004).

Teacher empowerment: Teacher empowerment includes educators who provide support, feedback, and ideas for developing their practice, causing teachers to take risks and try new ideas and techniques with encouragement (Trust, 2017).

Assumptions

I gathered information on administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. An assumption was that the 10 participants answered the questions honestly and without bias. Although participants knew each other, they did not know who participated in the study. Therefore, it is assumed that the participants did not meet to discuss the questions of the study. The study aimed to obtain information from the participants' experiences and their roles as administrators to support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills. Therefore, not allowing participants to know who was a part of the study was essential.

Scope and Delimitations

Burkholder et al. (2016) explained delimitation as narrowing a study regarding participants, time, and location by stating what the study will not include. The study did not include administrators in a secondary setting. The study focused on the elementary environment, so it did not include middle or high school administrators.

I invited one superintendent, one assistant superintendent, and administrators of five elementary schools to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. Participants were selected according to their years of experience, leadership levels, and leadership practices concerning administrative support of teachers' instructional practices. The study did not include both assistant superintendents. One

assistant superintendent was considered for the study because there was one assistant superintendent over elementary education.

The study also did not include other populations, such as special education or gifted education, but could be transferable to these educators' groups. Educators in these groups go through school administrators' evaluation processes due to classroom observations remaining the predominant data source used in teacher evaluations (Lawson & Knollman, 2017). Therefore, the findings from this study can potentially transfer to another situation, as they may share some commonalities (Vista, 2020).

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

Although this study benefits school administrators, classroom teachers, and students, there were limitations. One limitation is that interviews had to be conducted via Zoom meets due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic putting unprecedented challenges on the community (Givi et al., 2020); this limited the in-person reactions of the participants. Another limitation was the focus on one school district in a south-central state. My role as a first grade teacher did not affect how I posed questions to participants. To mitigate researcher bias, all participants worked on various campuses with varying positions from elementary to the district's central office. I also used member checking to gain insight into elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted the importance of member checking with follow-up questions as part of the data analysis protocol. Cavanna et al. (2021) explained that shared visions might reinforce teachers' learning across their educational area and affect student learning

outcomes within their specified educational group. The study's findings are based on elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve literacy.

Significance

This study addressed a local problem of administrators' challenges to support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills in a local elementary school. This study's findings were significant to practice and the scholars' community because it may help educators improve at-risk learners' literacy skills. Schools that applied the recommended administrator supervision approach derived from the results of this study may better provide positive outcomes for struggling readers.

For the community of scholars, this study shed light on critical areas within academic literacy that are highly significant in the educational process. Considering that literacy plays an integral role in classrooms today, school districts across the nation must ensure that students are equipped with the necessary tools and skills that allow them to be successful upon graduating from high school (Brevik, 2019; Dickinson et al., 2019; Frankel, 2016). The study explores elementary school administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central school district. Moreover, this study promotes positive social change by allowing administrators to reflect on their instructional leadership skills in supporting teachers. Reflection inspires positive social change by the increased awareness and greater understanding due to more information in the community, enabling people to make informed decisions based on the research (Cohen, 2011).

Summary

School leadership is one of the most influential factors of students' academic success (Tan, 2018). Tan (2018) further explained that an administrator's leadership practice enables others to act, inspire a shared vision, and challenge the process. The study's purpose was to explore the perceptions of elementary administrators' challenges as they support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills with a conceptual framework based on Hallinger et al.'s (1983) model of instructional leadership. Selected articles related to administrators' leadership practices, support, and PD improvements helped articulate implications for educational practice and the impact on social change. Data were collected from 10 administrators using semi-structured interviews from a south-central state elementary school to determine the perceptions of administrators' roles in providing teacher support with student literacy skills, with an assumption that participates answered questions honestly and without biases. The study focused on the elementary environment, so it did not include middle or high school administrators. The study was limited to one school district with 3,781 students, Pre-K to twelfth grades, with interviews conducted via Zoom meets due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Administrators must actively engage as literacy leaders who are advocates for literacy, continuous professional learners, and responsive leaders (Sharp et al., 2020). However, the literature base for literacy leadership is narrow and does not specifically provide how administrators address standards improving students' academic performance (Sharp et al., 2020). According to Kiral (2020), there is a gap in understanding leadership

practices and behaviors for ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes. However, a gap in practice remains that administrators have provided little direction to effectively address standards for improving students' academic performance (Pollitt, 2016). This study helps to close the gap in literature by aiming to provide insight into the educational practice and the community of scholars because it may instruct educators on improving at-risk learners' literacy deciphering skills. Overall, the purpose of this study explored elementary administrators' perceptions of challenges supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy skills in a south-central state school district. Chapter 2 includes a literature review on instructional leadership and effective administrators' leadership practices, support, and PD improvements.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in this study was that elementary school administrators in a south-central state school district in the United States are challenged to support teachers' use of instructional strategies that may help students' literacy skills. The purpose of this study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy. Teachers who feel that their administrators support them in carrying out professional responsibilities are more likely to be satisfied with their career and remain in teaching longer than those who do not feel this support (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018; Redding & Henry, 2018). This literature review includes research findings related to administrators' leadership practices, support of teachers, and PD improvements. The current literature is relevant to the problem because highly effective teachers are not just made; in turn, they must be supported, nurtured, and recognized for their hard work and devotion to the profession (Young & Bonanno-Sotiropoulos, 2018). Wenner and Campbell's (2017) study revealed that teacher leadership focused on roles beyond the classroom by supporting peers' professional learning, influencing policy/decision-making, and ultimately targeting student learning. In this study, I critically analyzed the research related to effective administrative leadership practices that optimized student outcomes.

Leadership is one of the essential school-level factors influencing education while being one of the most critical school-level determinants of student achievement (Young et al., 2017). Although necessary, educational leaders' responsibilities reach far beyond school policies and oversee daily operations. Educational leadership scholars have

asserted that broader community, school, and organizational contexts can influence and define leadership practices (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). How administrators work in schools' contexts is critical to understanding how they interpret and enact instructional leadership to meet their community stakeholders' diverse needs (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

Literature Search Strategy

I used different library databases and search engines concerning administrators' challenges as they supported teachers. I searched the literature systematically using the Walden University library; the databases included ERIC, ProQuest, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar. Using the ERIC database, the keywords that guided the literature search included *administrators' supporting teachers*, *educational leadership*, *leadership skills*, *administrators' role*, *instructional leadership*, *teacher empowerment*, *literacy*, *children learning to read*, *achievement gaps, professional development,* and *instructional leadership practice.* The keywords that guided the literature search using the Google Scholar database included *administrators' supporting teachers*, *educational leadership*, *leadership skills*, *administrators' role*, *instructional leadership*, *teacher empowerment*, *literacy*, *children learning to read*, *achievement gaps, professional development,* and *instructional leadership practice.* Using the ProQuest database, the keywords that guided the literature search included *administrators' supporting teachers, teacher empowerment, achievement gaps, and professional development.* Using the Sage Journals database, the keywords that guided the literature search included *administrators' supporting teachers, teacher empowerment, achievement gaps, and professional development*.

Conceptual Framework

A basic qualitative design using the Hallinger et al. (1983) instructional leadership model was chosen as the study's conceptual framework. Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that the conceptual framework helps a researcher cultivate research questions and then match the study's methodological aspects with those questions. The existing research on administrators' leadership for learning has strongly reinforced the importance of positive school culture, teacher trust, and collaborative practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Preston and Barnes (2017) argued that collaboratively minded leaders stand the best chance of achieving multiple goals that span multiple leadership domains, including student learning, instructional improvement, fiscal efficiency, cultural growth, and community relations (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Leadership theories have laid the foundation for 21st-century administrators to understand that they significantly influence closing achievement gaps (Smetana, 2020). Several studies showed how administrators led campuses and supported teachers positively affecting student achievement (Park et al., 2019).

The instructional leadership model helped to understand leadership functions and leadership processes to support teachers' implementation of literacy strategies. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) revealed that instructional leadership functions represent the substance of the administrator's instructional leadership role. Framing and communicating school goals allow schools to clearly define a mission, while schools focus on improving student achievement by frequently observing classroom instruction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Another essential instructional leadership function includes

monitoring student progress by coordinating curriculum, protecting instructional time, promoting effective PD, planning instructional improvement, and developing high standards. Lastly, providing incentives for students and teachers is an essential aspect of the school learning climate; influential leaders create incentives for learning that are school-wide in orientation (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Instructional leadership processes include regular use of frequent communication to build productive working relationships among staff and teachers, leading to conflict management, group process, and decision-making (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). According to Hallinger and Murphy (1986), developing a solid goal consensus and a common language regarding curriculum and instruction increases the likelihood that conflict will be productively channeled in the organization. Another instructional leadership process includes the change process, which challenges the administrator to articulate significant changes within instruction and curriculum. They are also more likely to be successfully implemented based on collegiality and collaboration rather than solely on authority (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Lastly, environmental interaction plays a part in administrators' behaviors that are connected to the instructional process.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Consistent findings in the literature revealed that when administrators are highly visible in classrooms, teacher performance and student achievement improve (Agasisti et al., 2019; Haiyan & Allan, 2021; Konza, 2017; Mestry, 2017; Van Vooren, 2018). By choosing a basic qualitative design using the Hallinger et al. (1983) instructional leadership model, the study's research questions' data collection and analysis processes

can be responsive to real-time learning. Leadership plays a vital role in crafting and designing a quality education system, influencing students' knowledge and perceived outcomes (Alam & Ahmad, 2017). Furthermore, effective literacy instruction is conceptualized as a comprehensive, balanced approach to teaching literacy (Pressley & Allington, 2015; Taylor et al., 2005). Research indicates that administrative support is imperative to the success of student literacy development.

Instructional Coaches

Researchers have revealed that administrators approached supporting teachers' instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills by providing instructional coaching. Anderson and Wallin (2018) mentioned that instructional coaches were created to assist school instructional leadership as a support system for teachers. Coaching originated from the premise that effective teachers could coach colleagues into becoming effective, thereby positively affecting teachers and students (Anderson, 2018). The negative effect of instructional coaching is the transition from teacher to coach. Many coaches struggle to reach teachers and succeed in the process (Ng Foo Seong, 2019). Another approach supporting teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills included instructional supervision. Knight (2011) explained instructional coaching as a partnership where teachers and coaches work equally to improve teaching and learning. Good coaches engage in the following actions: enroll teachers, identify teachers' goals, listen, ask questions, explain teaching practices, and provide feedback (Knight, 2011).

Konza (2017) explained three broad categories of skills that can contribute to effective coaching: pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and interpersonal capabilities. Anderson and Wallin (2018) demonstrated that pedagogical knowledge consists of an understanding and experiential base of how students effectively use questioning and classroom management techniques. Content expertise entails a thorough knowledge of the subject area and the curriculum using data and differentiated instruction to drive instruction (Ng Foo Seong, 2019). Interpersonal capabilities can help coaches build trust and encourage and inspire teachers to improve their practices, leading to change in an organized, assertive, positive manner (Ng Foo Seong, 2019). Instructional coaching allows teachers to discuss their lesson ideas during a pre-conference with their building administrative team.

Instructional Leadership

According to Liu et al. (2020), instructional leadership emulates administrators' behaviors and practices to improve teaching and learning. Johnson et al. (2018) mentioned that instructional leadership was the responsibility of the teachers. They noted that while administrators may be leaders, they have more than enough to do without taking over responsibilities that belong to teachers because of the challenge of principals or assistant principals being both the teachers' evaluator and instructional leader (Johnson et al., 2018). Throughout time, this method has not worked.

Hallinger and Murphy (1986) developed an instrument that provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for the instructional leadership model. The instructional leader develops school goals, communicates these goals with the staff,

coordinates curriculum, supervises classroom instruction, monitors student progress, rewards effective teaching and successful students, protects instructional time, maintains visibility, and provides teachers with PD opportunities (Liu et al., 2020). Liu et al. (2020) further explained that administrators monitor and evaluate teachers' instructional performances based on the school visions and goals and provide feedback to improve their instructional techniques and strategies. In particular, instructional leadership research was designed to address the deficiency of research on effective school administrators by addressing the lack of explanatory models of the school and administrators' effects (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). According to Hallinger et al. (1983), the instructional leadership model promotes better measurable outcomes for learners by enhancing classroom teaching and learning is the prime focus (Gawlik, 2018; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). However, the challenge is identifying how leaders can facilitate teacher learning and what teachers need to implement to support learners in achieving educational goals (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). Instructional leadership promotes the development of effective schools by promoting better measurable outcomes for learners by enhancing classroom teaching and learning as the prime focus.

Supports in Literacy Instruction

Research plays a crucial role in promoting literacy and integrating academic honesty towards improved research and knowledge exchange (Alenzuela et al., 2017). Alenzuela et al. (2017) explained that an engaged community is a way to build a culture of academic integrity to enhance students' academic success with properly integrated

supports. Additionally, teacher knowledge, practice, and student learning outcomes have been well established. Still, several challenges have hindered efforts to address the need to provide teachers with the appropriate training to equip them with the necessary knowledge (McMahan et al., 2019). For example, a low knowledge base in literacy constructs in graduates of teacher preparation programs could be perpetuated by their instructors not possessing knowledge of phonology, phonics instructional concepts, spelling patterns, and morphology to share with their students (Joshi et al., 2009; McMahan et al., 2019). Another obstacle to increasing teacher knowledge in reading constructs could be the difficulty of bridging scientifically rigorous research findings in reading and literacy to classroom practices (McMahan et al., 2019). According to Cohen et al. (2017), if teachers do not possess extensive knowledge of language structure and code-based concepts and the ability to apply that knowledge in practice, their struggling readers are less likely to develop critical reading skills.

Literacy instruction has demonstrated the inadequacy of the reading readiness and reading approaches. They fail to account for the length of literacy skills students need to learn when provided with quality comprehensive literacy instruction (Toews & Kurth, 2019). Hughes (2011) explained that the effectiveness of explicit instruction is supported by a large volume of concurrent research conducted over almost 5 decades and a variety of disciplines and theories. Smith et al. (2016) focused on how explicit instruction components (e.g., clear and explicit models, guided practice using visual and verbal prompts such as worked solutions) reduce cognitive load and its resulting stress on working memory for students who lack background knowledge and automaticity in

recalling prerequisite knowledge and skills related to what is being taught. Joseph et al.

(2016) contended that many teaching behaviors included in explicit instruction (e.g.,

modeling, prompting, frequent opportunities to respond accompanied with feedback) are

aligned with applied behavior analysis principles such as positive reinforcement

(feedback), carefully arranging examples, consistent use of terms (stimulus control), and

modeling (orienting attention to critical stimuli). In addition to describing and

synthesizing previous and recent intervention research, the Institute of Education Science

Practice Guides identifies, evaluates, rates, and recommends intervention approaches

used with typically achieving students as well as with students characterized as struggling

learners (Toews & Kurth, 2019). Supports in literacy instruction allow academic integrity

to enhance students' academic success by using intervention approaches with all students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

One of the most enduring challenges facing schools is improving learning while

closing persistent achievement gaps and disparities in academic performance among

students. (Dahlin & Cronin, 2010; Goddard et al., 2017). However, the progress in

reducing achievement gaps has not been steady or evenly paced (Hung et al., 2020). One

promising construct is collective efficacy, or the sense among group members that they

can organize and execute the courses of action required to achieve their most important

goals (Goddard et al., 2017). Research demonstrates that as early as kindergarten,

children from low socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate more inadequate literacy

scores competencies that lead to academic under preparation and widening the

achievement gap (Smalls-Marshall, 2020; Thomas et al., 2020). Leithwood et al. (2020)

listed various factors influencing learner achievement, including socioeconomic factors, district support, and instruction quality. Byrnes (2020) explained that most scholars who have examined the achievement results of large-scale national and international assessments had drawn the following three conclusions: (a) too few students in the United States acquire the skills they need to be successful in today's world, (b) this skill deficit is particularly acute among low-income and ethnic/racial minority groups, and (c) the size of the achievement gap between higher-income and lower-income groups has changed very little over the past 50 years (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2009; National Research Council, 2011; Ravitch, 2016). Schools' biggest challenge is the disparities in academic performance with no steady or evenly paced progression of improvements that affect students as young as kindergarten.

Professional Development

Teacher PD is an essential factor in improving the quality of the school and realizing school improvement goals as it aids teachers to translate ideas and innovative strategies into their practice system (Kennedy, 2016; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Ramlal et al., 2020; Sterrett & Richardson, 2020). A growing body of research indicates that leadership is essential to improving teaching and learning (Park et al., 2019). Effective administrative behaviors include those that impact teachers' and teachers' working conditions. Effective behaviors include creating a solid mission and vision, implementing routines and procedures, involving teachers in decision-making, providing helpful feedback, and supplying essential mentoring supports for new and veteran teachers alike (Fuller et al., 2018). The administrator is responsible for teacher growth while being

expected to build instructional leadership capacity through PD (Thessin, 2019).

Administrators strengthen the learning process by supporting teachers' growth through

helpful feedback (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020).

A wide range of empirical evidence highlights and reinforces a positive

relationship between instructional leadership, school performance quality, and student

learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harris et al., 2017). Research shows that strong

leaders contribute significantly to successful turnaround in schools where administrators

are seen as instructional leaders and are given greater autonomy, directly correlating with

teacher retention and student success (Pechota & Scott, 2020). The literature reviewed

suggested constructs that must be considered in the development of PD for teachers. The

most common reference point for PD was the focus of content knowledge that must be

threaded on the transformation of teachers' skills on strategies to develop student

thinking. Next, the essential construct focused on the collective participation of learning

through the medium of professional learning communities by which teachers extensively

discuss their intellectual work (Kennedy, 2016; Ramlal et al., 2020). The last construct

entailed using subject-specific coaches, which have their strengths and weaknesses

(Kennedy, 2016; Ramlal et al., 2020).

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), effective PD is structured

professional learning that changes teacher practices and student learning outcomes. For

students to develop mastery of challenging content, problem solving, effective

communication and collaboration, and self-direction, teachers must employ more

sophisticated forms of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Effective PD is critical

to teachers learning and refining the pedagogies required to teach literacy skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Recent practical PD ideas to improve literacy through administrative leadership include morphological instruction. Morphology is the study of meaningful units of language, called morphemes, and how they are combined in forming words (Zeh, 2016). For example, the word contradiction can be broken up as contra-dict-ion, with the prefix contra- (against), the root word dict (to speak), and the suffix–ion (a verbal action) (Zeh, 2016). Kirby and Bowers (2017) explained that (a) English is fundamentally morphophonemic in nature, (b) various theories give morphology a role in word reading, (c) there is evidence that adults process morphological information automatically when they read words, even if they are not aware of it, and (d) there is considerable evidence that knowledge of morphology predicts literacy outcomes, suggesting teaching morphology to children would increase their reading abilities.

Transformative Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that transforms followers to rise above their self-interest by changing their ideals, morals, values, and interests and motivating them to go beyond expectations (McCall, 1986; Xu et al., 2021). Arokiasamy (2017) and Khumalo (2019) described transformational leadership as leadership in which the school administrator will guide and encourage fellow staff to work while communicating the school's goal and empowering staff to achieve the school's vision. Akar and Ustuner (2019) observed that school administrators who displayed transformational leadership behavior significantly predicted that the teachers' quality of work-life was consistent with the results of previous studies. Akar and Ustuner

(2019) further explained that previous studies demonstrated that transformational leaders improved employees' control at work. They were more satisfied with work and felt an increased desire to work (Akar & Ustuner, 2019). Transformative leadership is a way for administrators to lead their staff by allowing them to engage in their interests by motivating them to go beyond expectations.

Transactional Leadership

According to Aldhaheri (2017), transactional leadership is grounded on the idea that adaptive leaders cooperate with their followers to devise innovative solutions to issues while enabling them to cope with a wider variety of leadership responsibilities (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bennis, 2001). Van der Vyver et al. (2020) further explained transactional leadership as leaders who clearly define obligations, objectives, and tasks for followers and stipulate rewards associated with met contractual obligations. By establishing contingent rewards, managers clarify desired behaviors to achieve goals (Asif, 2020). In turn, transactional leadership builds upon quid pro quo dynamics whereby the leader clarifies task requirements and rewards for compliance (Asif, 2020). Transactional leadership is more active and typically contingent on how well followers execute specific standards or tasks. In contrast, transformational leadership includes empowering, inspiring, and challenging followers to facilitate individual, team, and organizational outcomes (Subijana et al., 2021).

Distributed Leadership

As a new scenario of educational leadership, distributed leadership has become a popular topic in the contemporary world. Additionally, many researchers have

contributed significantly to its development; however, little attention has been paid to its effectiveness (Jambo & Hongde, 2020). Shava and Tlou (2018) explained that distributed leadership overlaps with several other terms such as shared leadership, collaborative leadership, democratic and participative leadership concepts, as being a vague concept. Harris (2014) held that distributed leadership concentrates on "engaging expertise wherever it exists" within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal positions or roles. For example, according to their expertise, an individual's position within a school does not matter if they can successfully and effectively complete a given task.

Summary of Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy. Research indicates that administrative support is imperative to the success of student literacy development. By providing coaching to solve problems, administrators can support teachers. Coaching originated from the premise that effective teachers could coach colleagues into becoming effective, thereby positively affecting teachers and students. Still, many coaches struggle to reach teachers and succeed in the process.

Another way to address administrative support of teachers includes administrators as instructional leaders. Instructional leadership promotes the development of effective schools by promoting better measurable outcomes for learners by enhancing classroom teaching and learning as the prime focus (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). A challenge of instructional leaders is the mindset of the individuals that administrators may lead

(Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Frequently, staff members may believe that administrators have enough to do without taking over responsibilities that belong to teachers (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). According to Wieczorek and Manard (2018), this method has not worked.

An important aspect of administrative support in instructional leadership is focusing on literacy instruction. According to Wieczorek and Manard (2018), literacy instruction demonstrates an inadequate reading readiness and functional reading approaches due to the need for a large volume of concurrent research, conducted over almost 5 decades, and various disciplines and theories. Another way to address administrative support was understanding the achievement gaps. One promising construct is collective efficacy, or the sense among group members to organize and execute the courses of action required to achieve their most important goals. Still, efforts have not been steady or evenly paced. Next, teacher PD is an essential factor in improving the quality of the school and realizing school improvement goals as it aids teachers in translating ideas and innovative strategies into their literacy practices.

Lastly, distributed leadership overlaps with several other terms such as shared leadership, collaborative leadership, democratic, and participative leadership concepts, as being a vague concept. Distributed leadership does not contribute to an outcome until expertise is needed. By aiding in teachers' growth through PD, the administrators strengthen teaching and learning. The role of the administrator is widely perceived to be a critical resource for developing teacher leadership through distributed leadership (Szeto & Cheng, 2018). Regardless of how formal leadership is organized in schools, teachers

are likely to work together, share ideas and resources, and help colleagues (Supovitz, 2018). Initiative-trained teachers play leadership roles in school improvement, providing them with authority that gives them leadership team member status and equips them with training, a set of tools, and opportunities to work with their peers on instructional improvement (Supovitz, 2018). Teacher leaders successfully take on leadership roles and engage with their fellow teachers in various productive ways, including leading PD and facilitating grade level and subject area professional learning communities (Supovitz, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 addressed research findings related to administrators' leadership practices, support, and PD improvements. Chapter 2 also included the literature search strategies, conceptual framework, and literature review related to key concepts and variables. By conducting a basic qualitative study, I provided support to enhance the administrators' role as instructional leaders. The literature review analyzed the research to promote effective leadership that optimizes student outcomes through leadership practices, support, and PD. An academic achievement gap has been prevalent throughout history, causing many challenges for administrators. The study fills the literature gap by exploring administrators' perceptions of teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy and reduce the achievement gap between White and Students of Color. The study addressed the gap by exploring beneficial supports in administrator support and mentoring with trusted colleagues, expected planning times, and student work analysis (Reitman & Karge, 2019). Administrators' support and mentoring give teachers

the opportunities to work with other colleagues, observe experienced teachers', be observed by mentors, analyze practices, and network with other teachers (Reitman & Karge, 2019). Little is known about the effectiveness of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and distributed leadership and their relation to administrators supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills (Akar & Ustuner, 2019; Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Subijana et al., 2021). In Chapter 3, I described the methodology of the basic qualitative study. I included how participants were invited and provided details about instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. I protected all participants' rights and confidentiality. Finally, I present key points to validate and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. Chapter 3 addresses the research method by analyzing the design, rationale, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The chosen basic qualitative design allowed data collection and analysis of the study's research questions of the problem to be simultaneous to the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Research Design and Rationale

With a basic qualitative research design, this study used semi-constructed interviews. I collected data from 10 administrators using semi-structured interviews from a south-central state elementary school in the United States to determine their perceptions of administrators' roles in providing teacher support with student literacy skills by examining the following research questions:

RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

Grounded theory, phenomenological research, narrative research, and ethnography research were considered for this study. However, the designs were not acceptable for this study. Grounded theory allows the researcher to develop a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in participants' views in a

study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Grounded theory would not work for this study because it requires the researcher to do fieldwork to understand what is happening (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this study, I did not observe individual students, parents, or teachers but interviewed administrators on their perspectives. In phenomenological research, the researcher collects and analyzes people's perceptions of a specific, definable phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016). Phenomenology is a research method that fully describes a person's lived experience that only those that have experienced phenomena can communicate to the outside world (Mapp, 2008). Therefore, it involves an understanding of an experience from those who have lived it. Narrative research is a process the researcher uses to study the lives of individuals by asking one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It was not my intention to observe individuals and describe individual stories concerning a phenomenon. Lastly, ethnography emphasizes in-person field study and includes immersion through participant observation, cultural settings, descriptive data, multiple data sources, and fieldnotes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, I conducted interviews via Zoom. Data collection and analysis of the study's research questions were simultaneous to the study. The basic qualitative study is best suited because it helps cultivate the research questions and match the study's methodological aspects with those questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher involved selecting appropriate participants, conducting voice-recorded semi-structured interviews, transcribing interviews, and analyzing data. I

ensured that my experiences, preferences, and personal biases did not factor into the research, although I currently work in the district where the study was conducted. I have no administrative role to evaluate the participants. Some of the participants held evaluative powers over me. I dealt with the imbalance of power and reported findings with integrity by following all ethical guidelines set in place by Walden University. Working in the district may have affected my data collection by participants saying things they think I wanted to hear. I mitigated this possibility by ensuring participants' comments remained confidential by using pseudonyms instead of their names and encouraging individual opinions by explaining the importance of the study, explaining how their contributions would be helpful, and using prompts to extend a response that may seem limited. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), discussing confidentiality with participants might mean that pseudonyms and other identifying facts are changed or not disclosed. To eliminate any possible biases, I scheduled an additional meeting with each participate for clarification of any data I was unsure of. During the transcribing process, I kept a research journal to record ongoing thoughts and I identified any possible biases to eliminate biases toward the study.

Methodology

With a basic qualitative design, I explored elementary administrators' perceptions to support teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central school district. I collected data through Zoom for virtual semi-structured interviews with district and building-level administrators. In the study, strategies used included peer debriefings, reflexivity, and member checking. The approach provided

insight into elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills.

Participant Selection

For this study, the data collection process consisted of 10 administrative participants. I invited the district's superintendent, assistant superintendent, and eight campus administrators with at least 2 years of experience. The number of participants selected was dependent upon the number required to inform essential elements of the phenomenon being studied (Sargeant, 2012). Sargeant (2012) explained that the sample size is sufficient when interviews do not identify new concepts, an endpoint called data saturation. To determine when data saturation occurs, analysis occurs concurrently with data collection in an iterative cycle, allowing the researcher to document the emergence of new themes and to identify perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked (Sargeant, 2012).

Participants were identified and recruited based on their current position, years of experience, leadership levels, and leadership practices concerning administrative support of teachers' instructional practices. Participants were contacted via email or telephone due to COVID-19 regulations. During initial contact, general information about the study was shared with participants.

Instrumentation

The methodology for the study used Zoom for virtual semi-structured interviews with district and building-level administrators. The discussions explored elementary administrators' perceptions as they supported teachers' instructional strategies to improve

students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. Semi-constructed interview implementation was dependent on how the interviewee responded to the question or topics presented by the researcher (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). I developed a set of guiding questions using the Hallinger et al. (1983) instructional leadership model as the study's chosen conceptual framework, which informed the study's research questions and interview questions. The research questions were also informed by the related literature in the literature review. I matched the study's methodological aspects with those questions. In doing so, the subject's responses gave me the flexibility to pose more enhanced questions than the initially drafted ones (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Appendix). Hence, I asked additional questions to enhance the study's understanding, depending on the participant's responses. I recorded all interviews and I transcribed them to use for analysis. Additionally, note-taking was used throughout each interview to enhance the data collection process.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Qualitative research consists of various approaches towards data collection, which researchers can use to help provide a cultural and contextual description and interpretations of social phenomena (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). While one of the aims of qualitative research is to seek deeper understandings of human experiences, semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate method to achieve this purpose (Bearman, 2019). In the current study, I conducted semi-structured interviews using a Zoom video conferencing platform.

The first step for data collection approval was to obtain permission from the prospective study site. I also requested Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission from Walden University. I was able to request and obtain site permission from the district's superintendent. Permission was acquired via email and fax. The superintendent was sent information explaining the study's intent, a timeline, sites within the district that were included in the study, and intended participants.

Before data collection and following approval from Walden's IRB, I sent an email with a Letter of Invitation explaining expectations and processes to potential participants; I retrieved emails from the district's directory. Participants received participant Informed Consent forms via email, fax, or mail. The delivery method was at the participants' discretion. I received the signed Informed Consent Forms via email, fax, or mail. I put all consent forms in a locked storage container for the required 5 years requested by Walden's IRB. A consent form is a standard method for informing prospective research participants about their potential involvement in a research study and documenting (often by written signature) their voluntary willingness to participate (Burkholder et al., 2016). Participants had access to my contact information for questions about the study. The appropriate individuals who were part of the University Research Review (URR) information was also available to participants for any additional questions that I was unable to answer.

With the ever-growing digital societies and this specific COVID-19 pandemic, people have become familiar with various platforms and applications to transmit at least some of their daily interactions and communication online (Lobe et al., 2020). The setting

of the data collection occurred over Zoom. Zoom is a video conferencing platform that has already been extensively used for research purposes (Archibald et al., 2019; Daniels et al., 2019; Kite & Phongsavan, 2017; Lobe, 2017; Matthews et al., 2018). The platform supports real-time audio and full-motion video, and the free basic plan offers many valuable settings that are user-friendly and intuitive (Lobe et al., 2020). Also, a Zoom account was not required for participants to participate in the data collection process but was required of the host (Lobe et al., 2020). I set up interview appointments through email, conducting no more than two during the evening hours. Each interview lasted no longer than 1 hour after school when students were not in school. Each participant signed an Informed Consent form to participate in an audio-record interview. I transcribed the audio recordings to carry out analysis. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the option to dismiss themselves from the study, which posed no adverse consequences to them. Participants were required to sign a written document releasing them from the study if they choose to leave the study.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process included an analysis of gathered transcripts using an open coding approach. Open coding highlights text or labels sections involving multiple rounds and readings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used the open coding process by sorting common themes to understand similarities and differences presented in the study's findings. Table 1 includes interview questions matched to RQs.

Table 1

Interview Questions to Address Research Questions

Research question	Interview questions
1. How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?	1. How do you align instructional practices based on data?
	2. Describe your role in providing reflective feedback as a means of supporting teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills.
	3. Describe the processes and procedures you use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?
	4. What actions through positive school culture do you believe are necessary to support teachers with instructional literacy skills? Please elaborate.
	5. What supports are currently in place to support teachers' implementation of literacy instruction? How effective have they been?
	6. What encounters do teachers have to obtain resources that support their engagement with teaching practices?
	7. What specific actions might you take with teachers to assist them with their literacy instructional strategies?
2. What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?	1. How do you communicate your vision and missions in closing the gaps of teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? Please Elaborate.
	2. Describe your role in influencing and providing support to teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? How is this communicated and monitored?
	3. What do you perceive as your role in supporting teachers, and what does it look like in practice?
	4. How do you best collaborate with teachers to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? Please elaborate.
	5. What do you perceive as challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instruction?

Research question	Interview questions
	6. Describe your role in providing instructional coaching essential to support teachers with literacy instruction through visibility in classrooms.
	7. What are your perceptions of challenges regarding the professional needs of teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

I followed a three-pronged data analysis process, including data organization and management, immersive engagement, and writing and representation. Data organization and management was used by transcribing semi-structured interviews, which began as soon as the data collection process began. I started transcribing and coding following each interview. I transcribed each interview myself to explore emerging ideas in the data that needed to be coded, then I categorized the codes to merge ideas and patterns and develop themes. According to Rubin & Rubin (2012), to facilitate retrieval of what was said on each topic, the researcher codes the data, marking a copy of the transcript, a word or phrase representing what they think a given passage means. An individual should think of a code not just as a significant word or phrase they applied to a datum but as a prompt or trigger for written reflection on the more profound and complex meanings it evokes (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) further explained that a qualitative inquiry code is a word or short phrase that symbolizes summative, salient visual data. Themes are summary statements, causal explanations, or conclusions that describe why something happened, what something means, or how the interviewee feels about the matter (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Themes show relationships between two or more concepts.

Contradictory evidence was sought out, examined, and accounted for in the analysis to ensure that researcher bias did not interfere with or alter participants' perceptions of the data and any insights offered. I allowed participants to read through the data and analyses and provide feedback on my interpretations of their responses, providing a method of checking for inconsistencies, challenging my assumptions, and providing opportunities to reanalyze my data. I used constant comparison throughout the study to compare interview #2 to #1 and so on. Constant comparison allowed for one interview to compare to the previous interview and not be considered on its own, enabling me to treat the data rather than fragmenting it (Anderson, 2010). Anderson (2010) further explained that constant comparison also allows the researcher to identify emerging or unanticipated themes within the study.

Trustworthiness

There are multiple strategies to establish a study's trustworthiness, including dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Burkholder et al., 2016). Each trustworthiness strategy was included, so that data collection and analysis of the study's research questions ensured validity. The process affirmed that elementary school administrators' challenges to support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to support students' literacy skills are faithful to the participants' experiences.

Credibility

According to Burkholder et al. (2016), credibility is a parallel concept that establishes believability of findings based on data presented from the study's findings. In the current study, strategies to support credibility will include peer debriefings,

reflexivity, and member checking (Burkholder et al., 2016). Peer debriefing involves

engagement with a qualified colleague who is not engaged in the research in ongoing

discussions of study progress, data analyses, and tentative findings (Burkholder et al.,

2016). The qualified colleague will engage in discussions to create conditions in which

others and I can challenge my interpretations of the research process and data at all stages

throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). They will also be required to

sign a pledge to confidentiality. Reflexivity obliges the researcher to document in field

notes, memos, or journals self-critical comments of biases, the researcher's role in and

responses to the research process, and any adjustments made to the study based on

ongoing analysis (Burkholder et al., 2016). Member checking, also called respondent

validation, systematically solicits feedback about data and conclusions from the people

being studied (Burkholder et al., 2016). As mentioned above, credibility was enhanced in

this study by ensuring validity. I used peer debriefings, reflexivity, and member checking

by documenting and engaging in discussions with qualified colleges and participants to

challenge my interpretations of the research process and data at all stages throughout the

research process.

Transferability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that transferability is how qualitative studies

can apply or are transferable to broader contexts while still maintaining their context-

specific richness. This study enhanced transferability by utilizing the strategy of thick

description. Denzin (2001) explained thick description as creating conditions for thick

interpretation. Thick interpretation gives meaning to the descriptions and interpretations

when recorded (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Utilizing thick descriptions during the analysis process allows readers to clearly understand participants' thoughts and feelings of elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy skills. Throughout the analysis process, transcripts were shared with participants to clarify findings from the study by using member checks. Member checks allowed the researcher to check in with participants to discuss aspects of the current study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transferability was improved in this study by ensuring validity using thick descriptions and member checks.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is akin to reliability in quantitative analysis. Reliability means that the instruments used to collect data produce consistent results across data collection occurrences (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity was utilized to ensure dependability. Therefore, a basic qualitative design using semi-constructed interviews was chosen for the current study using Hallinger et al. (1983) instructional leadership model. Each participant was made aware that interviews were audio-recorded using the Zoom platform, which ensured the accuracy of each transcript. Recording and transcribing interviews refers to descriptive validity, which provides factual data accuracy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability was used in this study by incorporating reflexivity, which entails a reasoned argument for collecting data. The data supported dependability by triangulating data with interviews of administrators from different schools.

Confirmability

Confirmability requires that other informed researchers arrive at virtually the same conclusions when examining the same qualitative data (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity, memo writing, recording of my impressions and participants after each interview, recognizing and not including my own biases were used to ensure confirmability. Confirmability aims to acknowledge and explore how our biases and prejudices map onto our interpretations of data. Allowing, possibly mediating bias through structured reflexivity processes entirely, I recorded my impressions after each interview, recognizing and excluding my own biases, and recording participants' responses, helped with confirmability to the study. While descriptive validity provides factual data accuracy, recordings were used to transcribe data. (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

This study followed the ethical standards set by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The ethical principle of respect for a person refers to respecting autonomy, which involves acknowledging an individual's autonomy to make personal choices regarding research participation and protection from harm for individuals with diminished or impaired ability to exercise autonomy (Burkholder et al., 2016). Beneficence refers to an obligation not to harm and the need for research to maximize potential benefits and minimize possible harm (Burkholder et al., 2016). Justice refers to treating individuals in a morally correct way. The selection of research participants and any potential benefits and burdens of participating in research are equitable among groups (Burkholder et al.,

2016; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). Before collecting any data, I requested and obtained permission to research the site from the site's superintendent. I also obtained IRB permission before collecting data.

I conducted semi-structured interviews using Zoom to conduct only audio-recorded interviews. This platform was chosen because it supports real-time audio and full-motion video, and the free basic plan offers many valuable settings that are user-friendly and intuitive (Lobe et al., 2020). Zoom provided an audio-recording-only option that was beneficial during the transcribing process of the study. Participants' responses were always kept confidential, and notes were stored in a combination locked safe, then will be destroyed after a five year mandatory period. All paper documents are stored in a locked file cabinet at my home, and any electronic files are stored on my password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected cloud drive. I established amicable relationships with participants throughout the process by following the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare ethical standards. Participants also understood the option to dismiss themselves from the study at any time, which posed no adverse consequences. Having ethical codes in place ensured certain conditions protected research participants, including voluntary informed consent, avoidance of harm, and risk assessment to the study participant (Burkholder et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2005). Due to confidentiality, I did not conduct interviews during work hours. This study did not endure any power issues because all interviewed individuals had higher positions than I. Due to the situation, I was helpful to my superiors by building rapport to make them comfortable as they answered interview questions. I

also informed them how I greatly appreciate their cooperation and knowledgeable contributes. Their insights were beneficial to the study as it allowed me to collect data on the district to help better serve our scholars and teachers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy skills in a south-central state school district. In chapter 3, I addressed the research method by presenting the design, rationale, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The goal of the research method is to understand the study's design and rationale to determine elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy skills by examining the study's research questions. In the chosen methodology of basic qualitative research, I collected data using Zoom, semi-structured interviews to explore 10 elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve student's literacy skills in a south-central state school district. Lastly, chapter 3 focused on ethical standards that protected participants by respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. In chapter 4, I discuss results revealed throughout the data collection and analysis process. I include the setting of the semi-structured interviews, data collection, data analysis, and results. As mentioned before, all participants' rights and confidentiality were protected. Finally, I present evidence to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of challenges supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills. The problem was that elementary school administrators in a south-central state school district in the United States are challenged to support teachers' use of instructional strategies to help students' literacy skills and address low achievement. From the data collected, I identified categories and themes to understand administrators' challenges to support teachers' implementation of instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills.

The conceptual framework I used for the current study is Hallinger et al.'s (1983) model of instructional leadership, exploring instructional leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and leadership processes. I collected data from seven administrators using semi-structured interviews to determine their perceptions of administrators' roles in providing teacher support with student literacy skills by examining the following research questions:

RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

I used Zoom for virtual semi-structured interviews with district and building-level administrators, which included open coding and a three-pronged analysis process to analyze interview transcripts. Chapter 4 includes the conditions of the setting, data

collection methods, data analysis process, the study's findings, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely, using the online videoconference application Zoom. The interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience to ensure they had adequate time, free from other obligations, to provide detailed responses to the interview items. The participants were asked to accept the Zoom call in a location where they were safe and had privacy and few distractions.

Demographics

The participants were a purposeful sample of three district administrators (DAs) and four BAs. Table 2 indicates the relevant demographic characteristics of the individual participants.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Number of years in education	Number of years as a teacher prior to taking on an administrative role	Number of years as an administrator
BA1	8	7	1
BA2	17	12	5
BA3	17	11	6
BA4	17	10	7
DA1	19	5	14
DA2	34	9	25
DA3	15	6	9

Note. BA=Building Administrator; DA=District Administrator.

Data Collection

A one-to-one, semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the seven participants. The interviews were conducted through the online videoconference application Zoom. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants' consent using Zoom's audio-recording feature. Each interview was approximately 1 hour in duration. No unexpected circumstances were encountered during data collection, and there were no deviations from the data collection procedure described in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

The audio recorded interview data were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word documents. I analyzed the transcripts thematically. In the first step of the analysis, I read and reread transcripts in full to gain familiarity with them. The second step involved coding the data. The data were reread again, and phrases or groups of phrases from participants' responses that expressed a meaning relevant to participants' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills were excerpted. Each excerpt was labeled with a brief, descriptive word or phrase. When different excerpts had similar meanings, the same label was applied to them. The labeled data excerpts were the initial codes.

For example, BA1 stated, "We review data every Wednesday." The data in question were on student performance. "We" referred to the building's administrative team. This excerpt was assigned to a code labeled, "evaluating data in teams." BA2 stated, "We actually get together in team meetings. We review the data." This response expressed a meaning similar to that of BA1's response, so it was assigned to the same

code. In all, 138 data excerpts were assigned to 27 codes. Table 3 indicates the initial

codes and the number of data excerpts assigned to them.

Table 3

Initial Codes

	Number of data excerpts assigned from:	
Code (listed alphabetically)	Building administrators (*N*=4)	District administrators (*N*=3)
Administrator presence in classroom	2	2
Aligning instructional practices with curriculum	2	3
Allowing mistakes	2	3
Being knowledgeable of the curriculum	1	2
Being part of collaborative teams	4	3
Building relationships	2	2
Classroom observations	8	2
Communicating in open conversation setting	3	1
COVID-19 is a challenge	2	
Differentiating supports is a challenge		3
Empowering teachers		3
Engaging teachers in honest self-reflection can be challenging	2	5
Evaluating data in teams	2	1
Facilitating coaching	1	2
Finding time is a challenge	5	2
Honest school-level performance assessment	3	1
Identifying strengths	1	2
Modeling by curriculum instruction team	3	1
Open-door policy	4	1
Partnership for resources		2
Prioritizing literacy	1	2

Code (listed alphabetically)	Number of data excerpts assigned from:	
	Building administrators (*N*=4)	District administrators (*N*=3)
Professional development	2	2
Providing coaching	5	3
Providing constructive criticism	8	5
Supporting teacher voice	1	3
Teachers can request resources	4	2
Using data to identify growth areas	3	9

The next step of the data analysis consisted of grouping similar or related initial codes into themes. Codes were identified as similar when the data assigned to them expressed similar meanings. Codes were identified as related when the data assigned to them expressed different aspects of the same broader idea. One theme was formed from codes that were related as describing how expectations were communicated to teachers and how student success data used to assess how effective teachers were in meeting those expectations. A second theme was formed from data indicating how teachers were supported in their classrooms through administrator observations and coaching. The third theme emerged from grouping codes related to how teacher needs for resources and training were met. To form the fourth theme, codes related to challenges administrators faced in supporting teachers were grouped. Table 4 indicates how the initial codes were grouped to form the themes.

Table 4

Grouping of Codes Into Themes

	Number of data excerpts assigned from:	
Theme Code grouped to form theme	Building administrators (*N*=4)	District administrators (*N*=3)
Theme 1. Expectations are communicated and data are used to assess performance	16	19
Administrator presence in classroom		
Aligning instructional practices with curriculum		
Communicating in open conversation setting		
Evaluating data in teams		
Honest school-level performance assessment		
Prioritizing literacy		
Using data to identify growth areas		
Theme 2. Teachers are supported in the classroom through observations and coaching	27	17
Being knowledgeable of the curriculum		
Classroom observations		
Facilitating coaching		
Identifying strengths		
Modeling by curriculum instruction team		
Providing coaching		
Providing constructive criticism		
Theme 3. Teacher needs are met through resources and professional development	18	21
Allowing mistakes		
Being part of collaborative teams		
Building relationships		
Empowering teachers		
Open-door policy		
Partnership for resources		
Professional development		
Supporting teacher voice		
Teachers can request resources		
Theme 4. Challenges include time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports	9	10
COVID-19 is a challenge		
Differentiating supports is a challenge		
Engaging teachers in honest self-reflection can be challenging		

	Number of data excerpts assigned from:	
Theme	Building administrators (*N*=4)	District administrators (*N*=3)
Code grouped to form theme		
Finding time is a challenge		

Evidence of Trustworthiness

A study's trustworthiness is assessed in terms of the four trustworthiness components of including dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Burkholder et al., 2016). Strategies used to strengthen each component of trustworthiness are discussed in the following subsections. These components are referenced as qualitative analogues to the quantitative constructs of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively.

Credibility

According to Burkholder et al. (2016), credibility is the extent to which study findings accurately reflect the reality they are intended to describe. In the current study, strategies to support credibility included peer debriefings, reflexivity, and member checking (Burkholder et al., 2016). Peer debriefing involved engagement with a qualified colleague who was not engaged in the research in ongoing discussions of study progress, data analysis, and tentative findings (Burkholder et al., 2016). The qualified colleague engaged in discussions to create conditions in which I and others could challenge my interpretations of the research process and data at all stages throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The colleague was also required to sign a pledge to confidentiality. Reflexivity obliged me to document my self-reflective statements of

biases in a journal, my role in and responses to the research process, and any adjustments

made to the study based on ongoing analysis (Burkholder et al., 2016). Member

checking, also called respondent validation, involved soliciting feedback about data and

conclusions from the people being studied (Burkholder et al., 2016). Discrepant data

were addressed by discussing them in the Presentation of Findings in relation to the

themes from which they diverged.

Transferability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined transferability as the extent to which qualitative

findings hold true in research contexts other than those from which they were derived.

Transferability was enhanced in the present study through the use of thick description.

Denzin (2001) explained thick description as creating conditions for thick interpretation.

Thick interpretation gives meaning to the descriptions and interpretations when recorded

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using thick descriptions during the analysis process will allow

readers to clearly understand participants' thoughts and feelings of elementary

administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve

students' literacy skills. Throughout the analysis process, transcripts were shared with

participants to clarify findings from the study by using member checks. Member checks

allow the researcher to check in with participants to discuss aspects of the current study

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is akin to reliability in quantitative analysis.

Reliability means that the study findings are replicable in the same research context at a

different time (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity was used to ensure dependability. Therefore, a basic qualitative design using semi-constructed interviews was chosen for the current study using Hallinger et al.'s (1983) instructional leadership model. Each participant was aware that interviews were being audio-recorded using the Zoom platform, which ensured the accuracy of each transcript. Recording and transcribing interviews ensured descriptive validity, which strengthened data accuracy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the influence of researcher bias on the findings is minimized (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity, memo writing, recording of my impressions after each interview, and recognizing and mindfully suspending my own biases were used to ensure confirmability. Direct quotes from the data are provided in this chapter as evidence for all findings so the reader can assess the confirmability of the analysis independently.

Results

This presentation of the study results is organized by research questions. Under the heading for each research question, the results are organized by theme. Table 5 indicates how the themes were used to answer the research questions.

Table 5

Use of Themes to Answer Research Questions

Research question	Theme(s) used to address question
RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?	Theme 1. Expectations are communicated and data is used to assess performance Theme 2. Teachers are supported in the classroom through observations and coaching

	Theme 3. Teacher needs are met through resources and professional development
RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?	Theme 4. Challenges include time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports

RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

Three of the themes identified during data analysis were used to address this question. The themes were: (Theme 1) expectations are communicated, and data are used to assess performance, (Theme 2) teachers are supported in the classroom through observations and coaching, and (Theme 3) teacher needs are met through resources and PD. The themes are discussed in the following subsections.

Theme 1: Expectations are communicated and data is used to assess performance

All seven participants contributed to this theme. The participants indicated that administrators at the district and building level supported teachers by expressing clear expectations regarding instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills. Student achievement data were then evaluated to assess whether expectations were being met and to identify areas for improvement.

The expectations that administrators expressed to teachers were developed to align teaching practices with the curriculum, participants said. DA2 explained that curriculum was translated into standards for literacy instruction that teachers were expected to follow:

When it comes to improving instructional literacy skills, that goes back to you as the leader having a clear understanding of what the strategies are, what's in the curriculum, and holding teachers accountable to unpacking those standards and understanding the language within those standards.

Instructional standards needed to be aligned not only horizontally with the grade-level curriculum, BA3 said, but also vertically, to serve as a link between the curriculum for the grade immediately below and the grade immediately above. BA3 added that teachers were given time to meet in vertical teams in order to, "See what's essential at the grade level before them, what's essential at the grade level after them, so that the curriculum is aligned all the way up."

Expectations were conveyed to teachers through open discussions during meetings, participants said. BA1 reported that meetings were held on a recurring basis: "We meet monthly to discuss expectations, and we need to discuss just the mission, the vision, everything. Because our vision, our mission has an implementation of literacy." DA1 reported that as a district administrator, they also conveyed expectations during open discussions: "I always communicated and will continue to communicate at our open conversation setting what our priorities are. One of them will always be literacy." Other participants agreed with DA1 that literacy was established as a priority when expectations were conveyed to teachers. DA2 said that expectations were conveyed to teachers by, "Setting the vision, making sure that they know that literacy is our top priority because literacy drives everything else."

Data were used to assess how well student achievement matched the expectation that literacy would be prioritized, participants reported. BA1 stated that student achievement data were reviewed by the building's administrative team, in collaboration with teachers: "We review data every Wednesday." BA2 reported a similar practice, stating, "We actually get together in team meetings. We review the data."

Participants stated that student achievement data were reviewed to identify areas for improvement in literacy instruction. BA3 explained that data were used to assess student achievement in relation to curriculum standards in order to adjust instructional practices to address growth areas:

We're constantly looking at student data and providing feedback to the teachers . . . We use the data to see the learning gaps of the children and see where there's holes in their learning. And then we take the standards, the essential standards that they should have learned, grade level to grade level, and adjust their learning so that their learning is continuous.

BA4 reported a practice similar to BA3's, stating that data were used to identify student needs so that instructional strategies could be improved: "The first thing we do is always look at the data, and then once we can identify where the area of concern is, then we can identify the avenue we need to take." DA2 expressed that at the district level, data on student success were used to evaluate the efficacy of instructional practices on a teacher-by-teacher and learner-by-learner basis:

We have to make sure we focus on the learner and say, okay, is the learner

learning? Then we have to pull that data, and that's how we can determine how

effective that teacher was in the delivery of that instruction.

Participants added that for evaluation of student achievement data to translate into

more effective literacy instruction practices, they and their teachers needed to be willing

to accept what the data said, even when it indicated that instruction was not optimally

effective. DA2 described receptivity to the student success data as central to instructional

improvement:

My philosophy, first, is accepting where we are, acknowledging where we are,

and when I say accepting, I don't mean let's accept [substandard outcomes]. I'm

just saying own it. This is our data. We can't run from it, but this is how we can

improve it.

BA4 also expressed the thought that administrators and teachers needed to be

willing to accept data when it indicated a need for improvement: "What we have to do as

the staff is be open enough to look at our student data, be reflective enough to pinpoint

our areas of growth and our areas of strength, and work together to move each other."

In summary, participants stated that standards for instructional practices and

student success were set to align with the curriculum. Expectations were conveyed to

teachers as a mission and vision of prioritizing literacy during meetings and open

conversations. Teams of administrators and teachers evaluated student achievement data

on a regular basis to assess whether literacy instruction was yielding the expected

outcomes in terms of student learning. When the expected outcomes were not achieved,

the data were used to identify areas for improvement. Using the data to identify growth

areas required a willingness to take ownership of any shortcomings it indicated.

Theme 2: Teachers are supported in the classroom through observations and coaching

The participants stated that administrators worked to support teachers in the

classroom. One means of supporting teachers was to observe them delivering literacy

instruction and then provide them with candid feedback about areas where growth was

needed. Administrators also coached teachers by providing them with guidance on how

to improve instructional efficacy and with ongoing feedback regarding whether

expectations were being met.

The participants reported that they conducted classroom observations, which

consisted of watching teachers deliver literacy instruction and then providing feedback.

BA2 stated that support was provided to teachers by,

> Actually, going into the classroom and actually observing, providing feedback for
>
> those teachers, having meetings prior to observations, [to] talk about some of the
>
> things that we've witnessed in the classroom, some of the things that we're
>
> looking for—actually go in there, actually see what's going on.

BA3 reported providing feedback to teachers and then asking two questions of

them to help identify growth areas, by, "Observing their teaching, and then reflecting on

those observations, and saying, okay, this is what I saw. Is this what the intention was?

What could we do differently next time?" DA3 reported conducting classroom

observations of literacy instruction as a district administrator to assess teacher

performance in relation to training: "My role was to make sure all my teachers were

trained in the science of reading, and then go in as an assessor and make sure the strategies they learned in training were being incorporated in the classroom."

Participants noted that to give meaningful feedback to teachers, and to have credibility with teachers, they needed to be knowledgeable of the curriculum. BA4 expressed this view in stating, "[Teachers] have to know that you have a depth of knowledge in the areas of instruction, because if you're a leader and you do not know anything about instruction, teachers are less likely to listen to you." DA2 reported that an administrator's knowledge of the curriculum enabled them not only to identify growth areas, but to provide teachers with specific guidance in how to improve: "In addition to that feedback, you have to be knowledgeable enough to give [teachers] strategies that maybe they didn't think about . . . so they improve."

Participants noted that when they provided feedback to teachers, they identified strengths of the teacher's instructional delivery. DA1 indicated that identification of teachers' strengths was used to reinforce those strengths: "It's very important as a leader that I provide meaningful feedback. So, it's not just that you're doing a great job, but what are you excelling in? What had the most impact, from my perspective, where the students engaged." BA4 also stated that identification of strengths was part of providing feedback to teachers: "I provide feedback to my teachers. In doing that, I ensure that I always find a positive, because there's always a positive."

Constructive criticism was another essential component of feedback to teachers, participants said. BA4 described a multipart process for providing constructive criticism to teachers and then assessing the implementation of that feedback:

I ensure that I give my teachers at least two areas that they can grow in in that particular area. Sometimes, it depends on the teacher. If the teacher needs a lot of support, I meet with them face to face, and we devise a plan on how I'm going to support them. If the teacher does not need as much support, then I give them the feedback and next steps, and I give them a deadline in order to make the changes, and I go back and observe them again and provide feedback.

DA1 reported providing constructive feedback to teachers as a district administrator, saying a practice during school visits was to, "Always provide reflective feedback on what's taking place so that our teachers will readily know if something's not working, if something's out of place, or if something was happening that needed to be addressed."

Providing feedback to teachers often extended to providing coaching by giving detailed feedback and guidance on multiple occasions, participants said. DA3 explained that coaching was an extension of providing feedback that involved guiding the teacher to recognize their own growth areas and identify more effective strategies:

When we did our observations and we gave teacher feedback, it was one of more so of a coach. I take the perspective of my job is to guide a teacher to a conclusion, as opposed to just telling the teacher my opinion. Because sometimes it's easier if a teacher understands or if a teacher sees, or can agree, or recognize that this might be something I need to look at . . . I take a very collaborative approach with my coaching in terms of, hey, let's create this coaching cycle. Let's

create this coaching plan together. And so now I'm only holding you to the standard that you set for yourself.

DA2 described a coaching strategy that involved one-to-one discussions with teachers in which the teacher was prompted to reflect on their practices in relation to evidence-based best practices for literacy instruction: "As far as me coaching [teachers], the biggest thing I've found is those one-on-one conversations and . . . being reflective with them . . . then going back to the basics of the science of reading." BA2 spoke from a building administrator's perspective, stating that coaching involved modeling desired instructional practices for teachers by, "Stepping into the classroom kind of providing a co-teaching."

Participants added that modeling of effective literacy instruction practices was also provided to teachers by the curriculum instruction team. DA1 stated, "Our curriculum instruction team continues to provide ongoing professional learning. They also provide support in the class, modeling in the classrooms, and they do observations." BA2 described coaching from the curriculum instruction team as on-the-job training, calling it, "Real-time PD, by actually having our literacy coaches go into the classroom and actually co-teach and give [teachers] some real-time feedback on what they should be doing."

In summary, participants stated that teachers were supported in the classroom through observations with feedback and through coaching. To provide meaningful feedback to teachers after conducting classroom observations, participants stated that they needed to be knowledgeable of the curriculum. Feedback after classroom

observations consisted of two components. The first component was the identification of strengths, in order to reinforce those strengths. The second component was constructive criticism, involving the identification of growth areas and guidance in how to improve. Participants also provided coaching to teachers by modeling effective literacy instruction practices and by providing guidance to assist teachers in identifying areas for improvement through self-reflection. Modeling and coaching were also provided by the district's curriculum instruction team.

Theme 3: Teacher needs are met through resources and professional development

The participants indicated that teachers were able to request the resources they needed, and that teacher needs were also met through PD to build knowledge and skills. To make teachers comfortable in requesting needed supports, participants used strategies such as building strong relationships with teachers, allowing mistakes, having an open-door policy, empowering teachers, and being part of collaborative teams.

Participants stated that when teachers needed resources to support literacy instruction, they were able to request them. BA1 indicated that providing resources to teachers was an administrative priority: "Our teachers know that anything they ask for, we will fight to get it to them . . . Sometimes we all face the battle of limited resources, but we are willing to do what is necessary." BA4 corroborated BA1's response in stating, "Once [teachers] do reach out for help, then the supports have to be made available to support them in being effective." DA1 indicated that teachers in the district had resources, but that additional resources could be requested as needed to ensure that

growth areas were addressed: "[Teachers] have a lot of resources at hand. In reference to their professional growth plan, they could request additional resources and supports."

Teachers were also supported in literacy instruction through PD, participants said. DA1 stated that PD was provided to address specific growth areas identified during classroom observations, through, "Observing and then providing ongoing professional development, professional learning, that addresses some of the areas that our staff members need to grow in." BA1 stated that PD was being provided to all teachers: "All of our teachers are currently going through training in the science of reading." BA3 stated that PD was offered by the district to teachers who opted to participate: "The district offers training. We've got the RISE [Reading Initiative for Student Excellence] training, we've got SOAR [Select, Organize, Associate, and Regulate] training, we've got Phonics First training."

Given that participants relied to some extent on teachers to report resource and training needs, participants added that they used strategies to make teachers comfortable reporting their needs. One such strategy was creating a school culture where mistakes were allowed, so that teachers would be comfortable asking for help and acknowledging their growth areas. DA2 said of this strategy, "One of the biggest things is to let teachers know that it's okay to say I don't know, or I need help. If we can get past that, then we can go in and provide that support." BA4 said that making teachers comfortable asking for help meant, "Your teachers have to know that you are in this with them, not that you're out to get them." DA3 spoke of this strategy as a means of helping teachers feel safe in acknowledging growth areas:

Teachers naturally become, I'm not going to say defensive, but the guard goes up

whenever there's an observation or whenever they're receiving feedback. And so,

what you first have to do is set a culture in your school where it's okay to make a

mistake. Nobody's perfect. You're not going to have your best day every day.

And so, from my perspective, the culture of your building has to be one where a

teacher feels safe and supported.

Another strategy for helping teachers feel comfortable asking for needed supports

for literacy instruction involved building relationships with them, participants said. BA1

indicated that building relationships enabled teachers to notify an administrator when

they needed help: "I have worked on developing relationships, and so if my teachers need

me, they'll tell me." DA2 described relationship-building as a prerequisite for having

hard conversations about needed growth areas:

When [teachers] know that you're here beside me, you're working with me,

you're a part of the PLC process—those professional learning communities—and

you are providing input, providing support, the resources that I need, you're

providing me that feedback and building that relationship with me . . . you all can

have the conversation [about growth areas].

As DA2's response suggested, another means of helping teachers feel comfortable

requesting needed supports were for administrators to participate with teachers on

collaborative teams, in which data were evaluated and support needs identified. DA2

indicated that being an integral part of collaborative teams was conducive to learning of

teacher support needs:

I do think being an integral part of the collaborative teams when they're

unpacking those [curriculum] standards is really helpful because that way you can

work with [teachers], but you don't necessarily take the lead, because you want to

build the capacity within that team. So just being available, visible, and giving

that feedback, and providing resources and accountability.

A further strategy that participants identified for learning of teacher support needs

was to have an open-door policy, in which they were always available to hear concerns

from teachers. BA3 described this strategy in stating that supporting teachers involved,

Just having an open-door policy, and just letting the teachers know that we're in

this together, that I've walked in their shoes, and providing support when

necessary and modeling when necessary, being a listener, being a reflection

partner, just constantly going through these ups and downs together and making

the teachers aware of that.

BA4 described an open-door policy as a means of building relationships with

teachers: "I think I have an open-door policy, so it's like I have a really good relationship

with all of my teachers." DA2 reported learning of teacher support needs by, "Having

that open-door policy, where [teachers] can come and talk with me, knowing that I will

come into their room and give them authentic feedback, but also that support."

Participants reported that they also learned of teacher support needs by ensuring

teachers' voices were heard. DA1 described supporting teachers' voices as an important

aspect of school culture:

I think the most important thing in reference to culture is having the opportunity in the environment where teachers are able to share their ideas and feel like their voice is being heard . . . They know the needs of our students, and so we need to make sure we take the time to listen to them and then provide the resources and supports that are needed and identified through those conversations . . . The best way is just take time to listen.

In summary, participants stated that resources and PD were provided to teachers both as a standard practice and upon request. To help teachers feel comfortable in identifying their support needs and asking for the help they needed, participants built relationships with teachers and cultivated a school culture in which mistakes were allowed. Participants also said that they used an open-door policy to help teachers feel welcome in coming forward to state their needs, and that they participated in collaborative teams with teachers to monitor instructional resource needs as they were identified. Participants added that they fostered a school culture in which teachers' voices were heard.

RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

One of the themes identified during data analysis was used to address this question. The theme is discussed in the following subsection.

Theme 4: Challenges include time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports

The participants described three challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies. The most frequently cited challenge were constraints on teachers' and administrators' time, which limited the amount of support participants could provide to teachers. Participants also described getting teachers to engage in candid self-reflection as a challenge to providing effective feedback and coaching. The third challenge participants described was differentiating supports based on teacher needs.

Participants stated that finding time to meet teachers' support needs was a challenge both for administrators and for the teachers themselves. BA3 indicated that without adequate time, teachers might not receive sufficient support to implement literacy instruction with fidelity:

I think that time is a really big factor. We're giving a lot of work to teachers and not a lot of time to really implement, and implement with fidelity. And I think that we can't just say, here's their curriculum, here's what you're going to teach. We have to make sure that they understand and that we're giving teachers the why behind what it is that we're asking them to do, so that the impact is there.

DA3 added of challenges to supporting teachers, "I think time is a great barrier," explaining, "It's time for two different reasons. It's time throughout the school day to get with your teachers and work with them. But there's also time in the school day for teachers to take those literacy practices and use them."

Engaging teachers in honest self-reflection was also a significant challenge to supporting literacy instruction, participants said. DA1 described the most difficult

challenge as, "Getting our teachers to be honest on where they need to grow. I think our teachers are so apprehensive of sharing that because they think they're going to be evaluated or judged based on them being honest." DA2 expressed a similar perception to DA1's in stating, "For me, the challenge piece of it is getting teachers to be honest about where they are in their learning process." BA4 described the capacity for honest self-reflection as exceptional: "In order for a teacher to be able to say that they don't know how to do something, or to reach out, that takes a level of reflection that not everyone has. And so, it's a very special teacher."

Participants noted that supports needed to be differentiated according to individual teachers' specific needs and that doing so was a challenge. DA1 described this challenge in saying, "All of our teachers have different needs as we move forward, so making sure we actually address those needs in that particular classroom, that particular school, and not do a one-size-fits-all across the school system." DA2 corroborated DA1's perception in stating, "The biggest challenge is that a lot of times, the way districts and schools are set up, they try and do professional development that's one-size-fits-all, and . . . it's not productive, because every teacher is at a different state of learning."

In summary, participants described three significant challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies. The first challenge consisted of the time constraints that limited the amount of support administrators could provide and the amount of instructional time teachers could devote to applying the feedback and guidance they received. The second challenge was getting teachers to engage in honest self-reflection. Teachers were often afraid that if they admitted their growth areas, they

would be evaluated negatively, and their reluctance to acknowledge areas in which they needed to improve was a barrier to supporting them with feedback and coaching, participants said. Lastly, participants described differentiating supports to meet the needs of individual teachers as a challenge.

Summary

Two research questions were used to guide this study. The first research question (RQ1) was: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? Three of the themes identified during data analysis were used to address this question. RQ1 Theme 1 was: expectations are communicated, and data is used to assess performance. Participants stated that standards for instructional practices and student success were set to align with the curriculum. Expectations were conveyed to teachers as a mission and vision of prioritizing literacy during meetings and open conversations. Teams of administrators and teachers evaluated student achievement data on a regular basis to assess whether literacy instruction was yielding the expected outcomes in terms of student learning. When the expected outcomes were not achieved, the data were used to identify areas for improvement. Using the data to identify growth areas required a willingness to take ownership of any shortcomings it indicated.

RQ1 Theme 2 was: teachers are supported in the classroom through observations and coaching. Participants stated that teachers were supported in the classroom through observations with feedback and through coaching. To provide meaningful feedback to teachers after conducting classroom observations, participants stated that they needed to

be knowledgeable of the curriculum. Feedback after classroom observations consisted of two components. The first component was the identification of strengths, to reinforce those strengths. The second component was constructive criticism, involving the identification of growth areas and guidance in how to improve. Participants also provided coaching to teachers by modeling effective literacy instruction practices and by providing guidance to assist teachers in identifying areas for improvement through self-reflection. Modeling and coaching were also provided by the district's curriculum instruction team.

RQ1 Theme 3 was: teacher needs are met through resources and PD. Participants stated that resources and PD were provided to teachers both as a standard practice and upon request. To help teachers feel comfortable in identifying their support needs and asking for the help they needed, participants built relationships with teachers and cultivated a school culture in which mistakes were allowed. Participants also said that they used an open-door policy to help teachers feel welcome in coming forward to state their needs, and that they participated in collaborative teams with teachers to monitor instructional resource needs as they were identified. Participants added that they fostered a school culture in which teachers' voices were heard.

RQ2 was: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies? The themes used to address this question were: challenges include time constraints, lack of teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports. Participants described three significant challenges to supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies. The first challenge consisted of the time constraints that limited the amount of support

administrators could provide and the amount of instructional time teachers could devote

to applying the feedback and guidance they received. The second challenge was getting

teachers to engage in honest self-reflection. Teachers were often afraid that if they

admitted their growth areas, they would be evaluated negatively, and their reluctance to

acknowledge areas in which they needed to improve was a barrier to supporting them

with feedback and coaching, participants said. Lastly, participants described

differentiating supports to meet the needs of individual teachers as a challenge. Chapter 5

includes discussion, interpretation, recommendations, and implications based on these

findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The acquisition of literacy skills during the early elementary years is central to the academic success of students (Roessingh & Bence, 2019; Vernon-Fergans et al., 2018); however, there continues to be a gap in understanding leadership behaviors and practices for ongoing efforts to improve students' literacy outcomes (Kiral, 2020). Teachers may experience challenges in implementing optimal language and literacy instruction unless there are adequate administrative structures in place (Spear-Swerling, 2019). Such is the case at a south-central state elementary campus, where the students' low state assessment scores led to the state's warning of a district takeover. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. In this study, I explored how administrators perceive the processes, practices, and procedures that are needed to support teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills and how administrators perceive the challenges associated with providing the necessary support due to low reading scores. The following research questions were formulated to guide the research.

RQ1:   How do elementary administrators describe the practices, processes, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

RQ2:   What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

Through a content analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews with seven school administrators, I found three major themes associated with the administrators' perceptions of the practices, processes, and procedures that are used to improve the instruction of teachers. Firstly, I found that administrators at the district and building level supported teachers through a clear alignment of expectations regarding the instructional strategies that are necessary to improve the literacy skills of their students. The performances of the teachers and their ability to meet expectations are then assessed through the students' achievement data. Secondly, I found that administrators supported teachers at the classroom level by observing them as they deliver literacy instruction and providing subsequent feedback and coaching to ensure that expectations are met. Finally, I found that administrators provide support by being open to teachers' requests for resources and opportunities for PD. Administrators apply strategies such as creating positive relationships and empowering teachers to ensure that teachers have the resources that they need.

There was only one major theme associated with the administrators' perceptions of the challenges to supporting the teachers' implementation of their literacy instructional strategies. I found that there were three main challenges that were frequently cited by the participants: time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports. Time constraints can be a challenge for both the administrators and the teachers, and without adequate time, teachers may be unable to receive sufficient support to meet expectations. The self-reflection of teachers also posed a challenge for administrators as teachers need to be honest about their own shortcomings and areas for improvement for

them to be able to receive the necessary support. Finally, the participants emphasized the need for differentiated supports, which can cater to the specific needs of teachers who have varying PD and performance needs.

Interpretation of the Findings

Administrators in this study reported that they understand the importance of setting and communicating goals. Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) model of instructional leadership includes framing and communicating school goals as a core function of instructional leadership. This relates to the first major theme of the study, which is the importance of goal communication and subsequent assessment. Defining school goals has two functions: constructing the school goal and spreading it (Hassan et al., 2019). It is important to define the goals of the educational institution and to organize the instructional program around those goals to improve the teaching and learning processes within schools (Hassan et al., 2019). The administrators in this study reported that they relay clear expectations regarding instructional strategies to improve the literacy skills of students to teachers through recurring meetings and encourage open discussion. The participants express a clear understanding of their responsibility to ensure that the designed curriculum is properly translated into standards for literacy instruction that their faculty must follow. By developing a common language regarding the expectations surrounding the curriculum and the pedagogical strategies needed to meet those expectations, educators are more likely to improve overall performance.

Curriculum and instruction coordination is another important part of instructional leadership. It is crucial for school leaders to adequately manage the curriculum and

teaching practices of faculty because it is the core function of a school (Hassan et al., 2019). The participants emphasized the importance of aligning the curriculum not only horizontally or at the grade level, but also vertically or across grade levels, to ensure that expectations for each grade level are aligned with those for the grade immediately below and the grade immediately above. In addition, the administrators also placed importance on literacy as a top priority when relaying expectations to teachers. If students are unable to master foundational literacy and numeracy skills, but the curriculum continues to proceed as usual, students will be unable to adequately engage in advanced topics in later years (Belafi et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2019).

Curriculum alignment can affect student outcomes; therefore, there must be coherence between all components of the educational system, particularly between learning objectives, assessment, and teaching (Johnson et al., 2020). Therefore, aside from communicating goals and coordinating curriculum and instruction strategies, it is important for administrators to develop a systematic process for performance assessment and evaluation. The primary focus of the instructional leadership model in the educational setting is to enhance classroom teaching, which is expected subsequently improve student learning (Gawlik, 2018; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). There continues to be a literacy achievement and learning gap within the schools of all the participants in this study. Participants stated that student achievement data were reviewed on a regular basis to assess the literacy instruction of teachers and to identify areas for improvement. Part of the comprehensive supervision practices of school leaders is the data-driven assessment and monitoring of the instruction program (Plaatjies, 2019). However, according to the

participants, for this practice of data-driven growth to yield positive results, teachers must show a willingness to accept the data, even if they reflect substandard or nonoptimal results. This consistent focus on finding ways to improve is related to the second major theme from the analysis: Teachers can be supported by observing their performance and giving them constructive feedback and coaching.

The participants stated that they can support teachers in the classroom observing teachers as they deliver literacy instruction and providing the necessary feedback to improve their pedagogy. Providing helpful feedback is an important aspect of school leadership in general (Fuller et al., 2018). The classroom remains to be a black box until leaders make frequent visits to observe the daily pedagogical process that occur in them (Plaatijes, 2019). The school administrators also stated that for their performance feedback to have credibility from the perspective of the faculty, school administrators must also possess great knowledge in the areas of literacy instruction. This is aligned with the findings of Plaatijes (2019) that if school leaders are to fulfil their roles as instructional leaders in literacy instruction, they must have a strong knowledge basis of the reading and writing features outlined in the curriculum. By having a good understanding of the content of the literacy curriculum, school leaders can be more effective literacy leaders who can identify the strengths and weaknesses of literacy instruction. Providing feedback to teachers can also extend to the provision of coaching, which involves guiding the teacher as they identify more effective strategies for instruction. Beyond the classroom, school administrators may also encourage the continuous learning and PD of the faculty staff.

Teachers' needs to build their knowledge and skills can be met by providing them opportunities for PD. PD is essential to meeting the goals of any educational institution, and effective school leaders can build teachers' instructional leadership capacity through PD (Thessin, 2019). Perhaps due to teachers' PD already being long established as a crucial factor to school success, the participants' responses focused more on making opportunities accessible to teachers. All participants stated that it is important to make teachers feel that they can request the resources they need to enable their professional growth. Because some participants rely on their faculty staff to report their own resource and training needs, it is important for them to foster positive and comfortable relationships and a supportive school culture. Karacabey (2019) similarly emphasized the role of school leaders in ensuring the participation of teachers in PD programs. School administrators are ultimately responsible for helping teachers in their career progression and engaging them in various programs with the goal of improving the school performance.

It is important to build positive and supportive relationships to encourage the PD of teachers. The participants placed a great emphasis on the importance of developing positive work cultures within the schools. According to the participants, teachers must feel that they are allowed to show their weaknesses and make mistakes in the school environment for them to properly recognize any areas of improvement and openly receive the needed support. The participants also shared some approaches to empower teachers, including involving them in collaborative teams as they unpack the curriculum, ensuring that their voices are heard, and maintaining a comfortable and open channel of

communication. This is aligned with Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) model, which places importance on the use of frequent communication to build positive working relationships among staff and teachers, which can further lead to positive conflict management, decision-making, and other group processes. The importance of positive relationships was also highlighted by Anderson and Wallin (2018), who stated that interpersonal capabilities can help coaches encourage and inspire teachers towards improvement and leading them to positive change in an assertive, organized, and positive way.

These various processes, practices, and procedures associated with supporting teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies come with challenges, including time constraints, teacher self-reflection, and differentiating teacher supports. Time constraints were found to be one of the most frequently cited challenges experienced by school administrators. Participants stated that finding adequate time to meet the support needs of teachers posed a challenge to both sides, which could lead to teachers not receiving the support that they need. Time can indeed be a scarce resource for school administrators as they assume many different functions in the school setting, including supervising instruction, attending trainings and seminars, and dealing with planned and unplanned administrative duties (Lincuna & Caingcoy, 2020). Participants also cited the possibility of giving teachers too much work, thus leaving them with inadequate time to implement expected strategies with fidelity. Teachers are expected to provide literacy instruction as well as manage the different needs of students in the classroom setting; moreover, teachers must deal with the time-consuming and tedious

preparation needed for classroom teaching, which add difficulty to applying theory to practice (Kamal et al., 2019).

It is also important to overcome the challenge of dishonest self-reflection to ensure performance improvements. Participants found that some teachers can be apprehensive about directly acknowledging their own areas of improvement, which may be due to a fear of being evaluated negatively. Therefore, it is crucial for administrators to encourage them to be honest regarding the areas in which they need to grow and their current stage in the learning process. This is aligned with the findings of Mukhtar et al. (2018) in the context of preservice teachers that self-reflection is an important part of improving teachers' skills. It is through self-reflection that teachers can constantly examine their lesson plans and themselves for areas of improvement. Without honest self-reflection, it will be difficult for teachers to grow into more capable instructors (Mukhtar et al., 2018).

Finally, teachers must be given differentiated support for the individual needs because teachers' needs can vary greatly from person to person. The administrators specifically emphasized the lack of specialized opportunities for PD. This is aligned with Stewart et al.'s (2021) findings that differentiated support is necessary to address different needs. They stated that new teachers are more likely to require induction and mentoring; however, only 31 states in the United States require programs to ensure that new teachers are adequately introduced into the job and only 22 states explicitly encourage reduced teaching loads for new teachers. The need to recognize the necessary

support for each individual teacher can pose significant additional challenges to school administrators.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are limited to the perceptions of the participating school administrators. This study also did not include middle or high school administrators, as the topic is focused on the elementary context. The sample was chosen purposively based on their current position, years of experience, and leadership levels with the goal of gaining rich information about the topic of interest. The sample size that was chosen for this study was relatively small, comprising three DAs and four BAs. The school administrators recruited for this study were bounded within the south-central school district selected as the geographic setting of this study. Moreover, this study does not include other populations, such as special education or gifted education. Due to these factors, the study's results cannot be generalized to populations that vary greatly from the sample used in this study. Moreover, the goal of this study is to describe the perceptions of the participants and not to produce theories.

The interviews conducted with the participants were focused on their perceptions of the practices, processes, procedures, and challenges associated with providing support to teachers as they implement literacy instruction strategies. This study does not focus on the impact of those literacy instruction strategies on actual student performance of the overall performance of the school. The credibility of the information was maintained by ensuring that the results of the analysis are based on the honest and accurate responses of the participants. However, the fact that the data analyzed were collected solely from the

perspective of school administrators limits the power of analysis and evaluation of the topic of interest, and further studies may be conducted to include the perspectives of other groups of stakeholders including teachers, students, and parents, among others.

Recommendations

Additional research should be conducted on not only how school administrators perceive the processes, practices, procedures, and challenges associated with providing support for teachers as they implement literacy instruction strategies but also how teachers respond to the different forms of support that are provided to them. Although this study gives insight into school administrators' perceptions of the standard practices and the challenges associated with the topic of interest, there are currently no systematic methods available to measure the efficacy of their literacy leadership, particularly from the perspective of teachers. It is not enough to identify the perceived challenges associated with support provision, it is important to identify the potential solutions, not just from the perspective of the school administrators but also from the perspective of the teachers who will be receiving their support.

As instructional leadership and literacy leadership are broad and extensive areas of research by themselves, further studies focused on the views of other stakeholders, such as teachers, administrative staff, or students may provide more valuable data on the topic of interest. This study can also be extended by using a larger sample size that can provide a more holistic idea of the different processes associated with literacy instruction and support provision. Having a larger group of interviewees may also improve the generalizability of the results. Moreover, further studies can be conducted among

different educational settings, including middle or high school contexts, or among special education and gifted education school administrators.

Implications

This study explored the perceptions of school administrators of the practices, procedures, processes, and challenges associated with supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in a south-central state school district. The findings of this study can help inform the development of school-level or district-level policies and standards regarding support provisions for teachers as they implement literacy instruction strategies. Findings show that there are different practices, procedures, and processes through which school administrators can provide support to teachers, such as classroom-level observation, coaching, and providing accessible opportunities for PD. These findings can be used as basis for improving the existing practices of school administrators in providing the necessary support for literacy instruction through improved awareness and reflection. By providing a description of the school administrators' perceptions regarding the necessary steps and procedures to adequately assist teachers, this study can yield positive social implications to the instructional literacy leadership of school administrators, including vertical curriculum alignment, regular student data assessment, data-driven instructional improvements, and nurturing positive professional relationships. These practices may allow them to positively influence the performance of teachers both inside and outside the classroom.

With literacy playing an important role in today's classrooms, school districts are expected to ensure students' literacy. Further studies are needed to understand how

instructional literacy leadership is being exercised in schools and what challenges are present as literacy leadership initiatives are enacted (Plaatjies, 2019). This study has positive practical implications by providing a better understanding of the current practices, procedures, and process that are currently being used by school administrators in the context of a south-central school district as well as the existing challenges that limit the success of such strategies. The results can be used by scholars to facilitate the evaluation and improvement of current standards and practices regarding providing literacy instruction support from curriculum induction to the provision of PD opportunities, which may lead to the improved literacy of students.

Conclusion

Literacy is critical to student success (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018). However, students at a Title 1 school district in a south-central state in the United States scored significantly low in state assessment results, which led to the state's warning of a district takeover. School administrators play an essential role in teaching and learning, and the administrative quality can influence the overall performance of schools (Roberts et al., 2018). The purpose of this study is to explore elementary administrators' perceptions of supporting teachers' instructional strategies to improve students' literacy skills in the focused school district. The respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding the practices, processes, and procedures related to the provision of support for teachers as they implement literacy instruction in the classroom. They were also asked about the challenges associated with providing such support to teachers.

Through a content analysis of the collected data, I found that participants understood the importance of goal setting and the proper communication of expectations. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of developing and communicating school goals and expectations in successful instructional school leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Hassan et al., 2019). Administrators also highlighted the importance of curriculum coordination and alignment, both horizontally and vertically to ensure proper student progression. Prior studies echo the importance of literacy and curriculum alignment in ensuring student success (Belafi et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2020). To ensure that goals are being met, administrators use student data to assess teachers' performance and areas for growth, which is part of the comprehensive supervision practices of school leaders (Plaatjies, 2019). However, this process necessitates teachers' openness to what the data indicates regarding their performance.

The results showed that administrators often provide literacy instruction support to teachers through classroom observation and coaching. However, it is important for administrators to have great knowledge in various aspects of literacy instruction for their feedback to be credible from the perspective of the teachers. While providing feedback is an essential part of school leadership (Fuller et al., 2018), school leaders must have a strong understanding of literacy instruction to be able to provide accurate feedback and for them to be able to properly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the literacy instruction their staff (Plaatijes, 2019). Results also showed that administrators provide support to teachers by ensuring that they have the resources that they need, including opportunities for PD. School leaders are expected to ensure that teachers engage in PD

opportunities that are suitable for them because they have the responsibility of guiding teachers toward their pedagogical success, which ultimately influences school success (Karacabey, 2019).

Results showed that these practices, processes, and procedures come with different challenges, including time constraints, difficulties with the quality of teachers' self-reflection, and the necessity of differentiated teacher support. Administrators often have difficulty handling different planned and unplanned responsibilities (Lincuna & Caingcoy, 2020), and teachers can have difficulty with time-consuming workloads (Kamal et al., 2019). The time constraints that result from these may, in turn, limit the success of applying literacy instruction theories into practice. Another challenge that emerged from the data collected was the lack of honest self-reflection among teachers. Self-reflection allows teachers to examine their own areas of improvement, and without proper self-reflection, pedagogical growth will be difficult (Mukhtar et al., 2018). Finally, differentiated support is important because teachers have different needs based on the different stages of their career (Stewart et al., 2021).

This study provided a description of administrators' perceptions of literacy instruction support for teachers. However, there continues to be a need for further studies exploring different perspectives in the educational setting regarding instructional leadership in literacy. This study is limited by factors that commonly limit qualitative studies. The nature of the study opens it to potential biases that may limit the internal validity and transferability of the study; however, this study provides insight and

recommendations on how further studies can be conducted to extend current

understanding of leadership and support in the context of literacy instruction.

References

Abdullah, A., Ali, A., Mydin, A., & Amin, N. (2019). Exploring the capacity of middle managers as instructional leadership to lead transformations of teaching and learning in Malaysian high-performing schools. *International Journal Academic Research Business and Social Sciences, 9*(3), 1132-1142. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i3/5773

Adhabi, E., & Anozie, C. (2017). Literature review for the type of interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education, 9*(3), 86-97. https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v9i3.11483

Agasisti, T., Bowers, A. J., & Soncin, M. (2019). School principals' leadership types and student achievement in the Italian context: Empirical results from a three-step latent class analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 47*(6), 860-886. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218768577

Akar, H., & Ustuner, M. (2019). The relationships between perceptions of teachers' transformational leadership, organizational justice, organizational support and quality of work life. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science, 5*(1), 309-322. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1198103.pdf

Alam, A., & Ahmad, M. (2017). The impact of instructional leadership, professional communities, and extra responsibilities for teachers on student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(3), 383-395. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-09-2015-0126

Aldhaheri, A. (2017). Cultural intelligence and leadership style in the education sector. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(6), 718-735. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-05-2016-0093

Alenzuela, R., Groen, C., Kamilova, Y., Terzi, P., & Zvonareva, D. (2017). Building a culture of integrity through library initiatives, academic collaboration, and administrative support. *Academic Integrity and University Governance* (pp. 51-61). KAZGUU University. http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/2380

American College Testing, INC. (2019). *ACT Aspire: Interpret Score. Reports and Test Data.*: ACT, Inc. Retrieved July 19, 2019, from https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/state-and-district-solutions/arkansas/aspire.html#interpretation

Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 74*(8), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.5688/aj7408141

Anderson, M. (2017). Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. *International Social Science Review, 93*(1), 1-13. http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol93/iss1/4

Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using Zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596

Arokiasamy, A. (2017). Moderating influence of school culture on the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational health of secondary

school teachers in Malaysia. *Economics, Management and Sustainability, 2*(1),
19-35. https://doi.org/10.14254/jems.2017.2-1.2

Asif, M. (2020). Strategic leadership and ambidextrous learning: Exploring the role of
dynamic capabilities and intellectual capital. *International Journal of Quality &
Service Sciences, 12*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-03-2019-0034

Avolio, B., & Bass, B. (2004). Multifactor leadership questionnaire. *Mindgarden*.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1602_2

Babchuk, W. (2017). Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation (Fourth
edition.). *Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.*
https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713616671930

Barzillai, M., & Thomson, J. (2018). Children learning to read in a digital world. *First
Monday, 23*(10), 1. https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v23i10.9437

Bearman, M. (2019). Eliciting rich data: A practical approach to writing semi-structured
interview schedules. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-
disciplinary Journal, 20*(3), 1-11.
https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.002757698372666

Belafi, C., Hwa, Y-Y., & Kaffenberger, M. (2020). Building on solid foundations:
prioritising universal, early, conceptual and procedural mastery of foundational
skills. *RISE Insight Series, 2020/021*. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-
RI_2020/021

Bennis, W. (2001). The contrarian's guide to leadership. Jossey-Bass.
https://doi.org/10.1108/lodj.2002.23.5.293.2

Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the Terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x033008003

Boyce, J., & Bowers, A. J. (2018). Toward an evolving conceptualization of instructional leadership as leadership for learning. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(2), 1. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-06-2016-0064

Bressman, S., Winter, J., & Efron, S. (2018). Next generation mentoring: Supporting teachers beyond induction. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 73, 162–170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.04.003

Brevik, L. (2019). Explicit reading strategy instruction or daily use of strategies? Studying the teaching of reading comprehension through naturalistic classroom observation in English L2. *Reading and writing*, *32*(9), 2281-2310. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-019-09951-w

Burkholder, G., Cox, K., & Crawford, L. (2016). The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957770.n7

Byrnes, J. P. (2020). The potential utility of an opportunity-propensity framework for understanding individual and group differences in developmental outcomes: A retrospective progress report. *Developmental Review*, *56*, N.PAG. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2020.100911

Capin, P., & Vaughn, S. (2017). Improving reading and social studies learning for secondary students with reading disabilities. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, *49*(4), 249-261. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917691043

Castillo, F., & Hallinger, P. (2018). Systematic review of research on educational

  leadership and management in Latin America, 1991–2017. *Educational

  Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(2), 207–225.

  https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217745882

Cavanna, J., Molloy Elreda, L., Youngs, P., & Pippin, J. (2021). How methods instructors

  and program administrators promote teacher education program coherence.

  Journal of Teacher Education, *72*(1), 27–41. https://doi-

  org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0022487119897005

Coch, D. (2016). LEARNING TO READ. *From the Laboratory to the Classroom:

  Translating Science of Learning for Teachers*, 191.

Cohen, G. (2011). Social Psychology and Social Change. *Science*, 334(6053), 178-179.

  https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1212887

Cohen, R., Mather, N., Schneider, D., & White, J. (2017). A comparison of schools:

  teacher knowledge of explicit code-based reading instruction. *Reading & Writing*,

  30(4), 653–690. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-016-9694-0

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among

  five approaches. Sage publications.

Dahlin, M., & Cronin, J. (2010). Achievement gaps and the proficiency trap. *Northwest

  Evaluation Association*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521963

Daniels, N., Gillen, P., Casson, K., & Wilson, I. (2019). STEER: Factors to consider

  when designing online focus groups using audiovisual technology in health

  research. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1609406919885786

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher
    professional development. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Denzin, N. (2001). Interpretive interactionism (2nd ed.) Sage.

Diamond, J., & Spillane, J. (2016). School leadership and management from a distributed
    perspective: A 2016 retrospective and prospective. *Management in Education, 30,*
    147-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020616665938

Dickinson, D., Nesbitt, K., Collins, M., Hadley, E., Newman, K., Rivera, B., IIgez, H.,
    Nicolopoulou, A., Golinkoff, R., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2019). Teaching for breadth
    and vocabulary knowledge: Learning from explicit and implicit instruction and
    the storybook texts. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 47,* 341-356.
    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.07.012

Dietz, J., & Mulder, H. (2020). Enterprise Ontology: A human-centric approach to
    understanding the essence of organisation. *Germany: Springer International
    Publishing.* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38854-6

Dyson, A. (2020). This isn't my real writing: The fate of children's agency in too-tight
    curricula. *Theory Into Practice, 59*(2), 119–127.
    https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1702390

Elleman, A., Steacy, L., Olinghouse, N., & Compton, D. (2017). Examining child and
    word characteristics in vocabulary learning of struggling readers. *Scientific
    Studies of Reading, 21*(2), 133–145.
    https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2016.1265970

Frankel, K. (2016). The intersection of reading and identity in high school literacy

    intervention classes. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *51*(1), 37–59.

    https://www.jstor.org/stable/24889933

Fuller, E. J., Pendola, A., Young, M. D., & University Council for Educational

    Administration. (2018). The role of principals in reducing teacher turnover and

    the shortage of teachers. Policy Brief 2018-2. *In Online Submission*. Online

    Submission. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED580347

Gaitas, S., & Alves-Martins, M. (2017). Teacher perceived difficulty in implementing

    differentiated instructional strategies in primary school. *International Journal of*

    Inclusive Education, *21*(5), 544–556.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1223180

Gallagher, M., & Chingos, M. (2017). Strategies for supporting early reading proficiency

    to close achievement gaps. *Building Ladders of Opportunity for Young People in*

    the Great Lakes States, brief, 2.

    https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/94726/building-ladders-of-

    opportunity-for-young-people-in-the-great-lakes-states_2.pdf

Garwood, J., Varghese, C., & Vernon-Feagans, L. (2017). Internalizing behaviors and

    hyperactivity/inattention: Consequences for young struggling readers, and

    especially boys. *Journal of Early Intervention*, *39*(3), 218-235.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815117706524

Gawlik, M. (2018). Leadership knowledge and practices in the context of charter schools. *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 17*(4), 422–453. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2017.1326145

Givi, B., Schiff, B., Chinn, S., Clayburgh, D., Iyer, N., Jalisi, S., Moore, M., Nathan, C., Orloff, L., O'Neill, J., & Parker, N. (2020). Safety recommendations for evaluation and surgery of the head and neck during the COVID-19 pandemic. *JAMA otolaryngology–head & neck surgery, 146*(6), 579-584. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoto.2020.0780

Glanz, J., Shaked, H., Rabinowitz, C., Shenhav, S., & Zaretsky, R. (2017). Instructional leadership practices among principals in Israeli and U.S. Jewish schools. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 26*(2), 132. https://doi.org/10.1177/105678791702600203

Goddard, R., Skrla, L., & Salloum, S. (2017). The role of collective efficacy in closing student achievement gaps: A mixed methods study of school leadership for excellence and equity. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 22*(4), 220–236. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2017.1348900

Gordon, R. Marston, L., Rose, P., & Zubairi, A. (2019). 12 years of quality education for all girls: A commonwealth perspective. REAL Centre. University of Cambridge. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2542579

Graduate Programs Staff. (2019). Top 5 leadership skills for the workplace of tomorrow. *Northeastern University Graduate Program.*

https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/essential-leadership-skills-for-tomorrow/

Haiyan, Q., & Allan, W. (2021). Creating conditions for professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools in China: The role of school principals. *Professional development in education*, *47*(4), 586-598. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1770839

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *9*(2), 157-191. https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345980090203

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986). Instructional leadership in effective schools, 14, 137-149. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED309535.pdf

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J., Weil, M., & Mitman, A. (1983). Instructional leadership: A conceptual framework. *Planning & Changing*, *14*, 137-149. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joseph-Murphy/publication/234676251_Instructional_Leadership_A_Conceptual_Framework/links/579a520b08ae425e49183b5a/Instructional-Leadership-A-Conceptual-Framework.pdf

Harmon, J., Antuna, M., Juarez, L., Wood, K., & Vintinner, J. (2018). An investigation of high school social studies teachers' understandings of vocabulary teaching and learning, *Reading Psychology, 39*(3), 271-302. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2018.1430633

Harris, A. (2014). Distributed leadership matters: Perspectives, practices, and potentials. Corwin: Sage Publication. *Reading Psychology*, *39*(3), 271-302. https://doi.org/10.447/ijelm.2014.18

Harris, A., Jones, M., Cheah, K., Devadason, E., & Adams, D. (2017). Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in Malaysia: Insights and implications. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *55*(2), 207–221. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-05-2016-0051

Hassan, R. B., Ahmad, J., & Boon, Y. (2019). Instructional leadership in Malaysia. *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology, 8*(6S3), 537-547. https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.F1096.0986S319

Hitt, D., & Tucker, P. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*, 531-569. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315614911

Hughes, C. (2011). Effective design and delivery of task-specific learning strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, *44*(2), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v44i2.6689

Hui, L., & Singh, G. (2020). The Influence of Instructional Leadership on Learning Organisation at High Performing Primary Schools in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of University Education*, *16*(2), 69–76. https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v16i2.10298

Hung, M., Smith, W. A., Voss, M. W., Franklin, J. D., Gu, Y., & Bounsanga, J. (2020). Exploring student achievement gaps in school districts across the United States.

Education and Urban Society, *52*(2), 175–193.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124519833442

Ifediorah, N., & Okaforcha, C. (2019). Extent of principals' support services for teachers'

job commitment in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Online Submission, *13*(2), 156–168. https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v13i2.14

Ingersoll, R., Sirinides, P., & Dougherty, P. (2018). Leadership matters: Teachers' roles

in school decision making and school performance. *American Educator*, *1*, 13.

https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1173452

Jambo, D., & Hongde, L. (2020). The effect of principal's distributed leadership practice

on students' academic achievement: A systematic review of the literature.

International Journal of Higher Education, *9*(1), 189–198.

https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p189

Johnson, C. E., Boon, H. J., & Dinan Thompson, M. (2020). Curriculum alignment after

reforms: a systematic review with considerations for Queensland pre- and in-

service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 45*(11). Retrieved

from https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol45/iss11/3

Johnson, J. (2020). Middle and high school administrators' perceptions of classroom-

management support for novice teachers (Doctoral dissertation, Walden

University). https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/9961

Johnson, W., Johnson, A., & Johnson, J. (2018). The three generations of effective

schools research. In Online Submission. *Online Submission*.

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598314.pdf

Joseph, L., Alber-Morgan, S., & Neef, N. (2016). Applying behavior analytic procedures to effectively teach literacy skills in the classroom. *Psychology in the Schools*, *53*(1), 73–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21883

Joshi, R., Binks, E., Hougen, M., Dahlgren, M., Ocker-Dean, E., & Smith, D. (2009). Why elementary teachers might be inadequately prepared to teach reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42, 392–402. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219409338736

Kaefer, T. (2020). When did you learn it? How background knowledge impacts attention and comprehension in read☐aloud activities. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*(S1). https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.344

Kamal, N. S. B. S., Zuraidah, A., Ghani, M. F. B. A. (2019). The challenges of school administrators in teaching and learning process for Malay literacy subject in primary school. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Research of Educational Administration and Management*. Retrieved from https://download.atlantis-press.com/article/125933773.pdf

Karacabey, M. F. (2020). Perceptions of school administrators on their contributions to teacher professional development. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science, 13*(1), 78-90. https://doi.org/10.30831/akukeg.541053

Kennedy, M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 945-980. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626800

Khumalo, S. (2019). The role of transformational school leadership in promoting teacher

    commitment: An antecedent for sustainable development in South Africa.

    Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education, *10*(2), 22–32.

    https://doi.org/10.2478/dcse-2019-0015

Kiral, E. (2020). Excellent leadership theory in education. *Journal of Educational*

    Leadership and Policy Studies, *4*(1).

    https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1282716.pdf

Kirby, J. R., & Bowers, P. N. (2017). Morphological instruction and literacy. *Theories of*

    reading development, *15*, 437.

Kirchner, E., & Mostert, M. (2017). Aspects of the reading motivation and reading

    activity of Namibian primary school readers. *Cogent Education*, *4*(1), 1411036.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1411036

Kite, J., & Phongsavan, P. (2017). Insights for conducting real-time focus groups online

    using a web conferencing service. *F1000Research*, 6, 122.

    https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.10427.2

Knight, J. (2011). What good coaches do. *Educational Leadership*, *69*(2), 18-22.

    https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/what-good-coaches-do

Konza, D. (2017). The literacy practices guide: A "smart tool" for principals.

    International Journal of Educational Organization & Leadership, *24*(1), 1–16.

    https://doi.org/10.18848/2329-1656/cgp/v24i01/1-16

Lawson, J., & Knollman, G. (2017). Evaluating special education teachers: School

administrators' perceptions of the process. *Journal of Special Education

Leadership*, *30*(1), 6–18. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1275730

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful

school leadership revisited. *School leadership & management*, *40*(1), 5-22.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

Lincuna, M. L. B, & Caingcoy, M. E. (2020). Instructional leadership practices of school

administrators: the case of El Salvador city division, Philippines. *Commonwealth

Journal of Academic Research, 1*(2), 12-32.

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3876710

Liu, S., & Hallinger, P. (2018). Principal instructional leadership, teacher efficacy, and

teacher professional learning in China: Testing a mediated-effects model.

Educational Administration Quarterly, *54*(4),1-28.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18769048

Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M., & Gümüş, S. (2020). The effect of instructional leadership and

distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Mediating

roles of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. *Educational

Management Administration & Leadership,* 1.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220910438

Lobe, B. (2017). Best practices for synchronous online focus groups. In Barbour, R. S.,

Morgan, D. L. (Eds.), A new era in focus group research: Challenges, innovation,

and practice (pp. 227–250). *Palgrave Macmillan*. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58614-8_11

Lobe, B., Morgan, D., & Hoffman, K. (2020). Qualitative data collection in an era of social distancing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920937875

Lonigan, C., & Shanahan, T. (2009). Developing early literacy: Report of the national early literacy panel. executive summary. A scientific synthesis of early literacy development and implications for intervention. *National Institute for Literacy*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508381.pdf

Mahaffey, A., Wolfe, Z., & Ciampa, K. (2020). Elementary principals' knowledge of and expectations for specialized literacy professionals. *Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership*, *5*(2). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1261310.pdf

MAP Growth. (2019). STUDENTS' 2019 MAP GROWTH SCORES: MATH AND READING.

MAP Growth. (2020). STUDENTS' 2020 MAP GROWTH SCORES: MATH AND READING.

Mapp, T. (2008). Understanding phenomenology: The lived experience. *British Journal of Midwifery*, *16*(5), 308-311. https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2008.16.5.29192

Matthews, K., Baird, M., & Duchesne, G. (2018). Using online meeting software to facilitate geographically dispersed focus groups for health workforce research. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1049732318782167

McCall, M. W. (1986). Leadership and performance beyond expectations, by Bernard M. Bass. New York: The Free Press, 1985, 191 pp. *Human Resource Management*, 25(3), 481–484. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930250310

McCarley, T., Peters, M., & Decman, J. (2016). Transformational leadership related to school climate: A multi-level analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *44*, 332-342. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214549966

McMahan, K., Oslund, E., & Odegard, T. (2019). Characterizing the knowledge of educators receiving training in systematic literacy instruction. *Annals of Dyslexia*, *69*(1), 21–33. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-018-00174-2

Mendez-Keegan, M. (2019). Transformational leadership practices and student achievement in diverse urban elementary schools. *Walden University*. https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8831&context=dissertations

Mestry, R. (2017). Principals' perspectives and experiences of their instructional leadership functions to enhance learner achievement in public schools. *Journal of Education*, (69), 257-280. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2520-98682017000200012&lng=en&tlng=en.

Meyers, C. V., & Hitt, D. H. (2017). School turnaround principals: What does initial research literature suggest they are doing to be successful? *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *22*, 38-56. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2016.1242070

Moran, K., & Larwin, K. (2017). Building administrator's facilitation of teacher

    leadership: Moderators associated with teachers' reported levels of empowerment.

    Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership, 3(1), 2.

    https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1161923.pdf

Mukhtar, M. A., Hasim, Z., & Md Yunus, M. (2018). The efficacy of simulated teaching

    in preparing pre-service teachers for practicum. *Journal of Nusantara Studies,*

    3(1), 64-74. https://doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol3iss1pp64-74

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). Achievement gaps. Retrieved September

    22, 2020, from https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/

National Research Council. (2011). Successful K-12 STEM education: Identifying

    effective approaches in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

    National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/13158

Ng Foo Seong, D. (2019). Instructional leadership. *Palgrave Studies on Leadership and*

    Learning in Teacher Education, 15–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23736-

    3_2

Óskarsdóttir, E., Donnelly, V., Turner-Cmuchal, M., & Florian, L. (2020). Inclusive

    school leaders: Their role in raising the achievement of all learners. *Journal of*

    Educational Administration, 58(5), 521–537. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-

    2019-0190

Park, J., Lee, I., & Cooc, N. (2019). The role of school-level mechanisms: How principal

    support, professional learning communities, collective responsibility, and group-

level teacher expectations affect student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *55*(5), 742-780. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18821355

Plaatjies, B. (2019). Investigating principal capacity in literacy instructional leadership at selected primary schools. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 10*(3), 136-160. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1229399.pdf

Pechota, D., & Scott, D. (2020). Principal development as a strategy in school improvement. Policy brief. in education commission of the states. *Education Commission of the States*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED603065.pdf

Pollitt, K. D. (2016). Advocacy update: ESSA and how the new law empowers principal leadership. *Communicator 39*(5), 21-24. https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=ft

Pressley, M., & Allington, R. L. (2015). Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching (4th ed., pp. 1 – 62). *New York, NY: Guilford*. https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.36-1108

Preston, J., & Barnes, K. (2017). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *Rural Educator*, *38*(1), 6-15. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1225156.pdf

Ramlal, A., Jones, D., & Kingston, K. (2020). Principals' experiences leading strategic planning in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 24. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1263880.pdf

Ravitch, D. (2016). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. Basic Books.

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. (2016). Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological. *Sage Publications*.

Redding, C., & Henry, G. (2018). Leaving school early: An examination of novice teachers' within- and end-of-year turnover. *American Educational Research Journal*. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218790542

Reitman, G., & Karge, B. (2019). Investing in teacher support leads to teacher retention: six supports administrators should consider for new teachers. *Multicultural Education*, 27(1), 7–18. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1250205.pdf

Rigby, J., Larbi-Cherif, A., Rosenquist, B., Sharpe, C., Cobb, P., & Smith, T. (2017). Administrator observation and feedback: Does it lead toward improvement in inquiry-oriented math instruction? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *53*(3), 475-516. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16687006

Roberts, C., Ruppar, A., & Olson, A. (2018). Perceptions matter: Administrators' vision of instruction for students with severe disabilities. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 43*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796917743931

Roessingh, H., & Bence, M. (2019). Embodied cognition: Laying the foundation for early language and literacy learning. *Language and Literacy: A Canadian Educational e-Journal*, *20*(4), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.20360/langandlit29435

Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing; The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sadan, N., & Alkaher, I. (2021). Development and formation of ESE policy: Learning

from teachers and local authorities. *Environmental Education Research*, *27*(2),

192–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2020.1847255

Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). *Thousand*

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Salter, D., Barkley, W., Benoliel, B., Dawidowicz, P., Englesberg, P., Flohr, J., Galaif,

E., Giraud, G., Harris, K., Hinrichs, J., & Jones, M. (2017). 2017 *Walden*

University Research Symposium.

https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=curr

ent

Sargeant, J. (2012). Qualitative research part II: Participants, analysis, and quality

assurance. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, *4*(1), 1–3.

https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00307.1

Scribbr. (2020). An introduction to qualitative research. Retrieved from

https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/

Sharp, L., Raymond, R., & Piper, R. (2020). Exploring the literacy leadership practices of

literacy teacher educators. *Teacher Educators' Journal*, *13*, 12–31.

Shava, G., & Tlou, F. (2018). Distributed leadership in education, Contemporary issues

in educational leadership. *African Educational Research Journal*, *6*(4), 279-287.

https://doi.org/10.30918/AERJ.64.18.097

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Slusser, M., Garcia, L., Reed, C., & McGinnis, P. (2018). Foundations of interprofessional collaborative practice in health care-e-book. *Elsevier Health Sciences*.

Smalls-Marshall, T. (2020). Kansas City teachers' perceptions of reading achievement gap among African American fourth grade boys: A qualitative descriptive case study. *(Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix)*. https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4212&context=dissertations

Smetana, A. L. (2020). Transformative responsiveness and school leadership: A mixed-method approach toward closing academic achievement gaps (Doctoral dissertation).

Smith, J., Saez, L., & Doabler, C. (2016). Using ex-plicit and systematic instruction to support working memory. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, *48*(6), 275–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059916650633

Spear-Swerling, L. (2019). Structured literacy and typical literacy practices: Understanding differences to create instructional opportunities. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, *51*(3), 201-211. https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/structured-literacy.pdf

Stein, L. (2016). Schools need leaders not managers: It's time for a paradigm shift. *Journal of Leadership Education*. *15*(2). 21-30. https://doi.org/10.12806/v15/12/13

Sterrett, W., & Richardson, J. (2020). Supporting professional development through digital principal leadership. *Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership*, *5*(2). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1261391.pdf

Stewart, K. I., Rotheram-Fuller, E., & Liou, D. D. (2021). Beginning teacher support model: elementary teachers' resilience and retention in Arizona. *International Journal of Modern Education Studies, 5*(1), 50-74. https://doi.org/10.51383/ijonmes.2021.75

Subijana, C., Martin, L., Tejón, O., & Côté, J. (2021). Adolescent athletes' perceptions of both their coachs' leadership and their personal motivation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *128*(2), 813-830. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031512520985760

Supovitz, J. (2018). Teacher leaders' work with peers in a quasi-formal teacher leadership model. *School Leadership & Management*, *38*(1), 53-79.

Szeto, E., & Cheng, A. (2018). Principal–teacher interactions and teacher leadership development: beginning teachers' perspectives, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 21:3, 363-379, HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1080/13603124.2016.1274785

Tan, C. (2018). Examining school leadership effects on student achievement: the role of contextual challenges and constraints. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *48*(1), 21–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1221885

Taylor, B., Pearson, P., Peterson, D., & Rodriguez, M. (2005). The CEIRA school change framework: An evidence-based approach to professional development and school reading improvement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *40*(1), 40 – 69. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.40.1.3

Thessin, R. (2019). Establishing productive principal/principal supervisor partnerships for instructional leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration.* https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-09-2018-0184

Thomas, L., Gerde, H., Piasta, S., Logan, J., Bailet, L., & Zettler-Greeley, C. (2020). The early writing skills of children identified as at-risk for literacy difficulties. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *51*, 392-402. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.01.003

Toews, S., & Kurth, J. (2019). Literacy instruction in general education settings: A call to action. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *44*(3), 135–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796919855373

Trust, T. (2017). Motivation, empowerment, and innovation: Teachers' beliefs about how participating in the edmodo math subject community shapes teaching and learning. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, *49*(1–2), 16–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2017.1291317

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (1979). The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. Washington, DC: National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/ Belmont.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). The Nuremberg code. http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/archive/nurcode/hrml

Uysal, S., & Sarier, Y. (2019). Teacher leadership effects on student achievement and student satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the studies published in Turkey and the USA. *Croatian Journal Educational 21*(3), 989–1010. https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v21i3.3257

Vaismoradi, M., & Snelgrove, S. (2019). Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research 20*,(3). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.3376

Van der Vyver, C., Kok, T., & Conley, L. (2020). The relationship between teachers' professional wellbeing and principals' leadership behaviour to improve teacher retention. *Perspectives in Education*, *38*(2), 86–102. https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v38.i2.06

Van Vooren, C. (2018). An examination of K-5 principal time and tasks to improve leadership practice. *Educational Leadership and Administration: teaching and program development*, *29*(1), 45-63.

Vaughn, M., Jang, B., Sotirovska, V., & Cooper-Novack, G. (2020). Student agency in literacy: A systematic review of the literature. *Reading Psychology*, *41*(7), 712–734. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2020.1783142

Vernon-Feagans, L., Bratsch-Hines, M., Varghese, C., Cutrer, E. A., & Garwood, J. D. (2018). Improving struggling readers' early literacy skills through a tier 2 professional development program for rural classroom teachers: The targeted reading intervention. *The Elementary School Journal, 118*(4), 525-548. https://doi.org/1010.1086/697491

Vista, A. (2020). Data-driven identification of skills for the future: 21st-century skills for the 21st-century workforce. *Sage Open*, *10*(2), 2158244020915904.

Walker, K. (2020). Administrators' and teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors and impacts on student outcomes. https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=10737&context=dissertations

Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*(1), 134–171. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478

Wieczorek, D., & Manard, C. (2018). Instructional leadership challenges and practices of novice principals in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *34*(2). http://jrre.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/34-2.pdf

Xu, X., Jiang, L., Hong, P., & Roche, M. (2021). Will mindful employees benefit from positive work reflection triggered by transformational leadership? A two-study examination. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *28*(1), 61–73. https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000222

Young, M., Winn, K., & Reedy, M. (2017). The every student succeeds act: strengthening the focus on educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *53*(5), 705–726. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17735871

Young, N., & Bonanno-Sotiropoulos, K. (2018). Administrative factors: Supporting teachers and contributing to the success of all students. *From Head to Heart: High-Quality Teaching Practices in the Spotlight*, 121.

Zebroff, D., & Kaufman, D. (2017). Texting, reading, and other daily habits associated with adolescents' literacy levels. *Education and Information Technologies*, *22*(5), 2197-2216. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-016-9544-3

Zeh, N. (2016). Teaching morphology to improve literacy. Cambridge: Cambridge University. https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/lwm/teaching/dld2_2017_18/Zeh_Morphological-Awareness.pdf

Appendix: Interview Questions

Introductory Information

- Revisit purpose for the study and questions

- Risks and benefits- Informal "Informed Consent"

- Explain confidentiality

- Permission for recording

- Review of signed consent form

Establishing Comfortability

a. How long have you been in education?

b. How long were you a teacher before becoming an administrator?

c. How long have you been an administrator?

d. What is your philosophy of education?

Interview Questions

RQ1: How do elementary administrators describe the practices, process, and procedures they use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

1. How do you align instructional practices based on data?

2. Describe your role in providing reflective feedback as a mean of supporting teachers implementation of instructional literacy skills.

3. Describe the processes and procedures you use to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills?

4. What actions through positive school culture do you believe are necessary to support teachers with instructional literacy skills? Please elaborate.

5. What supports are currently in place to support teachers' implementation of literacy instruction? How effective have they been?

6. What encounters do teachers have to obtain resources that support their engagement with teaching practices?

7. What specific actions might you take with teachers to assist them with their literacy instructional strategies?

RQ2: What are elementary administrators' perceptions of the challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?

1. How do you communicate your vision and missions in closing the gaps of teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? Please elaborate.

2. Describe your role in influencing and providing support to teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? How is this communicated and monitored?

3. What do you perceive as your role in supporting teachers and what does it look like in practice?

4. How do you best collaborate with teachers to improve teachers' implementation of instructional literacy skills? Please elaborate.

5. What do you perceive as challenges to support teachers' implementation of literacy instruction?

6. Describe your role in providing instructional coaching that is essential to support teachers with literacy instruction through visibility in classrooms.

What are your perceptions of challenges regarding the professional needs of teachers' implementation of literacy instructional strategies?