

2023

## Uneven Impact of the Reading Street Common Core Program on Student Reading Achievement

Donna Lee West  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Donna West

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. Salina Shrofel, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Julie Frese, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Paul Englesberg, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

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

Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Uneven Impact of the Reading Street Common Core Program on Student Reading  
Achievement

by

Donna West

MA, Walden University, 2005

BS, Old Dominion University, 1982

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

In 2013, a school district located in the northeastern region of the US implemented the Reading Street Common Core Program (RS), a highly structured and scripted reading program. The problem was that the program had an uneven effect on elementary level student reading achievement at Title 1 schools in the district. This qualitative case study explored how teachers, professional development lead teachers (PDLTs), and principals at four high performing schools (HPS) and four low performing schools (LPS) experienced implementation of the RS, and how their experiences explained the uneven effect on student reading achievement. The conceptual framework that grounded the study was the action theory of educational change developed by Fullan. Interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 teachers, two principals, and two PDLTs from eight schools. Data were analyzed using provisional codes, pattern codes, and thematic analysis. Study results did not explain uneven results of RS implementation. However, analysis indicated that both the HPS and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the district Curriculum Instructional Map (CIM), district writing curriculum, and RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership. Findings informed a policy paper that provides recommendations for the district to implement. The study may contribute to positive social change by increasing district leadership awareness of how to improve the implementation of RS leading to improved student reading achievement.

Uneven Impact of the Reading Street Common Core Program on Student Reading  
Achievement

by

Donna West

MA, Walden University, 2005

BS, Old Dominion University, 1982

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my daughters, Michaela and Angelica. You have been with me every step of the way. Even when things were not going as expected, you were there. I love you both forever and always! I want you to remember that anything is possible because we “can do ALL things through Christ who gives us strength” (Philippians 4:13).

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee members: Dr. Salina Shrofel, Dr. Jerita Whaley, Dr. Julie Frese, and Dr. Paul Englesberg for their help and support through this doctoral journey. I would also like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues who kept checking in and encouraging me along the way. I especially want to acknowledge my sister and friend, Gwen, who would not let me give up and kept encouraging me to see this journey through to “The End.”

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	v
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Definition of the Problem .....	3
Rationale .....	5
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level.....	5
Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature.....	5
Definitions.....	8
Significance.....	10
Research Questions.....	11
Review of the Literature .....	11
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Factors that Affect Title 1 Elementary Level Student Reading	
Achievement .....	14
Family Factors that are Related to Reading Achievement.....	14
School and Teacher Factors Related to Reading Achievement .....	20
Best Practices for Improving Reading Achievement for Low Achieving	
Elementary Students .....	24
Scripted Reading Programs.....	34
Implications.....	43



Summary .....	43
Section 2: The Methodology.....	45
Introduction.....	45
Research Design.....	46
Alternative Qualitative Approaches.....	47
Description of the Study School District .....	48
Selection of Participants .....	49
Data Collection .....	50
Interviews with Participants.....	50
Role of the Researcher .....	52
Ethical Issues Considered .....	53
Data Analysis .....	54
Data Coding .....	54
Provisional and Pattern Coding .....	55
Thematic Analysis .....	55
Organizing and Managing the Data .....	56
Discussion of Data Analysis .....	56
Validity and Reliability.....	56
Data Analysis Results .....	58
Section 3: The Project.....	117
Introduction.....	117

Rationale .....	118
Review of the Literature .....	118
Project Description.....	123
Potential Resources and Existing Supports.....	124
Potential Barriers .....	124
Proposal for Implementation and Timetable.....	125
Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others .....	125
Project Evaluation Plan.....	125
Project Implications .....	126
Local Community .....	126
Far-Reaching.....	126
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	128
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	128
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches .....	129
Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change .....	130
Project Development.....	130
Leadership and Change.....	130
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research .....	132
Conclusion .....	134
References.....	135
Appendix A: The Project .....	154

Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	172
Appendix C: Research and Interview Matrix .....	175
Appendix D: Provisional Codes.....	177

## List of Tables

Table 1. Average Percentages of Third Through Fifth Grade Students Scoring Advanced, Proficient, or Basic on the State Assessment at 64 Title 1 Schools.....	3
Table 2. Percentages of Student Population Receiving FARMS and Percentages of Highly Qualified Teachers at the Study Schools for the 2013-2014 School Year..	6
Table 3. Codes and Themes from HPS Principal Data.....	60
Table 4. Codes and Themes from LPS Principal Data.....	64
Table 5. Codes and Themes from HPS PDLT Interview Responses.....	71
Table 6. Codes and Themes from LPS PDLT Interview Responses.....	75
Table 7. Codes and Themes from HPS Teacher Responses.....	81
Table 8. Codes and Themes from LPS Teacher Responses.....	91

## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

During 2019, 65% of American children scored between *at risk* and *basic* levels and 35% scored between the *proficient* and *advanced* levels (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Student achievement in reading has been well documented in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2015d, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016d). At the national level, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 with the goal that all students must achieve 100% reading proficiency by 2014 (Savino-Garzon, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2016d). The U.S. Department of Education (2016a) predicted in 2011 that 82% of U.S. schools would not achieve reading proficiency by 2014. In 2017, national and state reading assessment results demonstrated no significant change since 2009 (Ji et al., 2021). Student reading scores in 2019 were lower than scores in 2017 (Ji et al., 2021).

Educational leaders, district leaders, and school administrations responded to these national and state reading achievement results by focusing on ways to increase elementary level student reading achievement. Some school systems introduced research-based whole language reading programs such as *Reading Recovery*, *Four Blocks*, and *Guided Reading*. These guided reading programs require teachers to group students according to their reading achievement levels, use texts based on students' instructional reading level, and teach comprehension and decoding instructional strategies (Hasbun &

Stewart, 2010; Puzio et al., 2020). Other school systems introduced research-based scripted balanced literacy programs such as *Reading Street Common Core Program (RS)*, *Success for All*, and *Reading Mastery* that combine whole language and phonetic strategies to meet the reading needs of student population (Dresser, 2012; Hasbun & Stewart, 2010; Powell et al., 2017). Scripted reading programs were designed to provide methodical and explicit teaching approaches (Dresser, 2012; Hasbun & Stewart, 2010; Powell et al., 2017). They provide well-defined lessons, specific timelines, and scripts that teachers are to use when teaching lessons in reading.

The New Beginnings Public School District (NBPSD, pseudonym) is located in one of the 43 states that began full implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2013. As part of the CCSS implementation process, the district decided to implement one structured reading program for all of its 146 elementary schools. In 2013, the NBPSD implemented RS by Scott Foresman, a highly structured and scripted reading program, to address the issue of low reading achievement of its students.

The NBPSD is located in the Northeastern U.S. It is a large school district with 208 schools and a student population of approximately 132,000 students and 22,000 employees. The school district is divided into three areas with each area having an assigned director who oversees schools within their specific area. The location of each school determines whether it is considered urban, suburban, or rural.

The NBPSD student population is comprised of approximately 60% African Americans, 4% Caucasians, and 36% other ethnicities. Approximately 60% of the

district's student population is considered low socioeconomic status (NCES, 2015a). Of the 208 schools, 80 have been identified as Title 1 schools with 64 of those schools being elementary schools. Of the total student population, 66.5% participate in the free and reduced meals (FARMS) program.

### **Definition of the Problem**

NBPSD 64 Title 1 elementary schools from 2010-2013 experienced low reading achievement on the state mandated reading assessment prior to the introduction of the RS program during the 2013-2014 school year. After implementation of the RS program, the percentage of Title 1 students who achieved *advanced* scores increased an average of 22.5% between the 2013 and the 2014 assessment. The percentage of Title 1 students who achieved *basic* scores decreased an average of 7.03% at 40 Title 1 schools while at 24 Title 1 schools the percentage of *basic* scores increased an average of 5.0%.

All 64 Title 1 elementary schools demonstrated gains in percentages of students who achieved *advanced* scores while decreasing the percentage of students who achieved *proficient* between 2012 and 2014 (see Table 1). However, 60 Title 1 schools demonstrated a decrease in percentages of students who achieved *basic* scores. Some schools stood out because the percentage of students who achieved the *basic* level increased after the first year of implementing the RS program instead of decreasing as shown in Table 1. For the purposes of this study, these schools are recognized as LPS and are referred to as Schools G, H, I, and J.

### **Table 1**

*Average Percentages of Third Through Fifth Grade Students Scoring Advanced, Proficient, or Basic on the State Assessment at 64 Title 1 Schools*

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014 After Implementation
<i>Advanced</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 8.18%	4 <sup>th</sup> 9.23%	5 <sup>th</sup> 32.21%
<i>Proficient</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 67.21%	4 <sup>th</sup> 69.38%	5 <sup>th</sup> 46.73%
<i>Basic</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24.61%	4 <sup>th</sup> 21.39%	5 <sup>th</sup> 21.06%

*Note.* Data from the State website.

Another set of schools stood out because the percentage of students who achieved the *advanced* level increased by more than 40% after the first year of implementing the RS program, higher than the expected increase. For the purposes of this study, these schools are recognized as HPS and are referred to as Schools A, B, C, and D.

The problem that this study addressed was the uneven impact of implementation of the RS reading program on students' reading achievement in NBPSD Title 1 schools 1 year after implementation. In this study, I attempted to understand this uneven impact. To do this, I compared perceptions of a sample of teachers, principals, and professional development lead teachers (PDLTs) who were employed at four Title 1 HPS with four Title 1 LPS. For this study, I explored how teachers at these two groups of schools experienced implementation of the RS reading program in their classrooms, challenges they faced in implementing this program, and resources and supports they were provided in order to improve reading achievement of their students. I also interviewed a sample of PDLTs and school principals and explored how they experienced implementation of the RS reading program at their schools, challenges they perceived teachers faced when implementing the program, and resources and supports that were provided to the teachers.



## **Rationale**

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

In the NBPSD, 52% of students at Title 1 schools, between 2010 and 2014, achieved low scores on the state mandated standardized test. Student reading achievement at these schools had been a concern for local school staff, district leaders, and the community. In 2013, to address reading achievement concerns, the NBPSD introduced a new reading program for all grade 3 through grade 5 elementary students: RS Common Core Program. The program is a highly structured and scripted approach to teaching reading that requires all teachers to follow the same instructional processes and materials and recite publisher composed teaching scripts. On any day, all teachers at any particular grade level are teaching the same lessons and using the same materials to teach all students in their classrooms, regardless of the learning needs of their students.

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

Program implementation fidelity, student socioeconomic status, and classroom pedagogy are major factors that impact uneven effectiveness of program implementation (Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; Quinn & Kim, 2017; van Kuijk et al., 2021). Implementation is affected by fidelity or the degree to which the program implementation follows guidelines (Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; Jacob et al., 2015; Quinn & Kim, 2017; van Kuijk et al., 2021). When implementation of a curriculum or program is done with fidelity, designed interventions and outcomes are more likely to lead to

curriculum or program goals and objectives (Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; Quinn & Kim, 2017; van Kuijk et al., 2021).

Student socioeconomic status impacts unevenness of implementation results because low socioeconomic students tend to attend schools which are under-resourced, lack qualified teachers, and lack classroom materials and technology (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; NCES, 2015a). Program implementation has to do with teaching guides that are used to implement reading programs and teachers' instruction methods (Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; Quinn & Kim, 2017). Along with program implementation, teachers' pedagogy or instructional practices impact student reading achievement (Quinn & Kim, 2017). This occurs when teachers make modifications to the program's teaching methods to meet needs of students within their classrooms (Bradley et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2013; Quinn & Kim, 2017).

All study schools were Title 1 schools where at least 40% of the student population qualified for FARMS as defined by ESSA (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b (see Table 2). Fidelity of implementation was partially controlled because the implementation was of a scripted reading program and all teachers were required to implement RS in the same manner. The school district also provided PD to teachers to achieve fidelity.

## **Table 2**

*Percentages of Student Population Receiving FARMS and Highly Qualified Teachers at the Study Schools for 2013-2014 School Year*

Site	FARMS	Highly qualified teachers
School A	86.1%	95.7%
School B	85.5%	95.7%
School C	76.3%	94.3%
School D	81.4%	95.7%
School G	75.6%	77.4%
School H	73.6%	67.7%
School I	84.8%	100%
School J	84.6%	88.4%

*Note.* Data from the state website.

Nationally, grades 4, 8, and 12 are critical educational transition points for students. Students at these grade levels are assessed on specific content knowledge and skills. According to the NCES (2019) fourth grade reading scores at the national level in 2011 indicated that 33% of students nationally were identified as *proficient* or *advanced* level and 67% were identified as *basic* or *at risk*. 35% of students nationally scored *proficient* or higher and 65% scored *basic* or *at risk*. These results show that the percentage of fourth grade students reading *basic* or *at risk* levels is greater than those reading at the *proficient* or *advanced* level which demonstrates that a higher percentage of the nation's fourth grade students are reading below the expectations for achieving reading proficiency.

In 2019, NCES reading achievement data acquired from the NAEP test administered to fourth graders, demonstrated a gap between Title 1 student and Non-Title 1 student achievement (NCES, 2019). The 2019 reading achievement scores demonstrated that Title 1 students achieved an average reading score of 210 out of 500

possible points (NCES, 2019). The Non-Title 1 students scored an average of 238 out of 500 possible points, demonstrating a difference or gap of 28 points (NCES, 2019).

The data results for NBPSD mirror the national report on student reading achievement from NAEP and NCES Title 1 and Non-Title 1 eligibility reports. The reading achievement data for fourth grade students in the NBPSD demonstrated that Title 1 students achieved an average reading score of 210 out of 500 possible points (NCES, 2015c). The non-Title 1 students scored an average of 238 out of 500 possible points, demonstrating a difference of 28 points (NCES, 2015c). This means that a higher percentage of Title I fourth grade students were reading below the expectations for achieving reading proficiency.

### **Definitions**

*Basic level students:* Students who achieved at the basic level on the state mandated reading assessment.

*Common core state standards (CCSS):* CCSS were developed to provide consistent educational standards in literacy, language arts, and mathematics across the U.S. to ensure graduating high school students are college and career ready (CCSS Initiative, 2021).

*Differentiated instruction:* Instructional strategies that teachers employ to meet learning needs of all students whatever their ability or achievement levels (Strickland et al., 2002).

*High performing schools (HPS):* In this study HPS are defined as schools where the percentage of students who achieved the *advanced* level increased by more than 40% on state mandated reading assessments after the first year of implementation of the RS reading program. These schools are referred to as Schools A, B, C, and D.

*Highly qualified teacher:* Teacher who has received a bachelor's degree or higher, passed the state certification requirements, and is teaching in the field or grade they received certification in (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

*Low performing schools (LPS):* In this study LPS are defined as schools where the percentage of students who achieved the basic level increased on state mandated reading assessments after first year of implementation of the RS reading program. These schools are referred to as Schools G, H, I, and J.

*Reading achievement:* The ability of students to demonstrate and apply grade level reading skills and knowledge to comprehend fiction and nonfiction genres (NCES, 2019). In the state where the study district is located, students are assigned an achievement level based on their test scores. Achievement levels are interpreted to mean the following: *basic* indicates a student who reads below grade level, *proficient* indicates a student who reads at grade level, and *advanced* indicates a student who reads above grade level.

*Reading comprehension:* The ability to understand and interpret what is being read, make connections to prior knowledge, and apply critical thinking skills (Strickland et al., 2002).

*Reading skills:* Skills such as inferencing, close reading, close analytic reading, vocabulary/comprehension skills, and comparing and contrasting strategies that a student uses to comprehend reading selection as well as, reading with fluency, and independently (Strickland et al., 2002).

*Title 1:* A federal program that provides funds to schools with high populations of low socioeconomic students who are academically at risk of underachieving. The purpose of Title 1 is to support student academic achievement by providing additional educational resources, as well as additional programs to selected schools in order to enrich and reinforce classroom instruction.

### **Significance**

Results of this study may lead to an understanding of the uneven impact of the RS reading program on student reading achievement in NBPSD Title 1 schools. Comparing teachers, PDLTs, and principals perceptions from four Title 1 HPS with those from four Title 1 LPS may lead to results that will encourage administrators to provide interventions that will improve continued implementation of the RS reading program at Title 1 schools. These interventions may lead to teachers becoming more successful in using the RS reading program to increase student reading achievement.

Findings from this qualitative case study may contribute to local social change in the NBPSD by increasing the percentage of students who learn to read at an *advanced* level in elementary school and go on to eventually graduate from high school.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that were answered by this qualitative case study were:

RQ1: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 2: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experience implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ3: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS compare in terms their experiences with implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 4: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 5: How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 students' reading achievement in the NBPSD?

### **Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experienced implementation of the RS reading program, challenges teachers faced in implementing this program, and resources and supports they were provided in order to improve reading achievement of their students. In this study, I compared perceptions of teachers, principals, and PDLTs who were employed at four Title 1 HPS with four Title 1 LPS in an attempt to understand the uneven impact of the RS reading program on Title 1 student reading achievement after the first year of

implementation. To obtain background knowledge to inform my study, I searched the following Walden University Library online databases: ProQuest, ERIC, SAGE Journals, EBSCOHost, and Google Scholar. I read sources published between 2015 and 2022 including peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, books, and reports. Search terms that I used were: *disadvantaged students, minority students, Title I, Reading Street Common Core Program, constructivism, reading achievement, effective reading instruction, teacher perceptions, differentiated instruction, and best practices*. I concluded the search when repeated use of search terms individually and in combinations revealed no new references.

In the literature review, I describe and discuss the relevant literature related to reading achievement in classrooms that are comprised of low socioeconomic students who historically underachieve in reading. I begin the literature review section by explaining the conceptual framework. Then, I discuss factors that research has shown are related to reading achievement such as family and community, school and teacher, and student factors. I follow this with a description and discussion of research-based practices for improving reading achievement for low achieving students. I end the literature review with a brief history of scripted reading programs and descriptions of some scripted reading programs that are currently being used in American classrooms.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that underlay this study was the action theory of educational change. Fullan (2007) said to implement and sustain any new program,



individuals responsible for implementation must have a thorough understanding of how educational components of the new program fit together to reach the desired results.

Fullan (2007) identified seven foundational premises that he argued would bring about successful educational change.

The first premise was titled “motivation”. Fullan said that all involved personnel must be motivated and committed to change. Fullan found that motivation must be individual and group and that motivation is the foundation for the other six premises. He argued that without individual and group motivation, the other six foundational premises would not be met. The second premise is capacity building, which was defined as “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the achievement gap of student learning” (p. 9). The third premise was learning in context. To achieve this premise, the administration must provide teachers with opportunities to learn about their practice in implementing the change. The fourth premise Fullan titled changing context. Changing context means that in the case of the implementation of a new program in schools, there is a necessity for the entire school district to change so they are supporting motivation, capacity building, and learning in context. The fifth premise is that stakeholders must establish a bias for reflective action where all who are involved in the change are provided opportunities to reflect on processes in which they are involved. Tri-level engagement is the sixth premise and refers to the process where individuals at the school, district, and state levels work together towards a common goal. The last premise was persistence and flexibility in staying the course. This indicates that

everyone involved needs to be flexible and address challenges or discouragements that might be encountered.

Fullan (2007) said understanding and using these seven foundational premises is critical for effective educational change to occur. Everybody involved in the implementation needs to understand the change process. Without that understanding, educational change would be ineffective. Fullan's action theory of educational change informed understanding and discussion of findings.

### **Factors that Affect Title 1 Elementary Level Student Reading Achievement**

Reading is an important skill that affects every area of an individual's life and plays a critical part in that individual's later success (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Hanselman & Borman, 2013; Henry et al., 2020). Educators strive to provide instruction that will equip students with reading skills and strategies that prepare them for success. Aside from instruction, reading achievement is influenced by many factors that educators cannot control. Student reading achievement is influenced by family factors, community factors, school factors, and teacher factors (see Connor et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2020; Lucariello et al., 2012; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010; NCES, 2015a; Nelson et al., 2011; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Wang et al., 2020).

### **Family Factors Related to Reading Achievement**

Family factors that influence student reading achievement are closely related to socioeconomic status and include ethnicity, parental education levels, lack of exposure to early learning experiences, parental homeownership, and lack of appropriate healthcare

(see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Connor et al., 2013; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Lucariello et al., 2012; McMahon, 2011; NCES, 2015a; Nelson et al., 2011).

### ***Ethnicity***

Ethnicity and low socioeconomic status are intertwined factors that affect the academic achievement of students. Data demonstrates that low socioeconomic families are often members of one of the minority racial groups (African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian) that make up 40% to 100% of a typical Title 1 school's student population (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010; Connor et al., 2013; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Little, 2017; McMahon, 2011; NCES, 2015a; Nelson et al., 2011).

Additionally, there is a correlation between economic status and low reading achievement scores of minority students in America (NCES, 2015a).

### ***Parental Educational Status***

Low-income parents often lack educational experiences that would allow them to obtain job opportunities with better financial options to adequately meet the needs of their families (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Connor et al., 2013; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; McMahon, 2011; NCES, 2015a). The NCES said 62% of low-income parents had not completed a college degree: 32% had some college experiences, 19% had graduated from high school, and 11% had not completed high school (NCES, 2015b). Many of these parents may hold several jobs that interfere with the amount of time they have available to interact with their children.

A correlation exists between parents' educational levels and their children's early reading success (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; National Center for Children in Poverty [NCCP], 2016; NCES, 2015a). This prevents these children from receiving necessary early childhood literacy experiences (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Liu & Channell, 2015; Parsons & Ward, 2011; Savino-Garzon, 2013; Suber, 2014). Many such students enter school already at a disadvantage when compared to their high socioeconomic peers of the same age due to a lack of early reading skills such as letter recognition, emergent reading behaviors, and knowledge of early text features (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Chmielewski, 2019; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Liu & Channell, 2015; Quinn et al., 2020). As a result, many students do not achieve early success, fall behind, and never catch up (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Liu & Channell, 2015; Quinn et al., 2020; Savino-Garzon, 2013; Suber, 2014). Students who do not achieve early success in school tend not to graduate from high school (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Gordon & Cui, 2018; Henry et al., 2020; Liu & Channell, 2015; Mendelson et al., 2020; Quinn et al., 2020).

### ***Lack of Exposure to Learning***

Early learning opportunities are critical to students' learning success when they begin school (see Henry et al., 2020; Kiuru et al., 2013; Liu & Channell, 2015; Nelson et al., 2015; Scammacca et al., 2020). Students from low socioeconomic families are often at a disadvantage because they lack early learning opportunities (see Henry et al., 2020;

Kiuru et al., 2013; Liu & Channell, 2015; Nelson et al., 2015; Scammacca et al., 2020).

Activities that provide these children with more opportunities for developing early reading success is achieved through parents spending time talking and interacting with their children, reading to them on a daily basis, providing visits to the library, parks, zoos, or museums, as well as highlighting print in their everyday experiences such as on food containers, street signs, newspapers, and mail (see Henry et al., 2020; Liu & Channell, 2015; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010; Nelson et al., 2011; Quinn et al., 2020).

A large number of children living in low socioeconomic circumstances lag behind in terms of language development (see Bass & Gerstl-Pepin, 2011; Chetty et al., 2018; Ghimire & Topple, 2020; Lam, 2014; Quinn et al., 2020). Quinn et al. (2020) said these language delays are not limited to one ethnic group but extend to all ethnic groups. Quinn et al. indicated that these children lack preschool exposure to literacy. Lack of early exposure negatively affects students both cognitively and interpersonally (Bass & Gerstl-Pepin, 2011; Chetty et al., 2018; Ghimire & Topple, 2020; Lam, 2014). Deficiencies in terms of these early learning opportunities that help to develop children's prior knowledge and experiences hinder their acquisition of vocabulary, spoken and written language, and literacy development (Chetty et al., 2018; Ghimire & Topple, 2020; Nelson et al., 2015; Quinn et al., 2020).

### ***Homeownership***

Homeownership for low socioeconomic families is financially difficult and leads to families having to frequently relocate (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Gordon

& Cui, 2018; Gottfried, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Lam, 2014). The NCCP (2016) said 21% of low-income families relocated during 2015 and 62% lived in places of residency where they were renters. As the rate of rent fluctuates, these families may be forced to move, impacting the children as they transition from school to school and contributing to student attendance concerns (see Gordon & Cui, 2018; Gottfried, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Lam, 2014; Maxwell, 2016, 2018). Hanselman and Borman (2013) said more than half of students in the U.S. do not attend the same schools from kindergarten through third grade. As students transition from one school to another, they experience different levels of instruction and pedagogies affecting their ability to learn as they adjust to the changes.

Gottfried (2014) conducted a longitudinal quantitative study in the Philadelphia School District on neighborhood characteristics and student absences to examine the connection between the two variables. The data for the study included all the elementary and middle schools in the district from 1994-1995 through 2000-2001. Gottfried studied the range of excused absences from zero to 66 days and unexcused absences from zero to 58 days. He also collected data on the neighborhood characteristics that influenced student absences and found that homeownership influenced student attendance. The results indicated that the higher the percentage of residents who own their homes in the neighborhood, the lower the percentage of student absences and the higher the percentage of residents who live in rented homes, the higher the percentage of student absences. Results also demonstrated an association between higher percentages of African

Americans living in neighborhoods and increased student absences. Also, Gottfried found that neighborhood characteristics and student absences contribute to early learning deficiencies and are linked to disruptive classroom behaviors due to students struggling with the learning expectations. Gottfried also found that disruptive classroom behaviors are more prevalent at the elementary level. Gottfried said as these students with classroom disruptive behaviors progressed to higher grade levels, they continued as academically struggling students. These findings have been confirmed by more recent studies (see Costa et al., 2013; Ghimire & Toppo, 2020; Henry et al., 2020; Lam, 2014; NCCP, 2016; Tang & Dai, 2021).

### ***Healthcare***

Many low socioeconomic families face a lack of adequate healthcare (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Berenson et al., 2012; Berman et al., 2018; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Gottfried, 2010; Johnson et al., 2019; Plaspohl et al., 2014). The NCCP (2016) said 21% of children in low-income families were without adequate healthcare. Parents of low socioeconomic status are often affected by unstable employment, financial distress, and insufficient take-home pay, which impacts their ability to acquire and continue to have access to adequate healthcare for their families (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Berenson et al., 2012; Berman et al., 2018; Bruner et al., 2011; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Ghimire & Toppo, 2020; Gottfried, 2010; Plaspohl et al., 2014). Children from low socioeconomic situations living in urban settings suffer from a higher incidence of health issues (see Bass & Gerstl-Pepin, 2011; Berman et al., 2018; Bruner et al., 2011; DePriest

& Butz, 2017; Ghimire & Toppo, 2020; Gottfried, 2010, 2014; Lam, 2014). Many of these health issues such as higher incidents of vision impairment, hearing loss, asthma, and viruses are impacted by the lack of preventive medical care (see Bass & Gerstl-Pepin, 2011; Berman et al., 2018; Bruner et al., 2011; DePriest & Butz, 2017; Ghimire & Toppo, 2020; Gottfried, 2010, 2014; Johnson et al., 2019; Lam, 2014). The NCCP (2016) said as a result of inadequate preventive health care, more than 10% of U.S. kindergarten and first grade students from low socioeconomic families experienced higher rates of absenteeism than students in more affluent families, affecting academic achievement and progress.

### **School and Teacher Factors Related to Reading Achievement**

School building conditions, school culture, teacher beliefs, and teacher qualifications are limitations impacting student reading achievement (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Berman et al., 2018; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Gottfried, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2021). Frequently, school buildings located in low socioeconomic communities are older, in need of frequent repairs, and harder to maintain (see Berman et al., 2018; Gottfried, 2014; Lam, 2014; Maxwell, 2016, 2018). They are located in neighborhoods where incidents of vandalism are frequent, resulting in classroom environments experiencing loss and/or damage to instructional and student materials (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Berman et al., 2018; Gottfried, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Lam, 2014; Maxwell, 2016, 2018; Simons et al., 2010). Schools in these low socioeconomic neighborhoods are attended by low socioeconomic students clustered



together in terms of ethnicity, parental education levels, lack of exposure to early learning experiences, homeownership, and lack of appropriate healthcare (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Berman et al., 2018; Connor et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2020; Lucariello et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2016, 2018; NCES, 2015a; Wang et al., 2020).

Maxwell (2016) conducted a study in to explore the connections between school building conditions, student absences, and student academic achievement. The results of the study indicated that the conditions of the school buildings in low socioeconomic areas contributed to student attendance concerns. Maxwell (2016) found that students in schools located in low socioeconomic areas were subjected to different types of molds, moisture build up due to poor ventilation and humidity conditions, pests such as roaches and mice, plumbing leaks, and structural defects. The results of the study demonstrated that the mold and moisture conditions in the school buildings contributed to health concerns such as allergies, respiratory illnesses, and asthma and that younger students were affected more because of their proximity to the floor, faster breathing rates, and higher levels of activity rate. More recent studies have confirmed the findings from this research (see Berman et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2019; Maxwell, 2018).

### ***School Culture***

Establishing a positive school culture where everyone feels safe, and learning is supported, takes the commitment of all school staff, students, and families. Students from low socioeconomic situations are at risk of displaying more difficult behaviors due to influences from their homes and community that often cause disruptions impacting both

school culture and academic achievement (see Berman et al., 2018; Ghimire & Topple, 2020; Gottfried, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Mendelson et al., 2020; Tang & Dai, 2021). In districts that predominately enroll low socio-economic students, students are at risk of being taught by unqualified teachers. Berry (2009) stated, “Children of poverty and those of color are far less likely to be taught by qualified, effective teachers than are students from more affluent families” (p. 1). Berry also found that 40% of low socioeconomic students had teachers that were teaching in areas outside of their teaching field. These findings were confirmed by more recent studies (see Ghimire & Topple, 2020). The combination of the lack of teacher experience and difficult student behavior may cause teachers to face classroom disruptions and students to experience less classroom instruction (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011; Ghimire & Topple, 2020).

### ***Teacher Factors***

What teachers understand and what teachers believe about working with students from low socioeconomic circumstances makes a difference to their students’ academic success (Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Jensen, 2013). Freidus and Noguera (2017) found that without developing an understanding of teaching students from low socioeconomic circumstances, teachers have difficulty teaching these students. Jensen (2013) found that these teachers may have negative preconceived ideas about teaching students from low socioeconomic situations such as thinking that a student who appears to be not listening to the lesson may not be an indication of a lack of engagement but related to the student’s lack of vocabulary skills. Additional negative preconceived ideas include teachers

identifying outburst of anger, aggression, or disrespect as the student being uncooperative, but the student's emotions may be a result of stress, low self-esteem, or feeling there is no hope (Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Jensen, 2013). Jensen (2013) found that a student with attendance issues may be the result of stress from not having the practical things necessary for their physical and mental growth.

### ***Relationship of Teachers' Beliefs to Student Learning***

Negative preconceived ideas of teachers often result in the tracking of students, grouping low socioeconomic students together in the classroom, and lower learning expectations for the students (see Costa et al., 2013; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Jensen, 2013; Lam, 2014). Jensen (2013) pointed out that as a result of the teacher's preconceived ideas along with a lack of understanding about how to meet the needs of students from low socioeconomic circumstances, student achievement is negatively impacted by the teacher's actions. Teachers have the potential to positively impact a student's learning through developing an understanding of the diverse circumstances that the student experiences, as well as through developing a positive, caring learning environment that engages the student in the learning process. These findings have been confirmed in a more recent study (Freidus & Noguera, 2017).

### ***Teacher Qualifications***

The U.S. Department of Education (2016c) stated, "In this era of high standards and high expectations having a highly qualified teacher has never been more important" (para. 1). The USDE also found that the requirements for being identified as a highly

qualified teacher are: having a bachelor's degree or higher, having state certification, and having the ability to exhibit an understanding of the subjects being taught and that states have made progress towards meeting this goal (U.S. Department of Education, 2016c). However, placing highly qualified teachers in schools that are located in low socioeconomic areas has been a challenge faced by many school districts, especially in rural areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2016c).

Title 1 schools which are located in low socioeconomic areas, often lack experienced teachers who understand how to meet the low socioeconomic student needs and who tend to lack classroom management skills making the implementation of effective instruction difficult (Lai et al., 2021). The lack of experienced teachers in Title 1 schools is affected by teacher flight, tenured teachers moving to non-Title 1 schools, leaving the positions open for the new and inexperienced teachers (see Firmender et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2021; Puzio et al., 2020).

### **Best Practices for Improving Reading Achievement for Low Achieving Elementary Students**

Best practices are identified as current research-based practices that are found to be highly effective and help students achieve their highest level of academic performance (see Cohen et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Puzio et al., 2020; What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews educational research studies to determine whether the research studies have met strict standards, and reports how those research studies can be utilized to guide and increase student achievement.

After careful analysis of different research studies, WWC developed a handbook that provides recommendations for teachers, administrators, and resource teachers involved in helping students to achieve higher levels of reading achievement. In the handbook, WWC made four recommendations for teaching reading strategies to students in kindergarten through third grade. These four recommendations are: a) teach and develop student's vocabulary and academic language for reading comprehension and making connections to the text, b) teach students phonemic awareness strategies such as letter sounds and making words, c) teach students to decode and identify parts of a word, and d) ensure that students have opportunities to read each day to develop reading comprehension, fluency, and accuracy (Cohen et al., 2017). WWC has also identified and written additional handbooks that provide teachers with strategies to support struggling readers and using assessment data to drive instruction to increase student reading achievement. The Institute of Educational Sciences (2016) stated, "the work of WWC helps teachers, administrators, and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions" (p. 1).

### ***Vocabulary Instruction***

WWC (2016) recommended that teachers teach and develop student vocabulary and academic language. Little (2017) found that vocabulary instruction increased text comprehension for struggling readers. Students from low socioeconomic situations are less likely to have acquired vocabulary as large as their more affluent peers (see Chmielewski, 2019; Costa et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2020; Lam, 2014; Little, 2017; Nelson et al., 2015; Ortlieb, 2013; Strickland et al., 2002). As students were provided

specific instruction, repeated practice, and exposure to the content vocabulary in a variety of ways such as in their reading, writing, and conversations, student reading achievement increased (see Berman et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; WWC, 2016).

Vocabulary instruction for low socioeconomic students increases reading comprehension (Relyea et al., 2020). Relyea et al. (2020) found in a home literacy environment where students and family members engage in literacy activities such as reading books together or telling stories, students' vocabulary knowledge increased. Sobolak (2011) said the intentional development of a vocabulary rich environment, such as teachers developing content word walls, teachers using new vocabulary repeatedly and in multiple ways throughout instruction, and teachers permitting students to participate actively, increased the students' knowledge of unfamiliar words. When students were exposed to new content vocabulary repeatedly, as well as in multiple ways throughout classroom instruction and a home literacy environment, repeated exposure for students who were already behind in vocabulary acquisition increased reading comprehension (Relyea et al., 2020; Sobolak, 2011). Sobolak said when students were active participants in the identification and celebration of new vocabulary, their participation helped them to accept ownership in using the new words and expanding the use of those words into independent practice in meaningful ways.

Nelson et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore kindergarten to third grade teachers' vocabulary instruction in low socioeconomic schools. Nelson et al. found that the teachers were providing vocabulary instruction; however, the largest amount of

time was spent on other reading components during the allotted instructional time. Additionally, Nelson et al. found that vocabulary instruction for students from low socioeconomic circumstances is critical to their learning and the best thing for teachers to do to increase student achievement would be to spend more time on vocabulary instruction. More recent studies have confirmed Nelson et al. research (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020).

### ***Phonological Awareness Strategies***

WWC (2016) identified that teaching students' phonological awareness strategies such as letter sounds, rhyming, and making words as reading strategies to help build and increase student reading achievement. In addition to teaching phonological awareness strategies, WWC recommended that students be taught to decode and identify parts of a word to increase word recognition, reading comprehension and reading fluency. For teachers to build student phonological awareness, WWC recommended that teachers teach students to identify and use letter sounds and that those sounds are put together to make words, as well as that sentences are made up of individual words (Cohen et al., 2017). Decoding strategies are employed when students break words into smaller parts, recognized smaller words in the bigger word, identify consonant blends, vowel sounds, and identify that a compound word that is made up of two words put together to make one word. Student acquisition of the phonological awareness skills is achieved through activities such as the use of manipulative letters, making and building words, and building sentences (see Cohen et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2015; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea

et al., 2020; WWC, 2016). Increased reading achievement occurs when these activities are centered on individual student needs (see Nelson et al., 2015; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020; WWC, 2016).

### ***Reading Comprehension Strategies***

Comprehension occurs when students understand the text vocabulary and can make the necessary connections to understand, recall, and apply their understandings of the content (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Henry et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002; WWC, 2016). Ortlieb (2013) conducted an experimental study with third graders utilizing anticipatory guides in reading and other curricula areas. Ortlieb found that when students are struggling with vocabulary skills, have little prior knowledge to build on, and do not understand the purpose of their reading, their lack of understanding has an impact on their ability to comprehend the reading text. Ortlieb also found that students who were provided practice in making predictions, utilizing questioning strategies, making connections to their learning, and were thinking critically about their reading achieved higher levels of achievement than the control group. Additionally, the results demonstrated that building and reviewing prior knowledge is a critical component in developing a better understanding of new text materials. Ortlieb found that when these comprehension strategies were provided consistently, on a daily basis, opportunities for students to achieve a higher level of reading success increased. More recent studies suggested that teachers of low socioeconomic students provide



opportunities for the students to build on and review prior knowledge (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Henry et al., 2020).

When teachers discuss and model reading comprehension strategies such as questioning, making inferences, visualizing, and making connections, with and for students, student reading achievement increased (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020). Lack of students' prior knowledge of skills being covered was a contributing factor for students struggling with reading comprehension skills (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020). Current research also suggested that for students to achieve reading mastery, teacher understanding of student prior knowledge and helping them make the connection to the new learning is important (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020). Cohen et al. (2017) suggested that as teachers helped students to make the connections to the new learning expectations, provided instruction, and modeled the comprehension strategies, they provided students the opportunity to understand what is being expected of them as it related to the type of genre they were reading.

### ***Employing Data to Drive Instruction***

Data driven instruction is what occurs when teachers use students' formal and informal assessment scores to guide their instruction to meet students' learning needs. Suber (2014) conducted a qualitative case study to develop an understanding of teachers' perceptions of the Reading Mastery Program© (RMP) that was being utilized to increase

student reading achievement. The results of the study indicated that the teachers identified and implemented differentiated instructional strategies and utilized assessment data to meet the needs of struggling readers to increase their reading achievement (Suber, 2014). The results of the study also found that teachers' use of data to drive instruction had a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Suber also found that the teachers utilized reading assessments at specific points during the school year to monitor student reading progress. In addition to what the teachers were doing, Suber found that when administrators provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate as grade level teams or as vertical articulation teams that are made up of multiple grade levels, the teachers had opportunities to analyze the assessment data. Through these collaborative discussions, teachers utilized the information gained from analyzing the student reading assessment data to modify and implement instruction and provide the enrichment or reinforcement strategies that increased student achievement (Suber, 2014).

Reis et al. (2011) conducted an experimental study on a schoolwide enrichment model-reading (SEM-R) program that provided differentiation and enrichment for reading fluency and comprehension in five low socioeconomic urban, suburban, and rural elementary schools across five states. Reis et al. (2011) found that reading enrichment combined with differentiated instruction was an effective instructional approach. Reis et al. also found that when teachers utilized the assessment data to develop instruction, they were able to advance the students to higher reading levels and to drive future instruction to meet the students' diverse needs. Additionally, the results demonstrated that as

teachers evaluated and continued to utilize the assessment data to monitor student learning, they developed an understanding of their instructional effectiveness and were able in turn to create ways to improve their instructional implementation resulting in an increase in student reading achievement. More recent studies have confirmed the research conducted by Reis et al. (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020; Scammacca et al., 2020).

As elementary teachers used formative assessment data to drive reading instruction, student reading achievement increased (Reis et al., 2011; Suber, 2014). Formative pre and post assessment data such as Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), student exit tickets, a written statement of their learning, or questions students may have related to the focus of the lesson are utilized by teachers to monitor student learning and identify student strengths and weaknesses throughout a lesson or unit of instruction. Administrators and instructional specialists who had an understanding of students' assessment data were able to provide teachers with instructional support and direct instruction involving identified standard outcomes and student learning priorities which in turn increased their students' academic achievement (Reis et al., 2011; Suber, 2014).

### ***Differentiating Instruction***

Reading achievement is a critical determinant of a student's academic success (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002;

U.S. Department of Education, 2016d; WWC, 2016). Differentiated instruction is an instructional strategy that teachers employ to meet the diverse needs of students whether students are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) found that it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading comprehension to increase, especially for students from low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as the teachers' differentiated instruction, the students were able to learn the material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom.

### ***Providing Opportunities for Small Group Instruction***

Fountas and Pinnell (2017) researched students' reading achievement and found that small group reading instruction provides teachers the opportunity to implement explicit instruction for students at their identified proficiency levels. Fountas and Pinnell (2017) also identified that during small group instructional time, teachers were able to provide more individualized instruction, as well as monitor student progress more frequently. Fountas and Pinnell (2017) described small group reading instruction as opportunities for teachers to work with smaller groups of students so that reading process skills can be targeted and monitored at the instructional levels of the students. Fountas and Pinnell (2017) also described small group instruction as an effective instructional strategy for all students especially for those who are identified as struggling readers and in need of the more personalized instruction. Costa et al. (2013) found that during small group reading instruction, students experienced fewer distractions, were able to focus

more, and were more likely to share and participate. Costa et al. (2013) also found that when students are instructed in a large group, they experienced more distractions, were less focused, lacked self-confidence to speak out, and participate less.

### ***Instruction to Promote Reading Achievement of Low Socioeconomic Students***

It has been well documented that to increase the reading achievement of low socioeconomic students', teachers need to understand the learning needs of their students and provide instruction that is directed towards individual student learning (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Lai et al., 2021; Liu & Channell, 2015; Mancilla- Nelson et al., 2015; WWC, 2016). Reading instruction that meets the student's individual learning needs equips the student with skills and strategies to increase student reading achievement (see Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Hanselman & Borman, 2013; Kiuru et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2021; Liu & Channell, 2015; Nelson et al., 2015; WWC, 2016).

### ***Curriculum***

In order to meet the needs of low socioeconomic students, research supports that as teachers follow the set curriculum, meet the determined standards, and implement multiple instructional strategies student reading achievement increases (Berman et al., 2018; CCSS Initiative, 2021; Firmender et al., 2013; WWC, 2016). CCSS for reading were developed to provide continuity across the United States to decrease the academic achievement gap that exists between low socioeconomic students and their more affluent peers (see Berman et al., 2018; Chmielewski, 2019; Henry et al., 2020; Savino-Garzon,

2013; Suber, 2014). CCSS were developed to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to different text genres and to curricula that develop critical thinking skills, build vocabulary, strengthen students' knowledge, and make connections both in and outside the classroom. Through these learning opportunities, students are provided strategies to increase their reading achievement as they progress in their educational journey (see CCSS Initiative, 2021; Savino-Garzon, 2013; Suber, 2014).

### **Scripted Reading Programs**

Scripted reading programs are not new to reading education. Scripted reading programs that are highly structured have been chosen by many school systems, particularly in low socioeconomic areas, to meet the students' needs (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020). When implementing these scripted programs, teachers are expected to follow the program implementation procedures that includes reading the scripted directions and dialogue (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Schrauben & Witmer, 2020). However, many teachers tailor those programs to meet the learning needs of the students whom they are serving (see Ainsworth et al., 2012; Azano et al., 2011; Dresser, 2012; Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Powell et al., 2017; Puzio et al., 2020). Implementing best practices such as providing differentiation, utilizing additional resources, and utilizing small group instruction were a part of the tailoring process that teachers employed to meet students' reading learning needs. Schrauben and Witmer (2020) noted that even though the programs are evidenced based and have resulted in students achieving higher levels of learning, the effectiveness

of the programs frequently demonstrated that the percentage of students achieving higher levels was low.

In the late 1800's Monroe and Monroe published reading text with scripted teacher's guides. These reading texts emphasized phonics and the instructional scripts provided teachers with a direct oral reading of the script, phonics instruction, and readiness instructional guidance (see Commeyras, 2007; Ladnier-Hicks et al., 2010; Powell et al., 2017; Savino-Garzon, 2013). Then, in the early to mid-1900s, the Dick and Jane series published by Foresman, a scripted reading program, became popular (see Commeyras, 2007; Ladnier-Hicks et al., 2010; Savino-Garzon, 2013). The Dick and Jane series was a scripted program that used the look-say method and was considered a whole word approach. Later, in the 1960's, teachers utilized the direct instructional (DI) approach developed by Engelmann and Bereiter to improve the reading achievement of disadvantaged students (see Commeyras, 2007; Jensen, 2011; Savino-Garzon, 2013). The DI approach turns from the whole word approach back to basal reading and the teaching of phonics that was first introduced in the early to mid-1800's with the McGuffey readers (see Commeyras, 2007; Ladnier-Hicks et al., 2010; Savino-Garzon, 2013). Currently, the DI approach is known as the scripted reading approach.

Many scripted reading programs have been developed by educational publishers and have been and are being implemented in school systems across the nation. Reading Mastery (RM) published by McGraw-Hill, Success for All (SfA) developed by

researchers at John Hopkins University and RS published by Pearson Scott Foresman are a few of the scripted reading programs most widely chosen.

### ***Reading Mastery***

Reading Mastery (RM) is formerly known as Direct Instruction System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading (Commeyras, 2007; Suber, 2014). The National Institute for Direct Instruction (2015) found that the RM program emphasizes three instructional components: (a) teachers model unfamiliar content expectations for students' such as comprehension skills, word recognition skills, and decoding skills, (b) teachers provide direct practice related to the instructional skills, and (c) teachers provide time for individualized practice and application of the content skills. Lessons are 30 to 45 minutes long with a particular focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Commeyras, 2007; McGraw-Hill Education, 2015; National Institute for Direct Instruction, 2015; Suber, 2014). The script incorporates transition signals teachers are to use to encourage student participation, help keep students focused and engaged, as well as to guide the pace of the lesson (Commeyras, 2007; McGraw-Hill Education, 2015; National Institute for Direct Instruction, 2015; Suber, 2014).

### ***Success for All***

SfA was developed by researchers Slavin, Karweit, and Madden from John Hopkins University through a partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools (Cheung et al., 2021; Hanselman & Borman, 2013; Hingstman et al., 2021; Success for All Foundation, 2015; van Kuijk et al., 2021). The goal of the SfA scripted reading program



is to increase the reading achievement levels of disadvantaged students (Cheung et al., 2021; Hingstman et al., 2021). Cooperative learning strategies are utilized by the teachers to motivate and engage students in the learning process such as through student teamwork, students helping each other, and students learning to see situations from other perspectives (Cheung et al., 2021; Hanselman & Borman, 2013; Hingstman et al., 2021; Savino-Garzon, 2013; Success for All Foundation, 2015; van Kuyk et al., 2021).

Implementation of the SfA scripted reading program in schools serving low socioeconomic students has increased student reading achievement (Cheung et al., 2021; Hingstman et al., 2021). In these schools, the teachers were provided extensive training, as well as provided constant support from a program facilitator who also worked with the principals (Cheung et al., 2021; Hingstman et al., 2021). However, the teacher participants from these research studies demonstrated frustration with the implementation of the SfA for meeting the needs of the low achieving reading students (Cheung et al., 2021; Hingstman et al., 2021).

### ***Reading Street***

RS is a research-based highly scripted reading program designed to help teachers increase student reading achievement through incorporating motivating and engaging literature, and employing reliable instructional strategies (Pearson Education Group, 2015a; Savino-Garzon, 2013). RS involves using direct instructional teaching strategies where teachers demonstrate and model unfamiliar content for the students. Teachers are provided specific strategies for differentiating instruction according to the student's

ability levels, progress-monitoring to determine student growth and specific details for providing small group instruction according to the reading instructional needs of each individual student. The scripted program includes fictional and informational text reading selections teachers are to use for large and small group instruction, instructs teachers to model and incorporate close reading strategies for building a deeper level of comprehension of the selected text, provides students opportunities to use different writing strategies to demonstrate their understanding, and provides teachers with assessments tools to monitor student performance (Pearson Education Group, 2015a; Savino-Garzon, 2013).

Scripted reading programs have been researched allowing the publisher to publicize the programs as being research-based. For example, Pearson Education Group worked with the Empirical Education Incorporation research firm to conduct a quasi-experimental study on the *Scott Foresman Links to Reading First*, an intervention component to support struggling readers, of *Scott Foresman Reading* (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The study compared 88 first to third grade student DIBELS assessment data from the controlled group utilizing Scott Foresman Links to Reading First and from the non-controlled group utilizing the current reading program (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The results of the study demonstrated that the 37 first through third grade students in the controlled group experienced higher gains in student reading achievement than the 51 students in the non-controlled group (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). *Scott*

*Foresman Links to Reading First* intervention program is utilized as a component of the RS reading program (Pearson Education Group, 2015b).

Gatti Evaluation Incorporated conducted a quasi-experimental research study on the RS reading program and aligned the study to the WWC guidelines (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The assessment data for this study was collected from NCES and compared students' national pre and post reading achievement scores of those who utilized RS and those who did not utilize RS (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The results of the Gatti Evaluation Incorporated found that states and districts who were utilizing the RS reading program saw increases in student reading achievement (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). Gatti Evaluation Incorporated found that the researchers were able to identify five areas of research-based best practices that the RS reading program incorporates into the reading strategies such as (a) placing priority on appropriate reading skills at different grade levels , (b) utilizing progress monitoring to determine increases in student reading achievement and identify reading difficulties, (c) differentiating instruction to identify and meet individual student reading needs, (d) increasing thinking, learning, and vocabulary through different types of reading genres, and (e) providing writing experiences enabling students to demonstrate their understanding (Pearson Education Group, 2015b).

Pearson Education Group (2015b) had Magnolia Consulting conduct an independent one-year research study. Like the Empirical Education Incorporation and Gatti Evaluation Incorporated, Magnolia Consulting aligned their research study with the

What Works Clearinghouse strict guidelines. This randomized-controlled-trial study was conducted in five schools across the nation (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). It included 48 teachers and 944 students with reading levels from those students with high reading achievement levels to those students who were considered to have low reading achievement levels (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The data were collected from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Gates-McGinire Reading Test (GMRT-4) administered as a pre and post assessment and DIBELS which was given three times during the school year: the beginning, the middle, and the end. The results demonstrated that in classrooms where RS was being implemented, student reading achievement increased by more than 24 percentage points on the GMRT-4 and more than 26 percentage points on the DIBELS from the beginning pre assessment to the post assessments (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The research data also demonstrated that the RS reading program worked well for all students of varying reading achievement levels (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). Magnolia Consulting conducted a second-year research study using five other schools across the nation using the GMRT-4 and DIBELS assessments to compare the research results (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). The results corroborated the findings of the first study. Student reading achievement increased by 30 percentage points on the GMRT-4 and increased by 47 percentage points on DIBELS (Pearson Education Group, 2015b). Findings from the Empirical Education Incorporation, Gatti Evaluation Incorporated, and Magnolia Consulting studies conducted for the Pearson Education Group on the implementation of the RS reading program demonstrated that in classrooms

where the RS reading program was being implemented, student reading achievement increased.

### **Conclusion**

Literature related to reading achievement in Title 1 classrooms that are comprised of low socioeconomic students who have historically underachieved in reading demonstrated that there are many factors that contribute to students' academic achievement. These factors are identified as family and community factors, school and teacher factors, and student factors (see Connor et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2021; Lucariello et al., 2012; Mancilla-Martinez, & Lesaux, 2010; McDaniel et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a; Nelson et al., 2011; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Wang et al., 2020). As teachers develop an understanding of these factors and students they are teaching, they are able to develop and tailor instruction to meet students' individual instructional needs (see Connor et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2021; Lucariello et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020).

Educators need to understand and address the factors that affect the reading achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Lai et al., 2021; Ortlieb, 2013; Porche et al., 2012). The research studies emphasized the importance for teachers of low socioeconomic students to know and understand their student's background knowledge and individual learning needs. As teachers of low socioeconomic classrooms used information to implement research-based

curricula and pedagogical practices, students experienced higher levels of academic achievement (see Lai et al., 2021; Suber, 2014).

There are many factors that affect Title 1 elementary reading achievement. These factors included family factors, community factors, school factors, and teacher factors (see Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Lucariello et al., 2012; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010; NCES, 2015a; Nelson et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020). When principals, teachers, and support staff understand these factors and apply that understanding to instructional practices, this results in demonstrated increase of students' reading achievement (see Connor et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2020; Little, 2017; Lucariello et al., 2012; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010; NCES, 2015a; Wang et al., 2020). In addition to understanding the factors that affect Title 1 elementary reading, research supports that the implementation of best practices are found to be highly effective and help students achieve their highest level of academic performance (see Cohen et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Puzio et al., 2020; What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). The best practices that were identified include: a) vocabulary instruction, b) phonological awareness strategies, c) reading awareness strategies, d) employing data to drive instruction, and e) differentiating instruction (see Cohen et al., 2017; Freidus & Noguera, 2017; Puzio et al., 2020; Quinn et al., 2020; Relyea et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002).

Scripted reading programs have been chosen by many school systems, particularly in low socioeconomic areas, to meet the students' needs (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020). These programs include RMP, SfA, and RS. In implementing the scripted reading

programs, teachers are expected to read the script (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Schrauben & Witmer, 2020). However, many teachers abandon the script and tailor those programs to meet what they perceive as the learning needs of students whom they are serving (Ainsworth et al., 2012; Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Powell et al., 2017; Puzio et al., 2020).

### **Implications**

The results of this study led me to develop a policy paper. I developed the policy paper to provide district administrators in the study district with recommendations that would lead to better implementation of the RS reading program at all Title 1 schools in the district and, perhaps, increased student reading achievement.

### **Summary**

The problem that this study addressed was the uneven impact of the RS reading program on reading achievement in NBPSD Title 1 schools. The focus of this study was how teachers, principals, and PDLTs experienced implementation of the RS reading program in their Title 1 classrooms. The perceptions of teachers, principals, and PDLTs who were employed at four Title 1 HPS were compared with those employed at four Title 1 LPS in order to understand, from teachers', principals', and PDLTs' perspectives the uneven impact of reading achievements after the first year of the RS reading program. In Section 1, I provided a brief discussion of national concerns about the U.S. student reading achievement scores and what the NBPSD implemented to address low reading achievement of its students. Evidence that supports the problem as well as the evidence

for the problem and implications for social change were described. A literature review was presented and potential projects that could be developed from results were described.

In Section 2, the study design and methodology that I employed are discussed. The selection of study participants, data collection process, how data for this project study were analyzed, how participants' confidentiality was protected and how issues of validity and reliability are addressed. In Section 3, the project is described, goals for the project are identified, and an evaluation of the project is provided. In Section 4, my reflections on the study and project are described and recommendations for alternative approaches and directions for future research are provided.



## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

For this qualitative research study, a case study approach was best suited for understanding teachers' and principals' experiences involving implementation of the RS reading program and how those experiences explained the uneven impact on reading achievement after implementation of this program. The case study approach involves focusing on a small group of participants to understand their experiences in terms of how what is being studied affects them (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yin, 2017). Qualitative methodologies allow for specific issues to be studied in-depth in order to develop a deeper understanding of experiences, as well as behaviors, emotions, and feelings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yin, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2017) said case studies are an intensive exploration of a bounded system such as programs, events, activities, individuals, or processes. Merriam and Grenier (2019) said case study approaches are useful when issues in education, program evaluations, and policy decisions are being studied.

The overall research questions for this qualitative case study were:

RQ1: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ2: How did principals and PDLTs at the four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ3: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS compare in terms of their experiences with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ4: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ5: How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 students' reading achievement in the NBPSD?

The gap in practice addressed was lack of understanding of the uneven impact of the implementation of the RS reading program on student reading achievement in the NBPSD after the first year of implementation. Employing a case study approach allowed for the development and attainment of an in-depth understanding of teacher, principal, and PDLT experiences of implementing RS and the uneven impact of the program on student reading achievement.

### **Research Design**

For this study, the case study design was used because research questions were best answered by exploring teacher, principal, and PDLT experiences and collecting rich and detailed data from a relatively small number of participants. Creswell and Poth (2017) said when using a case study approach, the researcher is exploring a phenomenon or case that has occurred within a bounded system. Merriam and Grenier (2019) said a case study includes a detailed explanations and investigations of a bounded system. I explored how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compared, as

well as how this comparison explained the uneven effect of the RS reading program on elementary level reading achievement in the NBPSD.

Quantitative researchers attempt to collect broad data in order to study relationships between independent and dependent variables or identify possible causes. A quantitative design was not selected because the study focus was not intended to explore relationships between variables or to identify cause.

### **Alternative Qualitative Approaches**

Other qualitative approaches, including ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology were considered but not selected.

#### ***Ethnography***

An ethnographic study is an in-depth and analytic description of a specific cultural situation. Because the study was not intended to explore the culture within which RS is implemented, an ethnographic design was not selected.

#### ***Grounded Theory***

The grounded theory design is appropriate when the researcher is developing a theory about phenomena being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yin, 2017). Because the study was not intended to develop a theory to explain teacher, principal, and PDLT experiences and perceptions, this design was not selected.

#### ***Phenomenology***

Phenomenological studies involve exploring lived experiences of participants. Phenomenological studies focus on individual's experiences and how those experiences

change into perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Because the study was not intended to explore intense human emotional experiences of teachers, principals, and PDLTs who were implementing RS in their classrooms, a phenomenological design was not selected.

### **Description of the Study School District**

The NBPSD is located in the Northeastern U.S. It is considered one of the largest school districts in the U.S., as well as the second largest in its state. During 2018, at the time of data collection there were 208 schools with a population of approximately 132,000 students and 22,000 employees. The school district is divided into three areas with each area having an assigned director who oversees school administration. The location of each school determines whether it is considered to be urban, suburban, or rural.

The NBPSD student population was comprised of 60% African Americans, 4% Caucasians, and 36% other ethnicities. Approximately 66% of the district's student population was considered to be of low socioeconomic status (NCES, 2015a). Of the 208 schools, 80 had been identified as Title 1 schools with 64 of those schools being elementary schools. Reading achievement data for these 67 Title 1 elementary schools showed that Title 1 students demonstrated lower achievement in reading compared to non-Title 1 schools in reading.

Each school within the NBPSD employed a PDLT. PDLTs are responsible for attending district wide professional development programs (PD) that provide training

sessions on reading implementation strategies. Then, the PDLTs disseminate what they learn to teachers at their schools.

### **Selection of Participants**

For this case study, the participants were purposefully selected using the following criteria: Teachers selected to participate in the study were third to fifth grade reading teachers who taught reading in HPS or LPS. PDLTs were those who were PDLTs at the selected schools. Principals selected to participate in the study were those who were administrators at the selected study schools. After obtaining IRB permission, (IRB # 09-20-17-0094846), the principals at six selected schools (three HPS and three LPS) were contacted and asked for a list of names and email addresses of the teachers who met the selection criteria. Then, I sent participant invitations through the NBPSD emails and invited teachers, principals, and PDLTs from the schools to participate in the study. The invitation included an outline of the study, an explanation of why they were invited to participate, the consent forms, and an explanation of ethical concerns such as how confidentiality and protection from harm would be maintained, as well as a contact number for those who preferred to respond by phone rather than email. I allowed 7 days for the participants to review the invitation. Only two responses from teachers (one HPS and one LPS), two PDLTs (one HPS and one LPS), and two principal responses (one LPS and one HPS) were received. Because I did not receive a sufficient number of teacher responses after the several emails were sent, I requested permission from the IRB and NBPSD to recruit teachers from four other schools (two LPS and two HPS). As a

result, eight responses from teachers, (four HPS and four LPS) were received. Once I received the required number of participants, I contacted the participants to discuss the study, schedule an interview date, time, and select a location or a time for a phone interview. The participants who agreed to be interviewed face-to-face selected their choice of location for the interview so that disruptions were minimized, confidentiality was maintained, and a quality recording of the interview was acquired. For those who chose to be interviewed by phone, we agreed to a date and time for the phone interview.

In this study, the final sample included 10 teacher participants (five LPS and five HPS). The teacher participants had three or more years of teaching experience and had previous experience with a reading program other than RS. Additionally, all third to fifth grade reading levels were represented. I constructed a sample of two PDLTs, one HPS and one LPS, and two principals, one HPS and one LPS. This sample allowed me to collect rich data to answer the research questions.

Prior to beginning the study, I established and maintained a working relationship of trust, honesty, and respect with the teacher, principal, and PDLT participants by being open about the study, answering questions they had, and talking with them so that they did not feel threatened, but comfortable and confident throughout the research process.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews with Participants**

Yin (2017) noted that conducting interviews is a way to gather the in-depth and detailed data through individual or group conversations. I collected data for this study

from February through June 2018 utilizing individual in person or phone interviews. Each interview was recorded on a digital recorder.

The selection of the location for conducting the in-person interviews with the principal participants was selected by the principals. The principal interviews were conducted in their offices. The face-to-face interview process lasted about an hour and included time for informal talk such as getting acquainted. At the beginning of the interviews, I stated the purpose of the study for clarity, and assured the participants that confidentiality was maintained. Then, I transitioned into the open-ended questions guided by the interview protocol (Appendix B) and used probes to allow them to expand on their responses with examples and/or clarify. I followed the same procedures with the teachers and PDLTs all of whom selected to do the interviews by phone. After each interview was completed, I transcribed the recording. Once the transcription was completed, I provided each of the participants an opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy and to add any additional details.

While I conducted the interviews, I kept track of my observations of the interviews and any emerging understandings that I had. I kept a reflective journal to document my thoughts and ideas about the research process and about the data as they emerged. The interview questions were sufficient to answer the research questions as shown by the interview protocol (see Appendix D).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher in a qualitative case study is the main instrument for data collection, analysis, reflection, and it is important that the researcher be aware of biases and monitor them. I have been teaching in the NBPSD for the past 24 years as a teacher in Title 1 schools. When teaching kindergarten, I was the grade level chairperson. In 2013, I was the Professional Development Lead Teacher (PDLT) for Math within the school where I was teaching at that time. When asked to be the PDLT for reading the following year, 2014, I declined the position so that the research for this project study would not be compromised.

Even though I have been teaching in the school district for 24 years, I did not know any of the teachers selected for this study. The teachers I have worked with and am working with now have changed from year to year due to the high rate of teacher turnover. I may have attended workshops with a few of the teachers I invited to participate, but I have not worked with them or had a leadership role with these teachers. I am viewed by them as another member of the teaching team in the NBPSD.

I was one of the NBPSD third grade teachers who implemented RS during the first year it was implemented. I used the CIM, the RS reading program components, and the different writing materials to implement instruction to the students. Additionally, I utilized additional resources to meet the needs of my students who were scored at the *basic* level on their reading achievement assessments. Although the Title I school where I taught did not meet the criteria for the selection of HPS or LPS, the student reading



assessment data from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2013-2014 school year demonstrated that student reading achievement at my school increased after the first year of the implementation of the RS reading program. I believed that the implementation of the RS reading program contributed to the increase in reading achievement at my school. To control for this bias, I was careful to ask neutral questions during the interviews, to maintain neutral body language and facial expressions when participants were describing their perceptions, and to maintain awareness of this bias during data analysis.

### **Researcher Bias**

To manage my biases, I was cautious not to let my beliefs and experiences influence the data collection process or the data analysis. I used interview questions that were carefully developed so as not to lead the participants in any particular direction. During the interviews, I was careful not to interject my opinions, use body gestures, or facial expressions that would influence the participants. In completing the data analysis, I was careful to manage and monitor myself to avoid my biases during data analysis.

### **Ethical Issues**

I put in place procedures to protect the participants' rights, maintain confidentiality, and protect them from harm as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2017). These procedures included providing the participants with an informed consent form, clearly sharing the purpose of the study, maintaining confidentiality, demonstrating respect, and establishing an effective form of communication to be utilized during the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Maintaining confidentiality was

accomplished by assigning each participant a number and HPS (high performing school) or LPS (low performing school) so that their identities were kept confidential. The collected data were stored on my personal computer that is password protected and stored in my home. Other individuals who viewed the collected data were restricted to the members of my research committee. All papers were shredded, and recordings and computer files will be permanently deleted after 5 years following the completion of the research study.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis included coding collected data, finding patterns, determining themes, providing thorough explanations, using reflection to explain results, and checking credibility of results (see Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yin, 2017).

### **Data Coding**

Creswell and Poth (2017) noted that the coding process breaks down and categorizes the data to form explanations and helps to identify themes that occur from the data analysis. I analyzed data using a two-cycle process. During cycle one, I coded the data from each group of schools using a list of provisional codes (Appendix E) that were predetermined prior to the data collection process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During cycle two, the provisional codes were aggregated and analyzed into major themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Provisional and Pattern Coding**

For cycle one of this study, I coded the transcripts using 20 provisional codes developed from the literature review and the conceptual framework (Appendix D). During cycle two of the data analysis process, I pattern coded the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) described pattern codes as “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (p. 69). Miles and Huberman (1994) further noted that pattern codes are the second step to the coding process that connects the data summaries in a significant way. I read the interview data several times to achieve familiarity with the data. Then, I pattern coded the data to analyze the collected data into smaller parts. As patterns emerged, I coded the data by writing the codes on the transcripts. As I coded, I maintained a list of the emerging coded so that I was consistent in coding the data. Then, I compared the provisional codes and the pattern codes and from that comparison, made a final list of codes. I used the final codes to recode the data. During the coding process, I kept track of any emerging understandings in my journal. The data was saved to a spreadsheet where the data could be presented in an organized manner and be password protected.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Creswell and Poth (2017) suggested that the researcher identify a small number of themes to provide detailed information rather than identify a lot of themes and only provide generalized information. I analyzed the codes and arrived at a list of four or five themes for each of the two groups of schools to account for all the data and show the

meanings of the data. These themes captured the essential meanings of the data. I answered the research questions by comparing the findings for each of the two groups of schools.

### **Organizing and Managing Data**

Once an interview was completed, I immediately transcribed the digital recording into a word document. After all the transcriptions were completed, I created a spreadsheet document for each group of schools. I created a matrix to show each of the participants' responses to each of the interview questions. The matrix had six tab sections, each labeled as an interview question. On the matrix, I listed the responses for that particular interview question, referencing the participant. During this process, I recorded emerging themes and reflections in a column set up within the tab section. The documents were stored, and password protected on my personal laptop.

### **Discussion of Data Analysis**

Qualitative researchers provide a written discussion of the data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The written discussion includes a summary with supporting details. In my discussion, I presented the data and discussed the themes and their meanings with reference to the data, providing the information in a way that the readers find easy to read and comprehend.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Ensuring validity and reliability of the research is an important component. Creswell and Poth (2017) suggested employing peer debriefing, and rich, thick

description. If the participant questioned any aspect of the transcript, I contacted the participant to discuss the problem and reach a consensus about what was meant by the statements during the interview. In my journal, I kept track of all questions about the transcripts and how consensus was reached. I described the transcript discussions in the section where I described the findings.

Peer debriefing is another strategy that I used to maintain validity and reliability. Peer debriefing provides another view that questions and encourages the researcher to restudy the transcripts and think about the data from another perspective, as well as to minimize researcher bias (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I employed a Walden EdD graduate to provide feedback on the data analysis to ensure that it aligned with the data coding, as well as to monitor the validity and reliability components. I reviewed the feedback from the peer debriefer and reconsidered my analysis as necessary. The peer debriefing results are reported in the data analysis portion of Section 2 where I describe the data analysis.

Qualitative research studies allow the researcher to collect rich data that help to provide a deeper understanding of the problem being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I chose to use a qualitative research design to develop a deep understanding of the teacher, PDLT, and principal perceptions of implementing the RS reading program.

### **Data Analysis Results**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to achieve an understanding of teachers' and principals' experiences of the implementation of the RS reading program and how those experiences explained the uneven impact on reading achievement after the implementation of the RS reading program. I interviewed two principals (one from a HPS and one from a LPS), two Reading PDLTs (one from a HPS and one from a LPS), and ten third to fifth grade reading teachers (five from HPS and five from LPS), to develop an understanding of their experiences in implementing the RS reading program.

To analyze the data, I conducted two cycles of coding. During cycle one, I coded the data from each of the transcripts using a list of provisional codes (Appendix D). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), provisional codes are derived from the literature review and predetermined prior to the data collection process. During cycle two, I coded the transcripts again using the iterative process of pattern coding. This allowed me to read the transcripts of the interviews several times to achieve familiarity with the data. Next, I organized the data onto Excel spreadsheets by the research questions. Then, I analyzed the provisional codes and pattern codes as a means to analyze the data into major themes.

The overall questions that guided this qualitative case study were:

RQ1: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ2: How did principals and PDLTs at the four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ3: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS compare in terms of their experiences with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ4: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ5: How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 students' reading achievement in the NBPSD?

### **Analysis of Data Collected from Principals**

Analysis of the HPS principal responses revealed three themes: (a) principal provided a leadership support team and PD resources as support for teachers, (b) teacher collaborative planning contributed to the success of the RS implementation, and (c) principal perceived that teacher were challenged by their unfamiliarity of and understanding of the RS curriculum and by student mobility, and that they needed more time for collaborative planning. The analysis of the LPS principal responses revealed three themes: (a) principal provided support for administrators and support staff, PD support for teachers, and two resources (Framework for Teaching and Balanced Literacy Structures), (b) uninterrupted reading block and turnkey training were factors that contributed to the success of the RS implementation, and (c) principal perceived that teachers required reading specialist support, parental support, and PD support, and were

challenged by large class sizes. Tables 3 and 4 describe the themes and codes that were derived from the data collected from the principals.

**Table 3**

*Codes and Themes from the HPS Principal Interview Responses*

Provisional Code	Pattern Code	Theme
Principal Support	PD for RS, reading specialist, learning walks, observations, use of RS materials, all specialists, consistent leadership, monitoring instruction, direct feedback, analyze data, identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses	Principal provided a leadership support team and PD resources as support for teachers
Curriculum, Instruction	Time to plan, team, lateral, and collaborative planning, RS materials, technology, lesson planning, small and whole group instruction	Teacher Collaborative planning contributed to the success of the RS implementation
Instruction, teacher qualifications, mobility	Familiarity of materials, knowledge of pedagogy, student mobility, time	Principal perceived that teachers were challenged by their unfamiliarity of and understanding of the RS curriculum and by student mobility, and that they needed more time for collaborative planning

***HPSP Theme 1: Principal Provided a Leadership Support Team and PD Resources as Support for Teachers***

**Leadership Support Team.** HPSP explained that the leadership support team, composed of the principal, assistant principal, reading specialist, PDLT, resource support teachers such as the Special education teachers and intervention teachers, and department chairpersons, developed PD to present to the teachers during the collaborative planning



time. These PD programs were developed based on information that the leadership team collected regarding the teachers' implementation of instruction collected during the learning walks, observations, and monitoring of instruction to support the implementation of the RS reading program.

**PD Resources.** HPSP further explained that these PD programs developed from the learning walks contributed to the teachers' success in the implementation of the RS reading program. HPSP stated, "So, we [the leadership team] use the learning walks in order to gather data... we take that data, we analyze it and share the feedback with the teachers of the findings that we saw, some of the strengths and weaknesses. Then, from that we develop our PDs." Additionally, HPSP stated that she believed that the PD program that the teachers received before the start of the school year prepared them for the RS implementation.

### ***HPSP Theme 2: Teacher Collaborative Planning Contributed to the Success of the RS Implementation***

**Collaborative Planning.** HPSP identified that collaborative planning time that was provided for the teachers was important. HPSP stated, "I would add the planning process, collaborative planning." This collaboration time allowed the teachers to meet together for an hour once a week to plan instruction, review student assessment data, and receive PD information. At the high performing school, the teachers planned in two ways: a) they planned horizontally and b) they planned laterally. HPSP stated that at her school she used horizontal planning with all members of the grade level team during

collaborative planning time and lateral planning by content areas because the third through fifth grades are departmentalized. HPSP stated, “We’re departmentalized. So, during A Week we plan as a team grade level and then, during B Week we have lateral planning by content.” During the lateral collaborative planning times, members of the administrative team (the principal, reading specialist, PDLT, resources support teachers and department chairpersons) attended and contributed to the teachers’ discussions and planning.

***HPSP Theme 3: Principal Perceived That Teachers Were Challenged by Their Unfamiliarity of and Understanding of the RS Curriculum and by Student Mobility, and That They needed More Time for Collaborative Planning***

**Planning and Collaboration Time.** HPSP stated that the teachers needed more time to plan and collaborate than they had been provided during their regular planning time. HPSP stated that to meet the teachers planning needs, she provided after school collaborative planning sessions for the teachers. These after school collaborative planning sessions provided the teachers additional time to plan and clarify what was being discussed. Because the collaborative planning time occurred after school hours, the teachers used additional time, outside of their required time, to have those conversations, plan for instruction, and to check for clarity. The reading specialist participated in the after school collaborative planning sessions, as well, in order to support the teachers as they planned their implementation of the RS reading program.

**Unfamiliarity With the RS Curriculum.** HPSP stated that unfamiliarity with the RS curriculum was a challenge for the first-year teachers who were either new to the teaching profession or new to the school district. HPSP explained that the training that the first-year teachers received was during their week of orientation before school started, and the training the teachers received during the school year was not rigorous enough. HPSP explained, “for first year teachers, being unfamiliar with the curriculum. That was a challenge.”

**Knowledge and Understanding of RS Curriculum.** Another challenge that HPSP perceived was that tenured teachers, those with more than 5 years of teaching experience, did not have enough knowledge of the RS curriculum and how RS instruction is to be presented. The RS reading program requires teachers to implement instructional strategies that were different from other reading programs. HPSP stated, “for those [teachers] that are tenured, the challenge was making sure that they really knew the pedagogy instead of relying on their past teaching experiences.” The challenge was that the tenured teachers were used to teaching in a certain way and now they were having to learn and readjust their own teaching strategies to implement the new strategies.

**Student Mobility.** HPSP stated that student mobility was a challenge for teachers at the school. Because of the school’s location and the socioeconomic status of the students, the school has a high rate of students transitioning into or out of the school. The high student turnover requires that teachers assess incoming students to teach or reteach and ready them for the RS reading program. This was a challenge because the teachers

were having to take instruction time to assess the incoming students so that they could teach or reteach the students at their appropriate reading levels.

**Table 4**

*Codes and Themes from the LPS Principal Interview Data*

Provisional Code	Pattern Code	Theme
Principal Support	PD for RS, framework for teaching, reading specialist, instructional lead teachers, reading chairpersons, reading department support, balanced literacy support, alignment with PARCC and CC	Principal provided support for administrators and support staff, PD support for teachers, and two resources (Framework for Teaching and Balanced Literacy Structures)
Curriculum, Instruction	RS reading instructional strategies, uninterrupted reading block time, principal's knowledge of the RS reading curriculum, RS materials, supplemental technology reading resources, lesson planning, small and whole group instruction,	Uninterrupted Reading Block and Turnkey Training were factors that contributed to the success of the RS implementation
Instruction, teacher preparedness, mobility	No reading specialist, lack of time for teachers to adequately plan, analyze data, and teacher discussions of best practices, lack of support for teachers, lack of collaborative conversations, student mobility	Principal perceived that teachers required reading specialist support, parental support, and PD support, and were challenged by large class sizes.

***LPSP Theme 1: Principal Provided Support for Administrators and Support Staff, PD Support for Teachers, and Two Resources (Framework for Teaching and Balanced Literacy Structures)***

**PD Support for Administrators and Support Staff.** One type of support that LPSP identified is RS PD support that the district provides for administrators and leadership team (assistant principals, reading specialists, instructional lead teacher,

reading chairpersons, PLDT's) that provides them with an understanding of the expectations for implementing the RS reading program so that they are better able to understand what is going on in the classroom. LPSP stated that she, like all the district principals, attended the district trainings provided by the Reading Department for them. These sessions provided the principals an overview of the RS reading program and an understanding of what the reading block curriculum should include. LPSP stated, "...so building level administrators were well versed on the reading curriculum and understood what should occur throughout the reading block... and becoming more fluent in what teachers are doing every day in the classroom with children."

**PD Support for Teachers.** LPSP stated that the teachers at their school were provided Turnkey PDs by members of the leadership team with the focus being on the instructional reading components of RS. The leadership team members were provided training prior to the PDs that they provide for the teachers. LPSP stated "There was a systemic push by the school district's reading department around providing focused professional development to ensure teachers were very clear regarding the instructional components of the Reading Street program." The leadership team then took that information back to their schools to inform teachers during collaborative planning sessions. LPSP stated, "The support staff [PDLTs, reading specialists, reading resource staff] also received deliberate professional development, which allowed for stronger turnkey capabilities as they came back to the schoolhouse to provide support and trainings."

**FfT Resource.** The FfT is the tool used by the administrators in the district to evaluate the teacher's implementation of instruction, the effectiveness of that instruction, and the success of student performance throughout the NBPSD. FfT is the tool that principals use to provide feedback to teachers to improve their instruction so they can improve student reading achievement. The FfT guides the evidence of what the school leadership team collects and evaluates during classroom observations. LPSP stated that teacher support is guided by the Framework for Teaching because "we [administration, leadership team, and teachers] know that this is the document that is used in order to evaluate instruction, evaluate student performance, and also provide feedback to teachers."

**Balanced Literacy Resource.** The Balanced Literacy program is typically used by teachers in the primary classrooms focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency and reading comprehension (WWC, 2016). In the NBPSD (2016), the Balanced Literacy program was implemented in all schools by the district to help teachers develop and strengthen students' phonological awareness skills with the combination of literature-based activities, as well as providing students the instructional support they need as they learn to read and write. LPSP explained that the Balanced Literacy program at their school is used to help students transition from second to third grade. With the implementation of the RS reading program and the level of reading expectations the RS program expected for the student, LPSP stated that in their school the teachers started to implement balanced literacy into the intermediate reading

instruction. LPP stated that balanced literacy is used in the district specifically for kindergarten through second grade, but “with the implementation of Reading Street, we are carefully revisiting Balanced Literacy Structures within our buildings.” Teachers in Kindergarten through second grade utilized a reading program different from the RS reading program. When the students got to third grade, the RS reading program was used and the expectations were challenging for the students. In continuing to teach the Balanced Literacy structures, the third grade teachers were continuing to provide those balanced literacy strategy supports in combination with the RS instructional reading strategies. LPSP attributed the increases in the student reading level scores to the Reading Department support to build teacher capacity refocusing on RS curriculum and alignment with PARCC and Common Core. LPSP stated that the Balanced Literacy support “allowed teachers to focus more around instructional strategies and allowed them to have these Ah ha moments that they may not have had before simply because they’re coming back together.” Even though these third through fifth grade teachers may have taught reading in their particular grade levels prior to implementing the RS reading program, the Reading Department had brought third through fifth grade teachers together to focus and collaborate on the implementation of RS and the new expectations.

***LPSP Theme 2: Uninterrupted Reading Block and Turnkey Training Were Factors That Contributed to the Success of the RS Implementation***

**Uninterrupted Reading Block.** A reading block is an uninterrupted amount of predetermined time, during which teachers implement a research-based reading

curriculum where whole group and small group instruction in reading is provided for students. For example, LPSP stated, “An uninterrupted reading curriculum block (as much as possible), ... can help teachers dig more deeply into the reading program.”

**Turnkey Training.** LPSP stated that they and the lead teacher received RS training so that they could understand what should occur throughout the reading curriculum block. For example, LPSP stated, “Using this information from the PD, I’m not just evaluating or observing, but I really am becoming more fluent in what teachers are doing every day in the classroom with children.” Additionally, LPSP stated, “the expectation becomes you’re able to then go back and turnkey.”

*LPSP Theme 3: Principal Perceived That Teachers Required Reading Specialist Support, Parental Support, and PD Support, and Were Challenged by Large Class Sizes.*

**Reading Specialist Support.** LPSP stated that a reading specialist would have been helpful in helping the teachers implement the program and in providing additional support for underachieving students. LPSP stated that she was unable to hire a reading specialist because of budget restrictions. However, she recognized that a reading specialist’s position at the school is important in helping the teachers. LPSP stated that “A reading specialist is imperative to student success.” LPSP stated, “our school does not have a reading specialist – so I believe that someone dedicated to this one role would be a huge asset to the reading program...because we’re an elementary school and this is the



foundation for reading for our scholars that should just be a normal position, a locked position.”

**Parental Support.** LPSP explained that teachers asked for the leadership team to improve parental support. LPSP stated that a challenge that the teachers identified was that the parents were not able to help their children at home because they did not understand the RS reading expectations. The teachers stated that they needed leadership to help parents develop an understanding of the RS reading program so that they would be able to help their child at home. In recognizing this need, the administrative team developed informational training opportunities for the parents. LPSP stated “This information helps parents to understand the instructional expectations. The trainings also provide parents the opportunity to understand how the reading assessment scores identify where their child is performing and the goal their child needs to achieve by the end of the school year.”

**PD Opportunities for Teachers.** Additionally, LPSP perceived that teachers needed to have opportunities to attend RS PDs themselves, have access to materials that support reading instruction, the flexibility to be creative with instruction rather than following the script word for word, and the ability to integrate the use of technology to support student reading achievement. LPSP stated, “Always professional development...access to materials, ability to communicate to parents, integration of technology, and the ability to be creative in their instructional approach.” The reading

PDs for the teachers needed to focus on specific curriculum strategies that were being implemented.

**Large Class Sizes.** LPSP identified that large class sizes were another challenge that his/her teachers faced. LPSP recognized that smaller class sizes would create opportunities for a better learning environment. LPSP explained that she recognized that the size of the class impacted instruction that takes place in that learning environment.

### **Analysis of Data Collected from PDLTs**

The analysis of the HPS-PDLT data revealed three themes: (a) PDLT provided Turnkey training and small group training and support, (b) teacher collaboration was a contributing factor for RS implementation success, and (c) PDLT perceived that teachers needed instructional support and time for collaborative planning, were challenged by lack of alignment of the CIM and RS pacing guide, inability to use the RS program as designed, student turnover, and lack of parental involvement. The analysis of the LPS-PDLT data revealed three themes: (a) PDLT provided collaborative planning, instructional pull-out resource staff, leadership feedback, and instructional planning time, (b) PDLT identified differentiated instruction as a contributing factor for RS implementation success, and (c) PDLT perceived that teachers needed more PD support, more instructional time for basic level students, and were challenged by lack of instructional time, the need to use additional resources, student mobility, and teacher attrition. Tables 5 and 6 describe the themes and codes that were derived from the data collected from the PDLTs.

**Table 5***Codes and Themes from the HPS PDLT Interview Responses*

Provisional code	Pattern code	Theme
PDLT's Support	District training for PDLT/Reading Specialist, provide small group training and support	PDLT provided Turnkey training and small group training and support
Curriculum, Instruction	Teacher collaboration, small group instruction	Teacher collaboration was a contributing factor for RS implementation success
Instruction, mobility, school culture, parental involvement	Not able to use RS as it is designed, Principal, student mobility, high population of ESOL students, ESOL parents, lack of parental involvement, classroom management, PDLT and reading specialist support, RS implementation, time for collaboration	PDLT perceived that teachers needed instructional support and time for collaborative planning and were challenged by lack of alignment of the CIM and RS pacing guide, inability to use the RS program as designed, student turnover, and lack of parental involvement.

***HPS-PDLT Theme 1: PDLT Provided Turnkey Training and Small Group Training and Support***

**Turnkey Training.** HPS-PDLT described the turnkey support she provided for teachers as required by the district. HPS-PDLT explained that she provided PD on the topics that the district Reading Department required.

**Small Group Training and Support.** HPS-PDLT stated that she and the reading specialist provided instructional training and support related to small group instruction for the teachers. HPS-PDLT stated, "One of the biggest tools, that the instructional person told the PDLTs, was to emphasize small group instruction for the teachers to

implement in their classrooms.” HPS-PDLT further stated, “I think that’s the biggest thing in my school and the previous school I was in, was to strengthen small group instruction in order for the teachers to teach the students.” The topic of small group instruction was tailored for each group so that the teachers could target the strengths and weaknesses of the students within the different groups. The PDLTs and Reading Specialist provided the teachers with additional resources, went into the classroom to provide assistance, and pulled-out students who needed additional reading support beyond what was available in the classroom.

***HPS-PDLT Theme 2: Teacher Collaboration and Small Group Instruction***

***Contributed to RS Implementation Success***

**Teacher Collaboration.** HPS-PDLT attributed the success of the teachers’ implementation of the RS reading program to teacher collaboration on the CIM and RS reading strategies and to the implementation of small group instruction. HPS-PDLT explained that she thought the success came from the teachers collaborating and working together to implement the reading strategies and to the implementation of more small group instruction during class instruction.

***HPS-PDLT Theme 3: PDLT Perceived That Teachers Needed Instructional Support and Time for Collaborative Planning and Were Challenged by Lack of Alignment of the CIM and RS Pacing Guide, Inability to use the RS Program as Designed, Student Turnover, and Lack of Parental Involvement***

**Instructional Support.** HPS-PDLT stated that the teachers needed instructional support from the leadership team. HPS-PDLT stated, “I believe that the teachers need a strong instructional support system from the leadership team which includes the PDLT and/or Reading Specialist.” HPS-PDLT stated that the teachers need PD opportunities where the focus is specifically on reading instruction. HPS-PDLT also stated that teachers needed more paid time for the designated PDs. With all the additional information that was to be discussed within that one-hour time frame, the teachers end up collaborating on their own time outside of the collaborative planning time. The teachers schedule this outside collaborative planning time afterschool on their own time.

**Collaborative Planning.** HPS-PDLT identified that time for collaboration was another need teachers had. Collaborative planning is time set aside once a week, during the instructional day, for teachers to have instructional conversations regarding planning, analysis of student work, and use data to drive instruction. However, finding time for discussions about RS implementation was difficult because of all the other issues such as testing, instructional planning for math, and/or science that had to be discussed during that same time. As a result, HPS-PDLT stated, “With the meeting time constraints and all the information that had to be covered, teachers would collaborate with each other and then ask questions as needed.” When the teachers collaborate with each other, however, their conversations are within their Grade Level meetings, on their own time, or in the afterschool collaborative planning meetings they schedule.

**Alignment of the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and RS Pacing Guide.** The first challenge that HPS-PDLT identified was that the CIM provided a day-by-day instructional guide and the RS pacing guide that was designed by units and weekly instructional guides were not aligned. HPS-PDLT stated, “One of the major challenges that the teachers identified was that the CIM and the RS pacing guide did not match.” HPS-PDLT stated that this was a challenge for teachers because the CIM was organized in a different sequence from RS. The CIM had the reading selections ordered in the sequence that was determined by the district reading department. The CIM order of instruction was different from that of RS. The district also had the teachers using a different writing curriculum other than the writing component that was provided within the RS program. The teachers had to switch between different curriculum documents to follow the CIM. The CIM was developed by the NBPSD Reading Department to provide teachers with a detailed guide for daily reading instruction. However, the CIM did not follow the sequence of instruction that the RS reading program had designed. The RS program had two reading anthologies. However, the CIM had the teachers moving from the first anthology to the second anthology and then back to the first one. The teachers ended up choosing whether they would follow the CIM, designed by the district, or follow the RS order of implementation.

**Lack of Ability to use the RS Reading Program as it was Designed.** The second challenge HPS-PDLT identified was that teachers were unable to use the RS reading program as it was designed. HPS-PDLT stated that the biggest challenge was that

there was a disconnect between RS and the district writing curriculum. RS has a writing component written into the curriculum. However, the school district required the teachers to use the district writing curriculum. HPS-PDLT asked, “RS integrates the different curricula, so why are they having to use a different writing curriculum, why is RS being used more as a resource and not as it is intended.” HPS-PDLT further stated, “I don’t know, but I just think that we need to put that down [the other writing curriculum] and stick with just RS.” The teachers had to modify the lessons to integrate the writing curriculum that the district required in the CIM as a 7-day cycle whereas RS had a 5-day cycle. As a result, there was frustration on the part of the teachers with the additional curriculum components, moving from one anthology to another, and following a 7-day cycle rather than a 5-day cycle.

**Student Turnover Rate and Parent Involvement.** HPS-PDLT stated that another challenge that her teachers faced was having a high population of ESOL students and parents that in turn affected the school’s student turnover rate and parent involvement. HPS-PDLT stated, “We have a high population of ESOL and our turnover rate is very high during the school year requiring more effort on the part of the teachers.” Additionally, HPS-PDLT stated that with the high population of ESOL students, parental involvement in their child’s education was a challenge. HPS-PDLT explained that a lot of the parents did not speak English and that they worked long hours that prevented them from being involved at their children’s schools.

**Table 6***Codes and Themes from the LPS PDLT Interview Responses*

Provisional Codes	Pattern Codes	Themes
PDLT's Support	Collaborative planning, supportive resource staff, principal feedback for teachers, Instructional planning time	PDLT provided collaborative planning, instructional pull-out resource staff, leadership feedback, and instructional planning time
Curriculum, Instruction, School culture, parental involvement,	Differentiation for <i>advanced</i> level students, <i>basic</i> level students required more time, Teacher attrition, student mobility,	PDLT identified differentiated instruction as a contributing factor for RS Implementation Success
Instruction, teacher qualifications, mobility	Ineffective use of RS, instructional time, lack of PD Opportunities, district training for PDLT and reading specialist, turn around training for teachers, teacher planning time, student mobility,	PDLT perceived that teachers needed more PD support, more instructional time for <i>basic</i> level students, and were challenged by lack of instructional time, the need to use additional resources, student mobility, and teacher attrition

***LPS-PDLT Theme 1: PDLT Provided Collaborative Planning, Instructional Pull-out Resource Staff, Leadership Feedback, and Instructional Planning Time***

**Collaborative Planning.** LPS-PDLT stated that her school provided collaborative planning sessions for an hour, once a week. However, the collaborative planning time was used to plan math, science, and other instructional components and only a portion of that time was spent planning RS instruction with limited support. LPS-PDLT stated, “During this time they get to discuss instructional planning, look at student data, and plan



the next steps. The discussion time is for all content areas, so reading is only a portion of the time.”

**Instructional Pull-out Supportive Resource Staff.** LPS-PDLT stated that struggling readers were pulled out of the classroom instructional setting by the supportive resource staff. During the pull-out time, students received instructional support on reading strategies that they needed in order to be able to achieve higher levels of success on that reading skill. LPS-PDLT explained that the supportive resource staff were able to consistently pull and support the learning of the struggling readers.

**Leadership Feedback.** LPS-PDLT stated that the feedback teachers received from leadership resulted in teachers implementing rigorous instruction. LPS-PDLT stated, “Teachers need feedback so they themselves can implement rigorous instruction.” The feedback the teachers received guided them into adjusting their implementation of instruction so that the students achieved higher levels of success.

**Instructional Planning Time.** LPS-PDLT stated that teacher instructional planning time, 30 minutes each day, was important so that the teachers could plan differentiation of instruction to meet student learning needs. For example, LPS-PDLT stated, “instructional planning time provides time to plan instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students whether they are above, on, or below grade level in reading.” The teachers needed the instructional planning time to develop the differentiation of reading instruction to ensure that the students were receiving instruction at the level of their understanding and to help them achieve higher levels of success.

***LPS-PDLT Theme 2: PDLT Identified Differentiated Instruction as a Contributing Factor for RS Implementation***

**Differentiation.** LPS-PDLT stated that the RS reading program differentiated for *advanced* students by challenging them to use higher order thinking skills, questioning strategies, inferencing, and monitoring of his/her own learning. LPS-PDLT explained that the way RS was set up allowed students at the *advanced* level opportunities for challenging their understanding along with the differentiated lessons the program provides which helped those students to continue to advance their reading skills.

***LPS-PDLT Theme 3: PDLT Perceived That Teachers Needed More PD Support, More Instructional Time for Basic Level Students, and Were Challenged by Lack of Instructional Time, the Need to Use Additional Resources, Student Mobility, and Teacher Attrition***

**Lack of PD Opportunities.** LPS-PDLT identified that teachers needed time to attend the PD's themselves rather than having the information turnkeyed to them. LPS-PDLT stated that the teachers needed time to review the reading instructional information and time to plan. LPS-PDLT stated that they and the reading specialists attend PDs to gain reading instructional information that they are to take back to the school and turnkey to the teachers. However, LPS-PDLT stated, "The information is usually quickly shared, copies are passed out, and the teachers are left to discuss the information in their grade levels." LPS-PDLT stated that the teachers then needed time to read through the reading instructional information, time to develop an understanding of what that instruction will

look like in his/her classroom, and time to talk with their team members to ensure that student learning takes place. LPS-PDLT explained that the teachers needed time to process the information, plan well thought-out instruction, collaborate with their teams, and look at student data to modify and revise for students to experience success.

**Basic Level Students Requirement for More Instructional Time.** LPS-PDLT stated that *basic* level students needed more instructional time in order to acquire the reading skills. However, the teachers were not able to consistently provide the additional time the *basic* level students needed. LPS-PDLT stated, “*basic* level students required more time and instruction in order to develop their understanding of the skills being taught. So, I understand their increase since the basic materials still require in depth teaching for students to improve their reading.” With RS implementing skills that were new to the students, the *basic* level students needed more time to understand and acquire the skills so that increases in their reading levels could be achieved.

**Lack of Instructional Time.** LPS-PDLT stated that teachers are challenged by not having time to teach what is expected due to the amount of instructional material to be covered during the allotted time and the interruptions that occur. LPS-PDLT stated that teachers need “Time to teach all that is needed for student success.”

**Additional Resources.** LPS-PDLT stated that teachers have to use additional reading resources to meet the reading instructional needs of students who are either above or below the leveled readers RS provided. LPS-PDLT stated, “Even though RS has leveled readers for the different groups, the teachers still had to pull from additional

instructional resources for materials that challenged or supported the students who were way above or way below grade level.”

**Student Mobility.** LPS-PDLT perceived that the lack of success of the RS reading program could be the result of student mobility, students moving from one school to another. She explained that when students were regularly present in school, instructional learning was consistent, and they were more susceptible to learning. LPS-PDLT stated, “Some of our students have attended multiple schools within their elementary experience. Again, there is not a consistent place of learning, so the child's learning experience is interrupted.” The students needed to have consistency so that gaps in their learning would not occur.

**Teacher Attrition.** Additionally, LPS-PDLT addressed the importance of teacher attrition as a contributing factor for the lack of success in the RS implementation. She explained that when teachers leave early (prior to the end of the school year), student learning was interrupted by the instruction of someone not being familiar with the program or having a long-term substitute there until another teacher could be found. LPS-PDLT stated, “I think that teacher attrition played a part because consistency for the students was important for their success.” She explained that the teachers had received training and provided PDs to support their implementation of instruction. However, she pointed out that substitutes were not required to receive these trainings resulting in the interruption of student learning.

### **Analysis of Data Collected from Teachers' Response**

My analysis of the HPS teachers' interview responses revealed four themes: (a) teachers needed reading specialist support, PD support, and collaboration time, (b) teachers identified that utilization of RS resource materials, utilizing RS to plan instruction and monitor student progress, small group instruction, teacher collaboration, merging RS and CIM, and implementation of RS strategies were contributing factors for RS implementation success, (c) changes in teaching practices, and (d) teachers identified that effectively using RS materials, switching between curriculum materials, lack of RS and district alignment and pacing, and being overwhelmed were challenges they faced while implementing RS. The analysis of the LPS teachers' interview responses revealed four themes: (a) teachers identified that PD support, support from the PDLT or the reading specialist, and teacher collaboration were supports provided to them, (b) teachers identified that factors that contributed to reading levels increases were RS curriculum and student-monitoring. Factors that contributed to reading level decreases were lack of RS support for low achieving students and lack of preparation for reading, (c) changes in teaching practices, and (d) teachers identified that administrative guidelines and support, lack of time for effectively monitoring student progress, lack of reading specialist support, lack of PD and time for developing adequate understanding of the RS program were challenges. Tables 7 and 8 describe the themes and codes that were derived from the data collected from the teachers.

**Table 7***Codes and Themes from the HPS Teacher Responses*

Provisional Code	Pattern Code	Theme
Principal support, PDLT Support	Lack of effective PD opportunities, reading specialist support, RS used as supplementary aid,	Teachers needed reading specialist support, PD support, and collaboration time
Curriculum, Instruction	Adequate RS resources that are geared toward students, small group instruction, knowledge of RS curriculum, collaboration, merging RS with the District CIM, implementation of RS strategies, fidelity	Teachers identified that utilization of RS resource materials, utilizing RS to plan instruction and monitor student progress, small group instruction, teacher collaboration, merging RS and CIM, and implementation of RS strategies were contributing factors for RS implementation success
Curriculum, Instruction	Ease of implementing RS, Teacher knowledge of own skills, small group focus, teacher modeling of skills, developing student independence, use of RS digital versions, follow District expectations, use RS more as the main Curriculum, use of materials based on student needs, implementation of Questioning Strategies, no changes	Changes in Teaching Practices

Instruction, Teacher preparedness,	RS has multiple components, uncomfortable, overwhelmed with amount of RS materials, switching between curriculum materials leads to student confusion, lack of District and RS Alignment, pacing, curriculum materials for <i>basic</i> level students, use of additional resources, not able to use RS as designed, multiple curriculum components, ability to use RS to plan instruction and monitor student progress	Teachers identified that effectively using RS materials, switching between curriculum materials, lack of RS and district alignment and pacing, and being overwhelmed were challenges they faced while implementing RS
------------------------------------	---	---

---

***HPS-T Theme 1: Teachers Needed Reading Specialist Support, PD Support, and Collaboration Time***

**Reading Specialist Support.** T2 was the only teacher who stated that she received PD support from the reading specialist. T2 stated, “To be honest with you the only PD that I received or anything that I considered PD was from the reading specialist in my building.” T4 stated that there is a reading specialist in her school. However, T4 explained that the reading specialist had not provided support for RS.

**PD Resource.** T1, T3, T4 and T5 cited PD as a resource, but they were highly critical of the PD that they received because it was delivered in a lecture format and was not related to the implementation of the RS reading program. T1 and T4 stated that PD was provided by the leadership team. However, they said that the PD was presented in a lecture format. They received the PD in one day, but they wanted more. T1 stated, “I did wish more training was provided to be able to implement the RS program effectively and quicker.” T4 stated that the PD they attended focused on the CIM rather than the RS reading program. T4 stated, “those trainings focused more so on the CIM and not

necessarily just Reading Street Reading program.” T3 stated they were provided PD training, but RS was not the primary focus. The PD training focused on the CIM. RS was being used more as resource support. T3 further explained that it [the PD] was more geared towards implementing the CIM with RS as a supplementary resource.

**Collaboration.** T4 and T5 stated that collaboration with their grade level team member was how they received their support and not from receiving Turnkey PDs provided during the collaborative planning sessions. T4 stated, “I work really close with my reading partner.” T5 could not remember receiving PD support and stated that they collaborate with team members for the support they need.

***HPS-T Theme 2: Teachers Identified That Utilization of RS Resource Materials, Utilizing RS to Plan Instruction and Monitor Student Progress, Small Group Instruction, Teacher Collaboration, Merging RS and CIM, and Implementation of RS Strategies were Contributing Factors for RS Implementation Success***

**Teachers Using RS Resource Materials.** All of the HPS-T participants stated that the RS resource materials were effective for the *proficient* and *advanced* level students. For example, T1 and T5 attributed the increases in the students’ reading levels to their utilization of the RS resource materials such as the leveled readers. T1 stated, “Students having the *advanced* leveled books and the differentiated lessons the RS program provides, helps those students to continue to advance their reading skills.” Additionally, T1 attributed the success of the *basic* level students to in depth teaching. In depth teaching occurred when the teacher took more time to break down the reading



instructional skills into smaller pieces to build and strengthen the student's comprehension and critical thinking skills.

**Using RS to Plan Instruction and Monitor Student Progress.** All of the HPS-T participants perceived that the differentiated reading resources of RS reading program met the students' reading level needs. For example, T5 stated, "I think the program provides resources which are geared to meet the students where they are and to move them from this level to where they need to be." T5 further explained that RS provided the leveled readers as well as the teacher's guides for the leveled readers and the documents for monitoring student progress. Using the RS materials helped to support what the teacher needed to meet the students' needs and provided documentation of the learning progress.

**Small Group Instruction in the Classroom.** Small group instruction is an instructional strategy that teachers use to meet the students learning needs. T5 stated that their use of small group instruction contributed to the reading level increases. T5 stated that using RS "makes it easier to facilitate guided reading and small group instruction during the reading block. I am better able to teach and track my students' progress and plan for them accordingly." T2 attributed the success to small group instruction and team collaboration. T2 explained that the success came from the teachers implementing more small group instruction while using RS.

**Collaboration with Team Members.** All of the HPS-T participants discussed the role of teacher collaboration and how collaboration with colleagues benefitted their

implementation of the RS. For example, T2 identified that collaboration with their team members led to them to decide that they would each teach according to their strengths. T2 stated, “what led to the success was the way we divided up the RS program so that one teacher taught the reading, and the other teacher taught all the writing.” For upcoming lessons, she and her team member collaborated together to plan the instructional implementation of materials so that reading and writing expectations were met.

**Merging RS with the District CIM.** All of the HPS-T participants discussed the challenge of merging RS with the district CIM. When they were successful in merging RS and the CIM, they perceived that students benefitted. For example, T3 attributed the increases in the students' reading achievement scores to merging RS with the district curriculum to make the CIM and the RS work together.

**Implementation of RS Strategies.** All of the HPS-T teachers discussed using RS strategies. For example, T4 attributed the success to the implementation of RS instructional strategies. T4 stated, “We used a ton of strategies throughout the year like inferencing, reacting to the text, asking questions...summarize the text, and monitor their reading.” She explained that utilizing these instructional strategies provided the students the support they needed to achieve higher levels of reading achievement.

### ***HPS-T Theme 3: Changes in Teaching Practices***

Three of the HPS teachers did not perceive that their teaching practices had changed as a result of implementing the RS and two teachers stated that their teaching practices had changed. Three out of the five teachers also identified additional changes

they planned on making in the future. These changes were a result of what they learned as they were implementing the reading instruction.

**Changed Teaching Practices.** When a new curriculum is being implemented some of the teaching practices may change. After the first year of implementing RS, T3 and T5 identified that their teaching practices changed because of the RS reading program was being used as a support rather than as the main curriculum. T3 stated that her teaching practices had changed because RS reading program was designed to be used as the main reading curriculum. However, with the CIM that was developed by the reading department being used as the main guide for instruction, RS was only being used as a reading resource. T3 stated, “My teaching practices changed because I was not really using it [RS] as my guide for instruction, but as a supplementary aid.” T5 stated her practices became more meaningful and she utilized the resources that RS provided for instructional support. T5 explained that RS had made teaching more meaningful in her classroom. Not only were the lessons laid out with instruction on how to model them, but there were also digital versions of textbooks which made it much easier to model reading and writing strategies.

**Lack of Changing Teaching Practices.** After the first year of implementing RS three teachers, T1, T2, and T4, stated that they did not think that their teaching practices had changed. For example, T1 explained that since RS incorporates reading, language, and writing into its lessons that meant that each of those subjects weren’t taught in isolation without the connection to a piece of reading text. T2 stated that she put more

emphasis on small group instruction and what she needed to do to for individual students in order to teach the skills or help the students understand the skills.” T4 explained that it allowed her to use a Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR). T4 further explained that students should be able to take what they have learned and apply it to the tasks they are completing with little to no support from the teacher.

**Future Changes.** After teaching the RS reading program T2, T3, and T4 identified some future changes that they planned on making such as to use RS as the main curriculum, use materials based on students’ needs, and implement questioning strategies. Although T2 had previously explained that she did not make any changes to her teaching practices she did explain that in the future instead of using an additional writing curriculum, she planned to use RS as the main curriculum for the writing component. T2 stated, “I think the information from RS and the writing skills covered in RS was enough so that we are covering the Common Core goals that we need to cover in order to prepare the students for 4th grade.” T3 stated that she would decide whether the CIM or RS would meet her students’ instructional needs and utilize that one that best fits. T3 explained that she would take RS and the CIM, put them side-by-side to compare and identify which one was going to help meet the needs of all her students.” T4 had previously explained that she did not make any changes to her teaching practices she did explain that in the future she planned to ask the comprehension questions through whole group reading instruction. T1 had previously explained that her teaching practices had not

changed and T5 previously explained that her teaching practices had changed, but neither of them had identified any additional changes that they would make in the future.

***HPS-T Theme 4: Teachers Identified That Effectively Using RS Materials, Switching Between Curriculum Materials, Lack of RS and District Alignment and Pacing, and Being Overwhelmed Were Challenges They Faced While Implementing RS***

**Effectively Using RS Materials.** After the first year of implementing RS, two teachers explained that they were not able to effectively use the RS materials. This is a challenge because the PDs the teachers received focused mainly on the CIM and not on the RS reading instructional components that they were to be using. For example, T1 stated, “Just getting to know the material as it was new, and how to utilize all of the material included to effectively help my students.” The teachers felt that they had multiple RS reading instructional components but were not adequately prepared to use what they had.

**Switching Between Curriculum Materials as a Factor Which Leads to Teacher Confusion.** RS includes a writing component that was included in the curriculum scope and sequence, as well as providing teachers additional instructional materials. However, the school district used a different writing curriculum (Writing Fundamentals) that the teachers were required to utilize. T2 found that switching between curriculum materials was a challenge. T2 stated, “I think the biggest challenge was that there was a disconnect... I just think that Writing Fundamentals [should be]... put that down and [we need to] stick with just RS.” Additionally, T2 stated that switching

between curriculum materials could lead to student confusion. T2 explained that the different curriculum materials being used were overwhelming and caused confusion for both the students and teachers.

**Lack of RS and District Alignment and Pacing.** There was frustration on the part of all the teachers in choosing whether to follow RS that had a 5-day cycle or to follow the CIM that had a 7-day cycle. For example, T3 and T4 identified the lack of alignment with the RS reading program and the district as a challenge. T3 stated a challenge was “going between the CIM and RS trying to make sense of the two documents.” Additionally, T3 stated a challenge was the lack of RS and District alignment. T3 stated, “It was difficult because I like how RS has it by the days. It is much easier how RS is laid out, but the CIM has other focuses or concentrations mixed in.” T4 stated that the challenge they had was feeling like they were still learning how to implement the RS reading program. T4 stated, “I used another reading program about 6 years ago published by Pearson. I feel like I am still in the learning phase of this particular reading program.” Additionally, T4 stated that staying on track with the pacing was a challenge. T4 explained that the biggest challenge she encountered when implementing the RS reading program was staying on track with the pacing because of the way the curriculum was mapped out.

**Being Overwhelmed with Amount of RS Materials.** RS provides an array of instructional materials that supports teachers in the implementation of the reading program. These instructional materials also include materials to support the students

different reading levels. Two participants (T5 and T2) particularly emphasized being overwhelmed by the amount of RS resources. T5 explained that she was overwhelmed because of the number of materials that RS provided. She further noted that she had to plan and decide how to effectively use the materials. T2 mentioned that the amount of RS materials was not only frustrating for her, but also caused confusion for the students.

**Table 8**

*Codes and Themes from the LPS Teacher Responses*

Provisional Codes	Pattern Codes	Themes
Principal Support, PDLT Support	PD opportunities, occasional PDLT or reading specialist support, peer collaboration	Teachers identified that PD support, support from the PDLT or reading specialist, and teacher collaboration were supports provided to them
Curriculum, Instruction	RS curriculum instruction, student self-monitoring, interventions, challenged students to higher levels of critical thinking, implementation of RS allows for in depth teaching, lack of adequate RS support, lack of instructional materials for <i>basic</i> level students, lack of student preparedness in phonics, decoding, writing, and fluency, ineffective use of RS, <i>basic</i> level students needed more strategy support for RS	Factors that contributed to reading levels increases were RS curriculum and student-monitoring. Factors that contributed to reading level decreases were lack of RS support for low achieving students and lack of preparation for reading.
Curriculum, Instruction	Modifying to meet students' needs, providing differentiation utilizing the RS 3-tiered System, RTI- RS provided additional support, increased use of technology resources, used additional Spanish resource materials for ELL, incorporated readymade centers and suggestions, RTI- RS provided additional support, differentiated small group instruction	Changes in Teaching Practices

Instruction, Teacher Preparedness, School Culture	Reteaching RS curriculum to properly teach students, time for effective monitoring of student progress, materials for ELL learners, frustration with lack of District and RS alignment, use RS more as the main curriculum, needed proper and sufficient support to implement RS accurately, lack of reading specialist support, lack of online component usage, lack of RS PD opportunities	Teachers identified that administrative guidelines and support, lack of time for effectively monitoring student progress, lack of reading specialist support, lack of PD and time for developing adequate understanding of the RS program were challenges.
---	--	--

---

***LPS-T Theme 1: Teachers Identified that PD Support, Support from the PDLT or Reading Specialist, and Teacher Collaboration Were Supports Provided to Them***

**PD Opportunities.** PD opportunities were provided to teachers as a support by the district. T6 stated that they attended a one-day PD for RS. T6 stated, “Staff development consisted of a one-day training provided by a representative from the vendor. We spent a day walking through components of the curriculum guides. This allowed time to ask questions.” T9 stated that the PD they attended was in the summer prior to RS being implemented and that additional PD opportunities were also provided. T9 stated, “a PD training was provided the summer prior to the first year of RS implementation.” Additionally, T9 stated, “After that initial PD, there were additional ones where I was able to sign up for the online access, how to manage online, and even how to read through the teachers manuals.” T9’s attitude towards for these additional PDs was positive.

**Support From the PDLT or Reading Specialist.** PDLTs and reading specialists provide teachers with support in understanding and implementing the reading curriculum.



However, T10 attributed her support to team collaboration and occasional PDLT or reading specialist support. T10 stated, “The teachers who work with me on my grade level are my main support.” T10 also stated in a negative manner that she had “occasional discussions with the PDLT or reading specialist, but the discussions are not so much on RS...but, are more focused in the curriculum pacing guide, upcoming assessments, and what we are doing to prepare the students.” The support she received was from discussions within her own team and outside of the discussions with the PDLT or reading specialist. The other four participants (T6-T9) from the LPS mentioned that they had peer support but did not identify having support from the PDLT or reading specialist.

**Peer Collaboration.** During peer collaboration teachers work together to discuss the implementation of the curriculum materials, student needs, and student achievement data to drive their instruction. These discussions occur laterally between teachers within the same grade level or horizontally between teachers of multiple grades. The teacher participants emphasized that they had peer support. However, T7 and T8 provided further explanation for their responses. T7 stated that the primary support was received from her peers. T7 stated, “a colleague who had previous experience with the material worked with me to understand the material and answered my questions.” When T8 was asked about the supports and resources that were put in place that contributed to her success in the implementation of the RS reading program, her response was “none.” She perceived that the PDLT or reading specialist did not provide the support she needed. What she did perceive was that other teachers were her support.

***LPS-T Theme 2: Factors that Contributed to Reading Level Increases were RS Curriculum and Student-Monitoring. Factors that Contributed to Reading Level Decreases were Lack of RS Support for Low Achieving Students and Lack of Student Preparation for Reading.***

The LPS teachers (T6- T10) attributed increases in the *advanced* level to teacher implementation of the RS curriculum and student self-monitoring. T6 and T9 attributed the increase in the *advanced* levels to the implementation of the RS curriculum. T9 also attributed the increase to their students using self-monitoring skills. T6 stated, “The increase in skills and number of students performing at *advanced* levels can be attributed to the specific instructions given to students. Students are encouraged to monitor their reading rates...and reflect on their reading, as well as their writing.” T9 attributed the increase in the *advanced* levels to the rigor of the RS reading program. T9 stated, “The implementation of the RS, provided a level of higher thinking... It forced students to think more critically and on an individual level.” Additionally, T9 stated, “the true contributor was that the students were starting to read stories about people that looked like them.” The students were able to see themselves in the text and this was a huge mind changer with RS.

The LPS teachers (T6- T10) attributed the increases in the *basic* level to: (a) the lack of adequate RS support and resources for *basic* level students and the lack of student preparedness in phonics, decoding, writing, and fluency, and (b) *basic* level students needed more strategy support for RS reading instructional strategies. Their responses

included that the students were not prepared for the level of instruction that was being expected of them. The *basic* level students needed more instructional time in order to acquire the reading skills. This additional time required the teachers to spend more time differentiating and implementing instructional strategies that would support the students in the acquisition of the reading skills in order to advance to higher level of reading achievement.

RS is designed to begin at the lower elementary levels. However, with RS being implemented in the third through fifth grades the expectations were challenging for the teachers and their students. T7 attributed the increase in the number of students scoring at the *basic* level to the lack of support and resources to meet the students' individual learning needs. T7 stated, "the increase in the *basic* level could stem from not having adequate support or resources to meet the needs of the students. Some students might lack the skills to independently practice phonics skills such as decoding words, writing, or fluency skills." T9 stated that the implementation of RS was different from the previous reading program. T9 stated, "I feel that the *basic* scores increased rather than decreased because the information was new, accessible, and delivered in a different manner." However, even with the differentiation across the reading levels, the skills the *basic* level students needed to more reading support to increase their reading achievement. With the new strategies the students were being taught, it was challenging for them to make the progress needed to achieve higher levels of achievement.

All of the LPS teachers perceived that basic level students needed more curricular and instructional resources than what was provided by the RS implementation. For example, T10 stated that the *basic* level students needed much more support that would help them to achieve higher levels of reading achievement.

***LPS-T Theme 3: Changes in Teaching Practices***

LPS teachers revealed that the implementation of RS had changed their teaching practices. T6, T7, T8, and T9 identified that their teaching practices had changed in that they modified or differentiated instruction to meet students' needs. T6 stated, "I became more aware of the components and ways to modify the materials to assure each student gained some level of success and accomplishment." T7 stated that they utilized the RS three-tiered system to provide more differentiated instruction.

T6 and T7 stated that utilizing the RS three-tiered System changed the way they differentiated instruction to meet student needs. T6 stated, "The three-tiered levels of the system were very valuable. The students were able to receive specific instructions based on their level of skill and needs. Using the system also gave me readymade center activities and suggestions to incorporate across texts." T7 stated, "I was able to adjust my teaching practices to easily differentiate for my students. The three-tiered system allowed me to provide students with materials and resources to assist students who are challenged or students who have special needs."

T6 and T7 stated that the RS Response to Intervention (RTI) materials contributed to the changes in his/her teaching practices. For example, T6 stated, "Students... received

RTI support through the Reading Teacher who used the resource curriculum associated with RS... This allowed more 1:1 supports, redirection, practice and guidance.” T7 stated, “The RTI materials allowed me to implement explicit instruction to assist with phonemic awareness.”

T8 stated that their teaching practices had changed, but the changes were not because of the implementation of RS. T8 stated that his/her teaching practices changed “because the curriculum does not use RS for anything more than literature, I have had to look at outside resources to make the lessons more interesting and hands on for the students.” T9 stated that they were able to differentiate instruction to meet the student’s needs. T9 stated, “Instead of teaching from one book or story, I now have a series with extended learning options, ELL options, and leveled readings that allow me to hit the strategies within a small and whole group.”

T10 stated that there were only small changes to her teaching practices. She stated, “Yes, but not too much. I differentiated instruction to meet my students’ needs.” Additionally, she stated, “I would have to pull from additional resources [from those used in lower grades] in order to support especially the basic students’ needs as well as those with special needs.”

***LPS-T Theme 4: Teachers Identified that Administrative Guidelines and Support, Lack of Time for Effectively Monitoring Student Progress, Lack of Reading Specialist Support, Lack of PD and Time for Developing Adequate Understanding of the RS Program Were Challenges.***

**Rigorous Administrative Guidelines and Support.** The combination of the administrative rigorous guidelines and the heavy demands of tracking/testing/retesting put additional demands on the teachers who were trying to meet those demands and the students who were trying to acquire the skills. T6 identified administrative rigorous guidelines as a challenge. For example, T6 stated, “A challenge has been following the rigorous guidelines of administration to assure components of the system are covered and documented.” T6 also stated, “I sometimes feel that students do not have enough “think/process” time due to the heavy demands for tracking/testing/retesting outside the RS system.” Instructional time is interrupted with the state and district assessment schedules and other required tasks.

A challenge that T10 identified was a need for proper and sufficient support to implement RS accurately. T10 stated, “The increase in the *advanced* levels and the increase in the *basic* level comes from not having adequate support or resources to meet the needs of the students. T10 also stated, “having the support of the reading specialist would have helped” because the reading specialist provides not only instruction support for the teachers but also support for the students. T10 identified that having support from the reading specialist would have provided the additional support they needed to increase student reading achievement.

**Time for Effective Monitoring of Student Progress.** Monitoring student progress provides teachers the opportunity to see students’ growth and make the changes needed to continue meeting the students’ needs. T7 identified not having enough time for

monitoring student progress as a challenge. T7 explained that one challenge was to find a significant amount of time to effectively monitor progress of each individual student and balance that with her instructional teaching. The other four teachers from the LPS made no mention of having inadequate time for monitoring student progress.

**Developing a Deeper Understanding of the RS Curriculum to Properly Teach Students.** In developing a deeper understanding of the RS materials, teachers were able to develop and present instruction in a way that the students achieved success. However, T9 explained that she had to spend time studying the reading curriculum to acquire an instructional understanding of what she needed to teach in order to be able to adequately implement instruction for the students. T9 further explained that she felt as though she was reteaching herself the curriculum and the readings so that she could properly deliver the material to the students. The other four teachers did not specifically mention that they had to study the RS reading curriculum. However, they did mention that it took extra time to make the CIM and the RS work together.

**Frustration with Lack of District and RS Alignment.** There was frustration on the part of the teachers when choosing whether to follow RS or to follow the CIM. T6, T8, T9, and T10 identified that meeting the district's expectations and the conflict between RS and the CIM order of implementation as challenges that they faced. T6 stated, "A challenge has been following the rigorous guidelines of administration to assure components of the system are covered and documented." Additionally, T6 stated, "With the outside curriculum guide requirements and the RS system, there is not enough

time to do all the components as successfully as desired.” T8 stated, “I was really excited about the implementation of RS and then very disappointed because the curriculum didn’t take advantage of all of the resources and follow the RS reading program.” T9 stated that the challenge she had was that the CIM and RS were not aligned. T9 stated, “The major change would be for our CIM to go along with the RS Series instead of it skipping or jumping around.” T10 also attributed her challenges to the CIM and RS not being aligned and that there were too many instructional components. T10 stated, “One challenge was RS and our curriculum pacing guide. The two guides did not match.” Additionally, T10 explained that an additional challenge was that RS had a writing component, but she had to use a different writing component.

**Lack of RS PD Opportunities and Instructional Support.** The lack of RS PD opportunities and lack of instructional support were challenges for the teachers. T6 explained that she attended a PD training from the RS representative. However, she also explained that there was minimal modeling. She felt that more small group practice /modeling for the teachers could have been beneficial.” T7 explained that she did not receive professional development training for the material by the leadership. She explained that she learned how to implement the material as she was preparing for instruction each week.” Additionally, T7 explained that she believed “proper and sufficient coaching and training is necessary to accurately and quickly implement the material.” T8 explained that she was not provided any RS PD opportunities. T10 explained that attending PDs or having the support of the reading specialist would have



helped. Although T6 was the only teacher who mentioned that she had attended a PD, she still identified an area for which she would have liked to receive more training. T7, T8, and T10 all made mention of their lack of PD opportunities and identified specific areas for which they needed additional support and training.

### **Answering Research Questions**

#### **RQ1: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?**

The district provided a one day PD regarding RS implementation to all elementary level teachers just before the start of the school year. Teachers received large-group presentations and opportunities to ask questions and examine the RS materials. The presenters stressed that the RS curriculum order that they were presenting would be different from how the RS would be ordered in the district because the district would follow the CIM order. Further, the presenters explained that the district writing curriculum would be used rather than the RS writing curriculum. The presenters, however, did not explain or compare/contrast the CIM and the RS, nor explain how the district writing curriculum would align with the RS. This appears to have led to the widespread teacher confusion throughout the first year of implementation and the devotion of team collaboration time to the issues as teachers struggled to merge the RS with the District CIM and writing curriculum.

Throughout the school year, the teachers met for team collaboration weekly for one hour. This time was devoted to Turnkey PD information, student progress

monitoring, alignment of the RS with the CIM, discussions of upcoming student assessments and other issues regarding other subject areas and school issues. All of the teacher participants expressed that the weekly sessions were not enough to help them with the RS implementation and that they devoted too much time struggling to align the RS with district CIM and writing curriculum. As a result, they needed to meet after school hours to discuss the RS implementation and to learn from each other.

Teacher participants from the HPS were critical of the PD support they received during the school year because it was presented in a lecture format that left little time for discussion. They pointed out that collaboration with their team members was more beneficial for them than were the PDs. Responses also revealed that these teachers had to strategically merge RS with the District CIM and writing curriculum. They attributed their success to using the RS resources, collaboration with team members, monitoring student progress, and implementing small group instruction. Two of the teachers noted that their teaching practices had changed, but the other three revealed that their teaching practices had not changed. However, the five teacher participants from the HPS pointed out additional changes that they planned on making in the future. The challenges these teachers encountered included not being able to effectively use the RS materials, merging the RS and District CIM, switching between different curriculum materials when teaching writing, the pacing, and being overwhelmed with the amount of RS materials even though they appreciated the rich resources provided by the RS program.

All teacher participants from the LPS stated that they received support from the PDLTs and/or reading specialists, but their primary support was from their team members and peer collaboration. Four of the teachers pointed out that their teaching practices had changed the way they modified instruction to meet the needs of their students. Another teacher stated that her teaching practices had not changed and that she pulled additional resources to meet their student needs. The teachers also identified the challenges and needs that they encountered while implementing the RS reading program. These challenges were merging the RS and District CIM, lack of support for *basic* level students and lack of student preparedness in phonics, writing and reading fluency, lack of PD and instructional support, meeting the timetables for student learning, testing, and retesting, and time to effectively monitor and address student progress.

**RQ2: How did principals and PDLTs at the four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?**

The HPSP had put specific strategies in place such as providing supports and resources for the teachers to successfully implement the RS reading program. They also attributed the success of the RS implementation to the collaborative planning time they provided for the teachers and to the learning walks conducted by the leadership team (assistant principals, reading specialists, instructional lead teacher, reading chairpersons, PLDT's), as well as from the conversations during the collaborative planning sessions. Additionally, HPSP argued that providing teachers with time for collaboration contributed to the success.

One of the supports the LPSP identified was that the district provided PD for administrators and the leadership team on the RS reading program so that they could provide better support for the teachers during the implementation. Utilizing the information that they had gained from the PD, the LPSP in turn provided PD supports and resources for the teachers as well. However, the LPSP stated that the lack of a reading specialist on staff had an impact on the teachers getting the additional support they needed not only for classroom instruction, but on student achievement as well. The LPSP, at the request of teachers, provided parents with information about how they could help support the reading development of their children.

HPS-PDLT response was similar to the HPSP principal's responses. HPSP described that they provided turnkey PD trainings, and small group instructional trainings and support. HPS-PDLT also attributed the success of the RS implementation to teacher collaboration. Additionally, HPS-PDLT perceived that the teachers were provided with instructional support, but the time to provide that support was limited so the teachers ended up collaborating on their own. Collaborative planning was provided, but again the time constraints had teachers collaborating with each other on their own time. HSP-PDLT also identified the alignment of the CIM, district writing curriculum, and the RS. Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students whether students are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) found that it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading comprehension to

increase, especially for students from low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as the teachers' differentiated instruction, the students were able to learn the material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom. Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration the student's assessment data, groupings, learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2016). The findings from this study revealed that not all schools provided PD to teachers so that they could improve their teaching by implementing differentiated/small group instruction as a challenge. HPS-PDLT perceived that the student turnover rate and parent involvement were a challenge because of having a high population of ESOL students and parents.

LPS-PDLT revealed that supports and resources were provided for teachers. During collaborative planning and instructional planning time they provided teacher support. However, this time was also used to plan other curricula areas and school issues leaving only a portion of the time for RS discussion. LPS-PDLT pointed out that instructional pull-out support and leadership feedback were supports and resources they provided. Differentiation was the factor that the LPS-PDLT argued contributed to the success of the RS implementation for the *advanced* level students because the *advanced* scores demonstrated an increase. However, LPS-PDLT noted that instead of the number of students receiving a *basic* score decreasing as students moved to higher levels, there was an increase in the *basic* level student. This increase was attributed to the students

needing more time for instruction and acquisition of the new skills and strategies, teacher attrition, and student mobility.

**RQ3: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS compare in terms of their experiences with the implementation of the RS reading program?**

Teachers at the HPS and the teachers at the LPS had similar experiences. Both groups of teachers expressed frustration with the lack of District CIM, writing curriculum, and RS alignment and pacing and that this was a challenge for them. Also, the teachers expressed frustration at not being able to implement RS as it was designed. The teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, as well as needing additional instructional materials to meet the *basic* level students' needs.

Both groups of teacher responses revealed that PDs were provided. However, the teachers' responses demonstrated frustration with the way the PDs focused mainly on the District CIM and writing curriculum and not on the RS reading program. The teachers perceived that the RS reading program was being used as resource support and not as it was designed.

Six of the teachers indicated that they experienced changes in their own teaching practices while implementing the RS reading program. Three teachers from the HPS and one teacher from the LPS stated that there were few or no changes to their teaching practices. The teachers specified supports that they utilized such as RS technology, center activities, and Spanish resource materials for the ELL students. The teachers' responses demonstrated how they were able to provide more small group instruction, and some

teachers expressed ease and enjoyment in implementing RS. However, the common threads throughout all of the teachers' responses was their frustration with the lack of District and RS alignment and pacing, lack of time and PD to learn to implement the RS effectively, and lack of support from administrators.

Both groups of teachers described teacher collaboration as beneficial and a contributing factor to their success with the implementation. Both groups expressed the need for more time for collaboration focused specifically on the RS implementation and student progress monitoring.

**RQ4: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?**

Both principals provided leadership and PD support. However, the HPSP and their leadership team conducted learning walks to gather information to develop the PDs they provided for the teachers. The LPSP and their leadership team first attended district PDs, then returned to their own schools to share the information with the teachers. The LPSP and leadership team also used the FfT to evaluate the teachers' implementation of instruction and Balanced Literacy Structures to strengthen students' phonological awareness skills as resources.

The HSPS and the LPSP explained the success of the RS implementation differently. The HPSP attributed the success to collaborative planning among the teachers. The LPSP attributed the success to having an uninterrupted reading block with a predetermined amount of time and to the turnkey trainings provided by themselves and

the PDLT. However, both the HPS-PDLT and the LPS-PDLT stated they were able to provide supports and resources for the teachers, but there were barriers in sharing the PD information to the teachers, as well as inconsistency. The PDLTs perceived that the lack of PD opportunities for teachers was also a concern. The PDLTs pointed out that there was a conflict between RS and CIM order of implementation, as well as the teachers not being able to use RS as it is designed.

The HPSP and the LPSP differed in what they saw as the needs and challenges for the teachers. The HPSP indicated that the teachers needed more time to plan and collaborate with their teams. The LPSP argued that they needed to have a reading specialist who would be able to provide the teachers the support they needed. The LPSP also argued that the teachers needed parental support, as well for the teachers to have the opportunity to attend the reading PDs themselves. The HPSP pointed out that the challenges the teachers had were unfamiliarity with the RS curriculum for first year teachers, knowledge of the RS curriculum for the tenured teachers, and student mobility. However, the LPSP indicated that large class sizes were a challenge the teachers faced. In addition to these challenges, both PDLTs also perceived additional challenges and needs the teachers' faced included student mobility, lack of planning time, and lack of parental involvement. The major differences between the HPSP and the LPSP were the employment of a reading specialist and providing time for teachers to collaborate. The HPSP attributed some of the success of the RS implementation to the presence of a



reading specialist. The LPSP attributed some of the lack of success to the inability to employ a reading specialist.

**RQ5: How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 students' reading achievement in the NBPSD?**

Data analysis did not provide a clear answer to RQ5. This could be the result of the focus of the interview questions that emphasized participants' experiences during implementation of the RS program at their schools and in their classrooms. As the researcher, I did not focus my probes on reading achievement, perhaps because of my personal experiences involving implementing the RS in my classroom. Lack of an answer to this research question could be attributed to the effect of the school district administration which was centered on the implementation of RS rather than on the effect on reading achievement of the RS at that time.

However, the answers to the other research questions provide important information for the district. The results of the analysis indicated that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM and the RS, inadequate time for and effectiveness of PD regarding RS implementation, and inadequate support from school and district leadership.

**Relationship of Findings and the Conceptual Framework and Literature**

Data were collected from two principals (one from a HPS and one from a LPS), two Reading PDLTs (one from a HPS and one from a LPS), and 10 third to fifth grade reading teachers (five from HPS and five from LPS), to explore how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at the HPS and the LPS experienced the implementation of the RS reading program, the challenges teachers faced in implementing the RS reading program, and the resources and supports teachers were provided in order to improve the reading achievement of their students.

The conceptual framework that underlay this study was the action theory of educational change put forward by Fullan (2007). Fullan argued that the individuals responsible for the implementation of a new program must have a thorough understanding of how the different educational components of the new program fit together to reach the desired results. Fullan (2007) identified seven foundational premises which he argued would bring about successful educational change: motivation, capacity building, learning in context, changing context, establish a bias for reflective action, tri-level engagement, and persistence and flexibility in staying the course. The data collected showed that these premises were to some extent addressed during the first year of implementation. Motivation was demonstrated by the intensity of teacher and administrator attention to the implementation. Capacity building, learning in context and changing context were somewhat demonstrated by the provision of professional development, teacher collaboration, and feedback to and support for teachers from PDTs and principals. A groundwork for persistence and flexibility was established by

the hiring of reading specialists and the provision of regularly scheduled meetings and PD. Tri-level engagement was evident in that the district and school administration as well as teachers were engaged in the implementation.

The review of literature showed that student reading achievement was influenced by family and community factors and school and teacher related factors. This study did not address family and community factors but did address some of the school and teacher related factors. The responses indicated that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM and the RS, inadequate time for and effectiveness of PD regarding RS implementation, inadequate support from school and district leadership.

#### ***Inadequate Time for Teacher Collaboration***

Teacher collaboration is a process that provides teachers the opportunity to work together to improve their teaching practices, develop a better understanding of the curriculum, and share experiences (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Randall & Marangell, 2021; White et al., 2020). Research has shown that PD and collaboration are linked to professional teaching practices and student academic achievement (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2021; Randall & Marangell, 2021; White et al., 2020). The findings from this study indicated that the time allotted to the PDLTs and teachers for collaboration (one hour per week) was perceived to be inadequate by teachers and PDLTs. The allotted time for PD and collaboration was used for other issues such as discussing the CIM, discussing data about student attendance and behavior, and

discussing curricula of areas other than reading rather than for collaboration about the implementation of the RS reading program. The teachers often used after school time for planning and collaboration, but that is evidence that the provided time was inadequate.

***Lack of Alignment Between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and RS***

The lack of alignment with the RS reading program and the district CIM and writing curriculum was a challenge for the teachers. Both the LPS and the HPS teachers identified that meeting the district's expectations for student progress and the conflict between RS and CIM order of implementation was difficult for them and that they spent too much time dealing with the issue. The issue was that the CIM required that teachers implement RS in ways that violated the RS program. The teachers explained that they did their best to merge the two sets of requirements to best meet the needs of their students but that the issue was a persistent problem.

***Inadequate Support from School and District Leadership***

The study revealed that the district and school leadership were committed to the implementation of RS. Despite this commitment, the support provided was perceived as inadequate by teachers, PDLTs and the principals in these areas: provision of PD regarding RS, time for teacher collaboration, employment of reading specialists, and provision of PD regarding differentiated small group instruction.

**Provision of PD.** The district provided training for the PDLT's who were tasked to turn-key that training at their schools. However, Both the PDLTs and the teachers found this turn-key situation inadequate in that they were receiving the information

second-hand, it was often delivered as lecture, and there was not enough time devoted to the process. Research has shown that effective professional development for teachers engages the teachers in active learning and focuses on their individual needs (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Such PD was not possible in the turn-key situation. Because of lack of time, the PDLT's presented the information they received, showing the slides that had been presented to them and/or distributing the hand-outs they had received. There was not enough time for teachers to ask questions or discuss issues related to their needs. Further the turn-key sessions were not designed to effectively model best practices or provide individual coaching.

**Time for Teacher Collaboration.** Teachers were provided with one hour of teacher collaboration time each week. As discussed earlier, teacher participants found this inadequate for the implementation of RS. Teachers too often needed to use after school time and their daily 30 minutes of preparation time to collaborate with colleagues.

**Employment of Reading Specialists.** Reading specialists are instrumental in the effectiveness of the school's overall literacy achievement (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). However, reading specialist in schools perform additional tasks other than just working with struggling readers (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). Reading specialists may also be an instructional lead teacher, reading instructor, data coach, behavior management specialist, as well as being considered an expert teacher (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). The finding from this study demonstrated differences

between the HPS and LPS regarding employment of a reading specialist. Some schools were not able to employ a reading specialist because of finances. The district did not mandate or provide the necessary financial resources to ensure that all schools would employ a reading specialist.

**PD Related to Small Group Instruction/Differentiated Instruction.** Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students whether students are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) found that it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading comprehension to increase, especially for students from low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as the teachers' differentiated instruction, the students were able to learn the material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom. Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration the student's assessment data, groupings, learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2016). The findings from this study revealed that not all schools provided PD to teachers so that they could improve their teaching by implementing differentiated/small group instruction.

**Employment of Reading Specialists.** Reading specialists are instrumental in the effectiveness of the school's overall literacy achievement (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). However, reading specialist in schools perform additional tasks other than just working with struggling readers (Bean et al., 2018;

Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). Reading specialists may also be an instructional lead teacher, reading instructor, data coach, behavior management specialist, as well as being considered an expert teacher (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). The finding from this study demonstrated that not all schools could employ a reading specialist. The district did not mandate or provide the necessary financial resources to ensure that all school would employ a reading specialist.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative case study focused on exploring experiences of teachers, principals, and PDLTs regarding implementation of the RS reading program, as well as comparing the perceptions of those who were employed at four HPS and four LPS in an attempt to gain an understanding of the uneven impact of the RS reading program on Title 1 student reading achievement after the first year of implementation. Findings showed that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and the RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership. These findings indicated that district administration and principals' actions were necessary to provide support for teachers as they continue to implement the RS program. As a result, I developed a policy paper that makes recommendations regarding district administration and principals' actions that the school district could implement to improve the implementation of this program.

In Section 3, the proposed project that will provide the NBPSD superintendent, principals, and director of the reading department with recommendations for the continued implementation of the RS reading program to improve and enhance teaching experiences and increase student reading achievement levels is discussed. Section 3 includes a description of and sets goals for the project. A review of the current literature chosen for this study is presented. Implementation of the project, project evaluation, and implications for social change are provided.



### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The project developed for this study was a policy paper that will be shared with the superintendent, Office of Research, and the reading department director. A policy paper is usually used to make recommendations for action to educational systems and agencies (Powell, 2012). Policy papers combine both professional (instructional implementation and responsibilities) and academic (knowledge and pedagogy) skills of educators (Powell, 2012). The policy paper was an appropriate choice for this project because my committee (chair and second committee member at that time) and I determined that recommendations are necessary for the NBPSD superintendent, Office of Research, and the reading department director who are the intended audience. The goal of the policy paper was to make recommendations based on findings of the study to help district leaders, principals, PDLTs, and teachers strengthen their practice of implementing the RS to improve student reading achievement.

To achieve an understanding of teachers, principals, and PDLTs involving their experiences with the implementation of the RS reading program, a qualitative case study was conducted. Results of the study indicated that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and the RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership.

In this section, the project option that best addresses the data analysis results is explained. Description and goals, rationale for choosing a policy paper, review of literature related to the genre of the project, implementation and evaluation of the project, and implications of social change are discussed as related to research findings of this study.

### **Rationale**

Findings of the study demonstrated the need for a policy paper that could inform, and guide continued implementation of the RS reading program. The policy paper provides district leadership recommendations regarding how to support on-going implementation of the RS reading program.

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review involves peer reviewed literature that is related to the findings and content of this project that focused on understanding teachers' and principals' experiences regarding implementation of the RS reading program. To obtain background knowledge to inform my project, the following databases via the Walden University's Library ProQuest, ERIC, SAGE Journals, EBSCOHost, and Google Scholar were searched. I read a variety of resources published between 2018 and 2022 such as peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, books, and reports. I also read relevant sources published prior to 2018. Search terms that used were: *policy paper*, *position paper*, *policy paper*, *teacher collaboration*, *positive influence of reading specialists*, *differentiated instruction*, *class size*, *role of the principal and teacher*

*evaluation.* The search was concluded when repeated use of search terms individually and in combinations revealed no new references.

The literature review is presented in two sections. The first section is focused on the policy paper as the chosen project for this study. The second section is focused on the identified factors that contribute to uneven impact of the RS reading program on Title 1 student reading achievement in the NBPSD.

### **Literature About the Project Genre: Policy Paper**

Policy papers are supported with current research and provide useful information involving outcomes from findings for the intended audience (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014; Powell, 2012). Policy papers need to be meaningful, identify and provide a history of the problem, provide evidence for the solution, and make recommendations developed from the evidence (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014; Powell, 2012). Powell (2012) said the format for a policy paper should be clear and concise, include headings and subheadings, and be designed to catch a reader's eye so that the proposed audience will want to read it. Educational research policy papers follow this same procedure. Researchers begin by examining a specific problem, provide research related to the problem, provide evidence based on data analysis, and make recommendations to specific audiences that will benefit from information.

Three educational research studies show how the researchers followed the identified steps and wrote policy papers to make recommendations for the intended audiences. Apfelbaum and Ardon (2015) studied segregation and the impact that has on

student achievement in Massachusetts. Then, they created program and financial recommendations for the state and specific cities that would benefit from the findings. Dolph (2017) studied school improvement in urban areas and then made recommendations for change that school principals could consider. Martinez (2017) studied English Language Learner's (ELL) student achievement gaps in New Mexico. Martinez then made recommendations for the state and individuals who provide support for the ELL students. For this study, the policy paper will provide district leaders and administrators with reasoned recommendations that could support on-going implementation of the RS reading program at Title 1 schools in the district.

### **Supporting Research for the Policy Paper**

Teachers, PDLTs, and school principals from both HPS and LPS experienced similar challenges, including inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and inadequate support from school and district leadership.

#### ***Teacher Collaboration***

Teacher collaboration is important in that is a process where teachers have the opportunity to work together to improve their teaching practices, develop a better understanding of the curriculum, and share their teaching experiences (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Randall & Marangell, 2021; White et al., 2020). White et al. (2020) said collaboration takes time to build and develop a place where open and non-judgmental communication can occur. Liu et al. (2021) conducted a study that focused on how

teachers experience a collegial collaboration and how that collaborative experience is affected by school leadership. Liu et al. found that when there is support from school leadership and teachers were given opportunities to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and professional development, results demonstrated higher student achievement. Collaboration is the foundation for teacher success, creating a positive school environment, and improvement of students' academic achievement because it provides time for teachers to establish cooperative interactions, share teaching practices, and allow time for reflection and revisiting their teaching knowledge (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Randall & Marangell, 2021; Sutton & Shouse, 2016; White et al., 2020).

### ***Influence of Reading Specialists***

Reading specialists fulfill many roles and are instrumental in terms of overall literacy achievement (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). However, reading specialists in schools perform additional tasks other than just working with struggling readers (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). Reading specialists may also be instructional lead teachers, reading instructors, data coaches, and behavior management specialist (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). They provide support to not only struggling readers but also provide instructional support for teachers such as helping to find resources and implementing different strategies to meet diverse learning needs of the

students. Supports for teachers may also include creating and implementing instructional PD sessions that focus primarily on teaching reading.

Reading specialists provide the support needed in the implementation of a literacy program and the implementation of instruction. However, research demonstrates that there are differences between how the principals and reading specialists understand the support and implementation of the reading program. Research indicates that the significant differences between what the principals and reading specialists perceived regarding a literacy program and implementation of instruction are: (a) guaranteeing that excellent instruction is being implemented, (b) making the most of the time allotments, (c) developing a reading procedure that is clear and reliable, and (d) creating a strong home and school connection (Bean et al., 2018; Prezyna et al., 2017).

### ***Differentiated/Small Group Instruction***

Differentiated instruction provides students with instruction according to their learning needs. When teachers use small groups, flexible grouping, or leveled grouping, they are implementing strategies that will help to target specific skills for particular students to help them achieve higher levels of success (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Hersi & Bal, 2021; Stover et al., 2016). Data collected from formal and informal assessments help teachers to identify student's strengths and weaknesses, set goals for the students, and target their learning needs.

Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration their assessment data, groupings,

learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Hersi & Bal, 2021; Stover et al., 2016). Hersi and Bal (2021) noted that in addition to the teachers focusing on the student needs, the teachers need to be trained and prepared to design and implement multiple levels of differentiated instruction. Research further indicates that differentiation of instruction differs from school to school (Dijkstra et al., 2017).

### ***Support Provided to Teachers by the Principals and District Leadership***

The role of the principal has changed over time. A principal's role is no longer just the leader of the school overseeing the school's daily operations (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). There are many facets to their role. A principal's role includes providing instructional support such as PDs for teachers with specific focuses, analyzing data to inform instruction, and conducting teacher evaluations (Davis, & Boudreaux, 2019; Neumerski et al., 2018). An effective leader is expected to know what to do, develop a good rapport and provide support for teachers and lead student achievement (Kim & Lowery, 2021). With these expectations, principals are expected to build a strong school climate, ensure that teachers are getting the PDs and support they need, in addition to ensuring that student achievement is occurring.

### **Project Description**

The project I chose for this study is a policy paper to be presented to the district superintendent, office of research, and the reading department director. The policy paper will describe the findings of this study and make recommendations related to each of the

factors that contributed to the uneven impact of the RS reading program on student reading achievement.

An email will be sent inviting them to attend with the date, location and time included. The policy paper will be presented in a meeting location determined by the superintendent. During the presentation, a brief description of the project and the findings will be provided. In addition, the recommendations and conclusion based on the results of the study will be shared.

A copy of the policy paper will be provided for the superintendent, Office of Research, and reading department director. The policy paper will include identifying the problem, providing a history of the problem, providing evidence for the solution, and making recommendations developed from the evidence.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

A copy of the policy paper will be distributed and presented to all the individuals who are invited to attend. To do this, I will require the email addresses of all the individuals who will attend, and a sufficient number of copies will be provided. The NBPSD Office of Research will receive a copy of the final study and a copy of the policy paper that will be reviewed and kept on file. Following the presentation, a time for questions and answers will be provided.

### **Potential Barriers**

A barrier may be that some of the individuals and other stakeholders will not be able to attend the presentation. However, the invited participants will have already



received a copy of the policy paper by email prior to the presentation. Additional barriers might include a) the policy paper may not be valued by the district administration because the study was qualitative and they expect a good study to be a quantitative or a mixed methods design, and c) the individuals and other stakeholders may act defensively because the study revealed inadequacies in the implementation of the RS reading program.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

After receiving CAO approval from Walden University, I will contact my supervising administrator at the study district to schedule the presentation. My goal, as the researcher, is to distribute the policy paper to the stakeholders during November, 2022 and to hold the meeting in November or December, 2022.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

My role, as the researcher is to provide a clear explanation of the project and the research findings. I will also provide an in-depth presentation of the recommendations provided in the policy paper. I will make the needed number of copies for the participants and have extra copies for any other stakeholders who may attend. All other individuals are being invited and will not be asked to assume any other responsibilities.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The project evaluation for this policy paper will be an outcome-based survey (see Appendix A) to determine whether the goals were met. The purpose of this survey will be to provide participants with the opportunity to evaluate the project. I will have

participants complete a survey following the presentation. The survey will be used to determine the participants' responses to the project and recommendations of the study. The survey will be developed using Google Forms and have five questions. Each participant will be invited to complete their own copy of the Google Forms survey. Then, all responses will be imported into a Google Spreadsheet where the responses are categorized by the questions and provide feedback on the determined goals.

### **Project Implications**

#### **Local Community**

The policy paper may contribute to a better understanding of the principals, PDLTs, and teachers understanding of implementing the RS reading program and what changes can be made to strengthen the implementation. Results from the project may provide the reading department director with information to support interventions for teachers, principals, and PDLTs as they continue to implement the RS program. The project is important because it contributes to local social change in the NBPSD by increasing awareness of the factors that impact the teachers' implementation of the RS reading program which in turn increases the percentage of students who learn to read at an *advanced* level in elementary school and go on to eventually graduate from high school.

#### **Far-Reaching**

As the researcher, I believe that other schools, similar to the participating schools, will benefit from findings and recommendations of this study. This project will help

superintendents, Office of Research, reading department directors and other stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding implementation of reading programs and how to support the on-going implementation process.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

I developed the project to apply findings of the research study. One strength of the project is that the policy paper provides recommendations that can be implemented in the district. Another strength is that the policy paper includes a description of the problem that led to the research study, as well as a summary of research findings.

Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students whether they are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) said it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading comprehension to increase, especially students in low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as teachers differentiated instruction, students were able to learn material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom. Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration the student's assessment data, groupings, learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2016). The findings from this study revealed that not all schools in the district provided PD to teachers so that they could improve their teaching by implementing differentiated/small group instruction. Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students whether students are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) found that it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading

comprehension to increase, especially for students from low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as the teachers' differentiated instruction, the students were able to learn the material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom. Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration the student's assessment data, groupings, learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2016). The findings from this study revealed that not all schools provided PD to teachers so that they could improve their teaching by implementing differentiated/small group instruction and recommends actions that the district could implement to address the problem (Lyons & Luginland, 2014; Powell, 2012).

A limitation of this project involves limited time for presenting the project. The presentation will be presented one time to the NBPSD superintendent, Office of Research personnel, and the reading department director. Another limitation is that teachers, principals, and PDLTs will not be invited. To address the limitation, I will make a copy of the policy paper and send it to all participants who provided data for the study.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

A recommendation for an alternative approach could be to present the policy paper via a district wide virtual PD session so that participants can participate from their current location instead of having to travel to another location. Another approach could be to pre-record the presentation for participants to view during a time that is convenient for them.

## **Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change**

### **Scholarship**

As the researcher, I learned about designing and conducting research and how research may bring about social change. I learned that research must be designed carefully to answer the research questions and when conducting research, the researcher must be vigilant and persistent to collect rich data that will answer research questions. I have learned to look at data analysis through a different lens. I am able to piece together data to create a bigger picture that provides a deeper understanding of data. This gives me more of an opportunity to share with my colleagues another way of looking at data rather than just looking at numbers.

### **Project Development**

The development of the policy paper included the research findings and recommendations for those who make decisions involving implementation of reading instruction. Throughout this process, I developed a deeper understanding of the importance of conducting research. Analysis of data collected from teachers, principals, and PDLTs led to the development of the policy paper.

### **Leadership and Change**

When I started this doctoral journey, my desire was to be able to help support and strengthen my colleagues who work alongside me. My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of skill and knowledge that would allow that to happen. During the process of this journey at Walden University, I achieved those goals. I have developed an

understanding of research and processes that have to be followed for the research to have meaning. Also, I have a new perspective of what leadership entails such as listening to what teachers share as their needs, paying close attention to ensure time for focused collaboration, and ensuring that needed supports are in place so that I make a difference within my school district and school.

### **Reflection on the Importance of the Work**

As a lifelong learner, I participate in professional activities that will help to increase my professional skills. As an educator, it is important to find out what works and does not work so that student achievement can increase. During the research process and while reviewing current literature, I developed a deeper understanding of what data reveals. I learned that it is important to separate my biases from the data analysis. During the process of conducting interviews and analyzing interview data, I found it was important to pay attention to details and piece them together to form findings that lead to the development of a policy paper.

As the project developer, I chose to write a policy paper because findings lead to policy recommendations. The policy paper makes recommendations based on the findings from the research data analysis. Recommendations can be used by the school district administration to improve implementation of the RS reading program.

Development of a policy paper was important for me so that I could make recommendations to help the superintendent, Office of Research, and the reading department director understand how teachers, PDLTs, and principals experienced the

implementation of RS. Findings from this qualitative case study may contribute to local social change in the NBPSD by increasing awareness of how teachers, PDLTs and principals experienced the implementation of the RS reading program which in turn may increase the percentage of students who learn to read in elementary school and go on to eventually graduate from high school.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experienced implementation of the RS reading program, challenges teachers faced in implementing the RS reading program, and resources and supports teachers were provided in order to improve reading achievement of their students. This study is important because findings revealed a need for recommendations which are addressed in the policy paper (see Appendix A). I conducted qualitative interviews with two principals, two PDLTs, and 10 teachers to collect and analyze data, and write up research findings to develop an understanding of their experiences involving implementing the RS reading program.

The policy paper will help the superintendent, Office of Research and the reading department director understand how teachers, PDLTs, and principals perceived implementation of the RS reading program and how the district can better support implementation.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The study was developed to understand how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experienced the implementation of the RS reading program, the



challenges teachers faced, and resources and supports teachers were provided in order to improve the reading achievement of their students. Findings of the research showed that teachers, PDLTs, and school principals from both HPS and LPS experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, writing curriculum, and the RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership. These findings were used to make recommendations that the school district administration can use to improve the on-going implementation of the RS reading program.

The findings of this study were based on the experiences and perceptions of teachers, principals, and PDLTs in one local school district, and the results are not generalizable beyond the local context. The study was limited to third through fifth grade teachers, the reading PDLTs, and their principals and limited to Title 1 schools only. Even though the findings are not generalizable beyond the study district, other school districts could learn from the study.

A recommendation for future research would be to conduct a mixed methods study to understand the problem using both quantitative and qualitative data. With the use of qualitative and quantitative data the researcher would be able to determine how specific implementation actions would be reflected by student achievement scores. The study could reveal whether the recommendations in the policy paper were implemented and the effect that the recommendations had on the implementation of the reading program and student reading achievement.

## **Conclusion**

Section 4 included an overview of my reflections of the project study. The development of the project was informed by the findings of a qualitative research study designed to achieve an understanding of how teachers, principals, and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experienced the implementation of the RS reading program, the challenges teachers faced in implementing the RS reading program, and the resources and supports teachers were provided in order to improve the reading achievement of their students. The findings of the study revealed that teachers, PDLTs, and school principals from both HPS and LPS experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, writing curriculum, and RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership.

## References

- Ainsworth, M., Ortlieb, E., Cheek, E. R., Pate, R., & Fetters, C. (2012). First-grade teachers' perception and implementation of a semi-scripted reading curriculum. *Language and Education, 26*(1), 77-90.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). *Early warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters*.  
[http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2011). *Double jeopardy*.  
<http://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy/>
- Apfelbaum, K., & Ardon, K. (2015). Expanding METCO and closing achievement gaps. *White Paper No. 129*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565731>
- Azano, A., Missett, T. C., Callahan, C. M., Oh, S., Brunner, M., Foster, L. H., & Moon, T. R. (2011). Exploring the relationship between fidelity of implementation and academic achievement in a third-grade gifted curriculum: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 22*(5), 693-719.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X11424878>
- Bass, L., & Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2011). Declaring bankruptcy on educational inequity. *Educational Policy, 25*(6), 908-934. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904810386594>

- Bean, R. M., Dagen, A. S., Ippolito, J., & Kern, D. (2018). Principals' perspectives on the roles of specialized literacy professionals. *Elementary School Journal, 119*(2), 327–350. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700280>
- Beasley, K. T., & Bernadowski, C. (2019). An examination of reading specialist candidates' knowledge and self-efficacy in behavior and classroom management: An instrumental case study. *Education Sciences, 9*(2), 76. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020076>
- Berenson, J., Doty, M. M., Abrams, M. K., & Shih, A. (2012). Achieving better quality of care for low-income populations: The roles of health insurance and the medical home in reducing health inequities. *Issue Brief (Commonwealth Fund), 11*, 1-18. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22611596/>
- Berman, J. D., McCormack, M. C., Koehler, K. A., Connolly, F., Clemons-Erby, D., Davis, M. F., Gummerson, C., Leaf, P. J., Jones, T. D., & Curriero, F. C. (2018). School environmental conditions and links to academic performance and absenteeism in urban, mid-Atlantic public schools. *International Journal of Hygiene & Environmental Health, 221*(5), 800–808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheh.2018.04.015>
- Berry, B. (2009). Children of poverty deserve great teachers: one union's commitment to changing the status quo. *Center for Teaching Quality, 1-40*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED519724.pdf>
- Bradley, D., Crawford, E., & Dahill-Brown, S. E. (2015). Fidelity of implementation in a

large-scale, randomized, field trial: Identifying the critical components of values affirmation. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 1-9.

Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J. E. (2011). Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), 65-84.

Bruner, C., Discher, A., & Chang, H. (2011). Chronic elementary absenteeism: A problem hidden in plain sight [Research brief]. *Attendance Works*. 1-5.

<http://www.edweek.org/media/chronicabsence-15chang.pdf>

Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hendren, N., Jones, M. R., & Porter, S. R. (2018). The opportunity atlas: Mapping the childhood roots of social mobility. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25147>

Cheung, A. C. K., Xie, C., Zhuang, T., Neitzel, A. J., & Slavin, R. E. (2021). Success for All: A quantitative synthesis of U.S. evaluations. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 14(1), 90–115.

<https://doi-org./10.1080/19345747.2020.1868031>

Chmielewski, A. K. (2019). The global increase in the socioeconomic achievement gap, 1964 to 2015. *American Sociological Review*, 84(3), 517–544.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419847165>

Çoban, Ö., & Atasoy, R. (2020). Relationship between distributed leadership, teacher collaboration and organizational innovativeness. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(4), 903-911.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1274610.pdf>

- 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>
- Commeyras, M. (2007). Scripted reading instruction? What's a teacher educator to do? *Phi Delta Kappan, 88*(5), 404-407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170708800515>
- Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2021). *Standards in your state*.  
<http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>
- Connor, C. M., Morrison, F. J., Fishman, B., Crowe, E. C., Al Otaiba, S., & Schatschneider, C. (2013). A longitudinal cluster-randomized controlled study on the accumulating effects of individualized literacy instruction on students' reading from first through third grade. *Psychological Science, 24*(8), 1408-1419.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612472204>
- Costa, H. C., Perdry, H., Soria, C., Pulgar, S., Cusin, F., & Dellatolas, G. (2013). Emergent literacy skills, behavior problems and familial antecedents of reading difficulties: A follow-up study of reading achievement from kindergarten to fifth grade. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 34*(3), 1018-1035.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2012.11.029>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). SAGE publications.
- Cunningham, P. M., Hall, D. P., & Sigmon, C. M. (1999). *The teacher's guide to the four*

*blocks*. Carson-Dellosa.

- Danielson, C. (2008). *The handbook for enhancing professional practice: Using the framework for teaching in your school*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Davis, F., & Boudreaux, M. K. (2019). Teacher leaders' perceptions of charter school principals' instructional leadership practices. *Journal of Educational Research & Practice*, 9(1), 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2019.09.1.07>
- DePriest, K., & Butz, A. (2017). Neighborhood-level factors related to asthma in children living in urban areas: An integrative literature review. *Journal of School Nursing*, 33(1), 8-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840516674054>
- Dijkstra, E. M., Walraven, A., Mooij, T., & Kirschner, P. A. (2017). Factors affecting intervention fidelity of differentiated instruction of kindergarten. *Research Papers in Education*, 32(2), 151-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2016.1158856>
- Dolph, D. (2017). Challenges and opportunities for school improvement: Recommendations for urban school principals. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(4), 363-387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516659110>
- Dresser, R. (2012). The impact of scripted literacy instruction on teachers and students. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 21(1), 71-87.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ986817.pdf>

- Firmender, J. M., Reis, S. M., & Sweeny, S. M. (2013). Reading comprehension and fluency levels ranges across diverse classrooms: The need for differentiated reading instruction and content. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57(1), 3-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986212460084>
- Fitz, J. A., & Nikolaidis, A. C. (2020). A democratic critique of scripted curriculum, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(2), 195-213.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1661524>
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. (2012). Guided reading: The romance and the reality. *Reading Teacher*, 66(4), 268-284. <https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01123>
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading*. Heinemann Publishing.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2017). *Guided reading: Responsive teaching across the grades*. Heinemann Publishing.
- Freidus, A., & Noguera, P. A. (2017). Making difference matter: Teaching and learning in desegregated classrooms. *Teacher Educator*, 52(2), 99–113.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2017.1294925>
- Fullan, M. (2007). Change theory: A force for school improvement. In J.M. Burger, C. Webber, & P. Klinck (eds.), *Intelligent Leadership* (pp. 29- 39). Springer.
- Garet, M. S., Wayne, A. J., Brown, S., Rickles, J., Song, M., & Manzeske, D. (2017). *The impact of providing performance feedback to teachers and principals* (NCEE 2018-4000). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance,



Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED578874.pdf>

Ghimire, R., & Topple, T. A. (2020). The effect of neighborhood limited English proficiency on third graders' reading achievement in public elementary schools in the US state of Georgia. *Social Science Quarterly*, *101*(1), 218-239.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12738>

Gordon, M. S., & Cui, M. (2018). The intersection of race and community poverty and its effect on adolescents' academic achievement. *Youth & Society*, *50*(7), 947-965.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X16646590>

Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the relationship between student attendance and achievement in urban elementary and middle schools: An instrumental variables approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, *47*(2), 434-465.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209350494>

Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Can neighbor attributes predict school absences? *Urban Education*, *49*(2), 216-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085913475634>

Hanselman, P., & Borman, G. D. (2013). The impacts of success for all on reading achievement in grades 3-5: Does intervening during the later elementary grades produce the same benefits as intervening early? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *35*(2), 237-251. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373712466940>

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.

- Harn, B., Parisi, D., & Stoolmiller, M. (2013). Balancing fidelity with flexibility and fit: What do we really know about fidelity of implementation in schools? *Exceptional Children*, 79(2), 181-193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440291307900204>
- Hasbun, T., & Stewart, S. (2010). Promoting successful readers: Scripted programs vs. a guided reading approach. *ICERI Proceedings*, 3578-3581.
- Henry, D. A., Betancur Cortés, L., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2020). Black-White achievement gaps differ by family socioeconomic status from early childhood through early adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(8), 1471-1489. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000439>
- Hersi, A. A., & Bal, I. A. (2021). Planning for differentiation: Understanding Maryland teachers' desired and actual use of differentiated instruction. *Educational Planning*, 28(1), 55–71.
- Hingstman, M., Doolaard, S., Warrens, M. J., & Bosker, R. J. (2021). Supporting young struggling readers at Success for All schools in the United States and the Netherlands: Comparative case studies. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 16(1), 22–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F1745499920975984>
- Institute of Educational Sciences. (2016). What is the WWC? A trusted source about what works in education. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/WhatWeDo>
- Jacob, R., Elson, D., Bowden, B., & Armstrong, C. (2015). Exploring the implementation, effectiveness and costs of the Reading Partners Program. *Society*

*for Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 1-9.

Jensen, A. (2011). *Educational differences* (Vol. 182). Routledge.

Jensen, E. (2013). *Engaging students with poverty in mind*. ASCD.

Ji, C. S., Rahman, T., & Yee, D. S. (2021). Mapping state proficiency standards onto the NAEP scales: Results from the 2019 NAEP reading and mathematics assessments (NCES 2021-036). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics.

Johnson, S. B., Spin, P., Connolly, F., Stein, M., Cheng, T. L., & Connor, K. (2019). Asthma and attendance in urban schools. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, *16*, 1–10.  
<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.5888/pcd16.190074>

Kim, T., & Lowery, C. (2021). Who should get “ineffective”? A principal’s ethical dilemmas on teacher evaluation. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, *24*(2), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458920976718>

Kiuru, N., Lerkkanen, M., Niemi, P., Poskiparta, E., Ahonen, T., Poikkeus, A., & Nurmi, J. (2013). The role of reading disability risk and environmental protective factors in students' reading fluency in grade 4. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *48*(4), 349-368. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.53>

Ladnier-Hicks, J., McNeese, R. M., & Johnson, J. T. (2010). Third grade reading performance and teacher perceptions of the Scott Foresman Reading Street Program in Title I Schools in South Mobile County. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, *4*(2), 51-70. <https://doi.org/10.3776/joci.2010.v4n2p51-70>

- Lai, I., Wood, W. J., Imberman, S. A., Jones, N. D., & Strunk, K. O. (2021). Teacher quality gaps by disability and socioeconomic status: Evidence from Los Angeles. *Educational Researcher*, 50(2), 74–85.
- Lam, G. (2014). A theoretical framework of the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement of students. *Education*, 134(3), 326-331.
- Little, M. (2017). Racial and socioeconomic gaps in executive function skills in early elementary school: Nationally representative evidence from the ECLS-K:2011. *Educational Researcher*, 46(2), 103-109.
- Liu, D., & Channell, L. (2015). The predominance of literacy activities in urban early childhood education. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 3(11), 897-905.  
<https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2015.031116>
- Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Gümüş, S. (2021). 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*, 49(3), 430-453.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220910438>
- Lucariello, J. M., Butler, A. G., & Tine, M. T. (2012). Meet the "reading rangers": Curriculum for teaching comprehension strategies to urban third graders. *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, 9(2), 1-15.
- Lyons, J. B., & Luginland, J. W. (2014). White papers and beyond: Reflections from former grants officers. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 52(2), 129-

135.

Makgato, M., & Mudzanani, N. N. (2019). Exploring school principals' leadership styles and learners' educational performance: A perspective from high-and low-performing schools. *Africa Education Review*, *16*(2), 90-108.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2017.1411201>

Mancilla-Martinez, J., & Lesaux, N. K. (2010). Predictors of reading comprehension for struggling readers: The case of Spanish-speaking language minority learners. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *102*(3), 701-711.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019135>

Martinez, J. (2017). *New Mexico's academic achievement gaps: A synthesis of status, causes, and conclusions* [White Paper]. Center for Positive Practices.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED575669.pdf>

Maxwell, L. E. (2016). School building condition, social climate, student attendance and academic achievement: A mediation model. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *46*, 206-216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2016.04.009>

Maxwell, L. E. (2018). 6 - The role of the physical environment in education. *Environmental Psychology and Human Well-Being*, 135-166.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-811481-0.00006-8>

McDaniel, S. C., McLeod, R., Carter, C. L., & Robinson, C. (2017). Supplemental summer literacy instruction: Implications for preventing summer reading loss. *Reading Psychology*, *38*(7), 673-686.

- McGraw-Hill Education. (2015). *Reading mastery signature edition 2008*. McGraw-Hill Education Global Holdings.
- McMahon, B. (2011). The perpetuation of risk: Organizational and institutional policies and practices in a Title 1 school. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 9(2), 199-215. <http://www.jceps.com/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/09-2-12.pdf>
- Mendelson, T., Clary, L. K., Sibinga, E., Tandon, D., Musci, R., Mmari, K., Salkever, D., Stuart, E. A., & Ialongo, N. (2020). A randomized controlled trial of a trauma-informed school prevention program for urban youth: Rationale, design, and methods. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2019.105895>
- Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: examples for discussion and analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). SAGE Publications.
- National Center for Children in Poverty. (2016). *Basic facts about low-income children*. Columbia University. [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1074.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1074.html)
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2015a). *Children living in poverty*. U.S. Department of Education. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cce.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cce.asp)
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2015b). *Fast facts*. U.S. Department of Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2015c). *Nation's report card*. U.S. Department

of Education.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014464MD4.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015d). *What level of knowledge and skills have the nation's students achieved?* U.S. Department of Education.

[http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/what-knowledge](http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/what-knowledge)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *Nation's report card*. U.S. Department of Education.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/itemmaps/?subj=RED&grade=4&year=2019&jurisdiction=NT&variable=SLUNCH3>

National Institute for Direct Instruction. (2015). *Reading mastery signature edition*.

Author.

Nelson, K. E., Welsh, J. A., Trup, E. M., & Greenberg, M. T. (2011). Language delays of impoverished preschool children in relation to early academic and emotion recognition skills. *First Language, 31*(2), 164-194.

Nelson, K. L., Dole, J. A., Hosp, J. L., & Hosp, M. K. (2015). Vocabulary instruction in K-3 low-income classrooms during a reading reform project. *Reading Psychology, 36*(2), 145-172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2013.839485>

Neumerski, C. M., Grissom, J. A., Goldring, E., Rubin, M., Cannata, M., Schuermann, P., & Drake, T. A. (2018). Restructuring instructional leadership: How multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems are redefining the role of the school

principal. *Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 270–297.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/700597>

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, 101 et seq. Stat. 1425 (2002).

Ortlieb, E. (2013). Using anticipatory reading guides to improve elementary students' comprehension. *International Journal of Instruction*, 6(2), 145-162.

Owens, R. C. (2013). *Reading recovery*. Richard C. Owens Publishers, Inc.

Parsons, S. A., & Ward, A. E. (2011). The case for authentic tasks in content literacy. *Reading Teacher*, 64(6), 462-465. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.64.6.12>

Pearson Education Group. (2015a). *Reading street common core*. Pearson Education.

Pearson Education Group. (2015b). Pearson research overview.

<http://www.whitewingschool.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ReadingStreet.pdf>

Plaspohl, S. S., Dixon, B. T., Streater, J. A., Hausauer, E. T., Newman, C. P., & Vogel, R. L. (2014). Impact of school flu vaccine program on student absences. *Journal of School Nursing*, 30, 75-80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840513487750>

Porche, M. V., Pallante, D. H., & Snow, C. E. (2012). Professional development for reading achievement: Results from the collaborative language and literacy instruction project. *Elementary School Journal*, 112(4), 649-671.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/665008>

Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., & Correll, P. (2017). Power and agency in a high poverty



elementary school: How teachers experienced a scripted reading program. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 13(1), 93–124.

Powell, V. (2012). Revival of the position paper: Aligning curricula and professional competencies. *Communication Teacher*, 26(2), 96-103.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2011.643805>

Prezyna, D. M., Garrison, M. J., Lockte, H. A., & Gold, C. P. (2017). Principal leadership and reading specialist role understanding in the era of test-based accountability policies. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 12(2), 1-16.

<https://doi.org/10.22230/ijep.2017v12n2a686>

Puzio, K., Colby, G. T., & Algeo-Nichols, D. (2020). Differentiated literacy instruction: boondoggle or best practice? *Review of Educational Research*, 90(4), 459–498.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320933536>

Quinn, D. M., & Kim, J. S. (2017). Scaffolding Fidelity and Adaptation in Educational Program Implementation: Experimental Evidence from a Literacy Intervention. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(6), 1187–1220.

Quinn, J. M., Wagner, R. K., Petscher, Y., Roberts, G., Menzel, A. J., & Schatschneider, C. (2020). Differential codevelopment of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension for students with and without learning disabilities. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(3), 608–627.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000382.supp>

Randall, R., & Marangell, J. (2021). Changing what we might have done on our own:

- improving classroom culture and learning through teacher collaboration. *Clearing House: Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 94(1), 38–46.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research. Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. SAGE Publications.
- Reardon, S. F., & Galindo, C. (2009). The Hispanic-White achievement gap in math and reading in the elementary grades. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(3), 853-891. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209333184>
- Reis, S. M., McCoach, D. B., Little, C. A., Muller, L. M., & Kaniskan, R. B. (2011). The effects of differentiated instruction and enrichment pedagogy on reading achievement in five elementary schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 462-501. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210382891>
- Relyea, J. E., Zhang, J., Liu, Y., & Lopez Wui, M. G. (2020). Contribution of home language and literacy environment to English reading comprehension for emergent bilinguals: Sequential mediation model analyses. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(3), 473-492. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.288>
- Savino-Garzon, D. (2013). *Teacher evaluation of the scripted reading street program and the level of satisfaction among its sub-scale components* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Seton Hall University. <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1912>
- Scammacca, N., Fall, A. M., Capin, P., Roberts, G., & Swanson, E. (2020). Examining factors affecting reading and math growth and achievement gaps in grades 1–5: A

- cohort-sequential longitudinal approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(4), 718-734. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000400.supp>
- Schrauben, K. S., & Witmer, S. E. (2020). Feedback provided within structured reading programs: A systematic review. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 36(3), 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2019.1627967>
- Simons, E., Hwang, S., Fitzgerald, E. F., Kielb, C., & Lin, S. (2010). The impact of school building conditions on student absenteeism in Upstate New York. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(9), 1679-1686. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.165324>
- Sobolak, M. J. (2011). Modifying robust vocabulary instruction for the benefit of low-socioeconomic students. *Reading Improvement*, 48(1), 14-23.
- Stover, K., Yearta, L., & Harris, C. (2016). Formative assessment in the digital age: Blogging with third graders. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 377-381. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1420>
- Strickland, D. S., Ganske, K., & Monroe, J. K. (2002). *Supporting struggling readers and writers: Strategies for classroom intervention, 3-6*. Stenhouse.
- Suber, P. (2014). *Elementary teachers' perceptions of the reading mastery (c) program's literacy professional development* (Publication No. 3612310) [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest dissertation publishing.
- Success for All Foundation. (2015). *Scaling up success for all: The first 16 years*. Success for All Foundation. <https://www.successforall.org/results/research->

[archive/](#)

- Sutton, P. S., & Shouse, A. W. (2016). Building a culture of collaboration in schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 97(7), 69-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721716641653>
- Tang, X., & Dai, T. (2021). How do classroom behaviors predict longitudinal reading achievement? A conditional autoregressive latent growth analysis. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 54, 239–251.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.09.007>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016a). *Duncan says 82 percent of America's schools could "fail" under NCLB this year*. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/duncan-says-82-percent-americas-schools-could-fail-under-nclb-year>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016b). *Every child succeeds act*. Author.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016c). *Highly qualified teachers for every child*. Author. <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/stateplanfacts.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016d). *No child left behind: Elementary and secondary education act*. <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>
- van Kuijk, M., Mullender-Wijnsma, M., & Bosker, R. (2021). A systematic review of studies addressing the implementation of the evidence-based whole-school reform success for all. *ECNU Review of Education*, 4(1), 128–163.
- Wang, C., Fan, X., & Pugalee, D. K. (2020). Impacts of school racial compositions on the mathematics and reading achievement gap in post unitary: Charlotte-Mecklenburg

schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 52(7), 1112-1132.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124519894970>

What Works Clearinghouse. (2016). Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. *Institute of Educational Sciences*, 1-123. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/21>

White, P., Raphael, J., Hannigan, S., & Clark, J. C. (2020). Entangling our thinking and practice: A model for collaboration in teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(8), 93–110.

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. SAGE Publications.

Appendix A: The Project

Addressing the Uneven Impact of the Reading Street Common Core Program© On  
Student Reading Achievement

A Policy Paper

by

Donna West

Walden University

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	156
Definition of the Problem.....	158
Summary of the Analysis and Findings.....	159
Discussion and Recommendations Related to the Findings.....	159
Conclusion.....	164
References.....	166
Policy Paper Evaluation.....	170

## Introduction

### **The Problem**

During 2019, 65% of American children scored between *at risk* and *basic* levels and 35% scored between the *proficient* and *advanced* levels (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Student achievement in reading has been well documented in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2015d, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016d). At the national level, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 with the goal that all students must achieve 100% reading proficiency by 2014 (Savino-Garzon, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2016d). The U.S. Department of Education (2016a) predicted that in 2011 that 82% of U.S. schools would not achieve reading proficiency by 2014. In 2017, national and state reading assessment results demonstrated no significant change since 2009 (Ji et al., 2021). Student reading scores in 2019 were lower than scores in 2017 (Ji et al., 2021).

Educational leaders, district leaders, and school administrations responded to these national and state reading achievement results by focusing on ways to increase elementary level student reading achievement. Some school systems introduced research-based whole language reading programs such as Reading Recovery, Four Blocks, and Guided Reading. These guided reading programs require teachers to group students according to their reading achievement levels, use texts based on students' instructional reading level, and teach comprehension and decoding instructional strategies (Hasbun &



Stewart, 2010; Puzio et al., 2020). Other school systems introduced research-based scripted balanced literacy programs such as Reading Street Common Core Program (RS), Success for All, and Reading Mastery that combine whole language and phonetic strategies to meet the reading needs of student population (Dresser, 2012; Hasbun & Stewart, 2010; Powell et al., 2017). Scripted reading programs were designed to provide methodical and explicit teaching approaches (Dresser, 2012; Hasbun & Stewart, 2010; Powell et al., 2017). They provide well-defined lessons, specific timelines, and scripts that teachers are to use when teaching lessons in reading.

The New Beginnings Public School District (NBPSD, pseudonym) is located in one of the 43 states that began full implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2013. As part of the CCSS implementation process, the district decided to implement one structured reading program for all of its 146 elementary schools. In 2013, the NBPSD implemented RS by Scott Foresman, a highly structured and scripted reading program, to address the issue of low student reading achievement of students.

The NBPSD student population is comprised of approximately 60% African Americans, 4% Caucasians, and 36% other ethnicities. Approximately 60% of the district's student population is considered low socioeconomic status (NCES, 2015a). Of the 208 schools, 80 have been identified as Title 1 schools with 64 of those schools being elementary schools. Of the total student population, 66.5% participate in the free and reduced meals (FARMS) program.

### Definition of the Problem

NBPSD 64 Title 1 elementary schools from 2010-2013 experienced low reading achievement on the state mandated reading assessment prior to the introduction of the RS program during the 2013-2014 school year. After implementation of the RS program, the percentage of Title 1 students who achieved *advanced* scores increased an average of 22.5% between the 2013 and the 2014 assessment. The percentage of Title 1 students who achieved *basic* scores decreased an average of 7.03% at 40 Title 1 schools while at 24 Title 1 schools the percentage of *basic* scores increased an average of 5.0%.

All 64 Title 1 elementary schools demonstrated gains in percentages of students who achieved *advanced* scores while decreasing the percentage of students who achieved *proficient* between 2012 and 2014. However, 60 Title 1 schools demonstrated a decrease in percentages of students who achieved *basic* scores. Some schools stood out because the percentage of students who achieved the *basic* level increased after the first year of implementing the RS program instead of decreasing as shown in Table 1. For the purposes of this study, these schools are recognized as LPS and are referred to as Schools G, H, I, and J.

Another set of schools stood out because the percentage of students who achieved the *advanced* level increased by more than 40% after the first year of implementing the RS program, higher than the expected increase. For the purposes of this study, these schools are recognized as HPS and are referred to as Schools A, B, C, and D.

A study was conducted that compared perceptions of teachers, principals, and PDLTs who were employed at four Title 1 HPS with those at four Title 1 LPS in an attempt understand, from the teachers, principals, and PDLTs perspectives, the uneven impact of reading achievements after the first year of the introduction of the RS reading program. I explored how teachers at these two groups of schools experienced implementation of the RS reading program in their classrooms, challenges they faced in implementing the RS reading program, and resources and supports they were provided in order to improve the reading achievement of their students. I also interviewed a sample of PDLTs and school principals and explored how they experienced implementation of the RS reading program at their schools, challenges they perceived teachers faced when implementing the RS reading program, and resources and supports that were provided to the teachers.

### **Summary of the Analysis and Findings**

The study was unable to explain the uneven effect of the implementation of the RS. However, the results of the study indicated that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and the RS, and inadequate support from school and district leadership.

### **Discussion and Recommendations Related to the Findings**

#### **Inadequate Time for Teacher Collaboration**

Teacher collaboration is a process that provides teachers the opportunity to work together to improve their teaching practices, develop a better understanding of the curriculum, and share experiences (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Randall & Marangell, 2021; White et al., 2020). Research has shown that PD and collaboration are linked to professional teaching practices and student academic achievement (Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2021; Randall & Marangell, 2021; White et al., 2020). The findings from this study indicated that the time allotted to the PDLTs and teachers for collaboration (one hour per week) was perceived to be inadequate by teachers and PDLTs. The allotted time for PD and collaboration was used for other issues such as discussing the CIM, discussing data about student attendance and behavior, and discussing curricula of areas other than reading rather than for collaboration about the implementation of the RS reading program. The teachers often used after school time for planning and collaboration, but that is evidence that the provided time was inadequate.

### ***Recommendations Regarding Teacher Collaboration***

It is recommended that district and school administrators develop policies that:

- Ensure that there is adequate time dedicated for teachers to collaborate with each other, with reading specialists, and with PDLTs regarding their implementation of RS
- Create a collaborative environment where teachers, principals, reading specialists, and PDLTs work together for the benefit of the students

### **Lack of Alignment Between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and RS**

The lack of alignment with the RS reading program and the district CIM and writing curriculum was a challenge for the teachers. Both the LPS and the HPS teachers identified that meeting the district's expectations for student progress and the conflict between RS and CIM order of implementation was difficult for them and that they spent too much time dealing with the issue. The issue was that the CIM required that teachers implement RS in ways that violated the RS program. The teachers explained that they did their best to merge the two sets of requirements to best meet the needs of their students but that the issue was a persistent problem.

***Recommendation Regarding Alignment of Cim, Writing Curriculum and RS***

It is recommended that district and school administrators develop policies that:

- Provide a comprehensive guide for teachers that aligns the CIM, the writing curriculum, and the RS

**Inadequate Support from School and District Leadership**

The study revealed that the district and school leadership were committed to the implementation of RS. Despite this commitment, the support provided was perceived as inadequate by teachers, PDLTs and the principals in these areas: provision of PD regarding RS implementation, employment of reading specialists, provision of PD regarding differentiated small group instruction.

**Provision of PD Regarding RS Implementation**

The district provided training for the PDLT's who were tasked to turn-key that training at their schools. However, Both the PDLTs and the teachers found this turn-key

situation inadequate in that they were receiving the information second-hand, it was often delivered as lecture, and there was not enough time devoted to the process. Research has shown that effective professional development for teachers engages the teachers in active learning and focuses on their individual needs (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Such PD was not possible in the turn-key situation. Because of lack of time, the PDLT's presented the information they received, showing the slides that had been presented to them and/or distributing the hand-outs they had received. There was not enough time for teachers to ask questions or discuss issues related to their needs. Further the turn-key sessions were not designed to effectively model best practices or provide individual coaching.

### **Employment of Reading Specialists**

Reading specialists are instrumental in the effectiveness of the school's overall literacy achievement (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). However, reading specialist in schools perform additional tasks other than just working with struggling readers (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). Reading specialists may also be an Instructional Lead Teacher, reading instructor, data coach, behavior management specialist, as well as being considered an expert teacher (Bean et al., 2018; Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019; Prezyna et al., 2017). The finding from this study demonstrated differences between the HPS and LPS regarding employment of a reading specialist. Some schools were not able to employ a reading specialist because of finances. The district did not mandate or provide the necessary financial resources to ensure that all schools would employ a reading specialist.

### **PD Related to Small Group Instruction/Differentiated Instruction**

Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students whether students are considered *advanced* or *at risk* (Puzio et al., 2020; Strickland et al., 2002). Puzio et al. (2020) found that it is important for teachers to develop and implement differentiated reading strategies for students' reading comprehension to increase, especially for students from low socioeconomic circumstances. Puzio et al. also found that as the teachers' differentiated instruction, the students were able to learn the material and demonstrate their learning in the classroom. Research indicates that differentiated instruction needs to target students' individual needs while taking into consideration the student's assessment data, groupings, learning styles and preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2016). The findings from this study revealed that not all schools provided PD to teachers so that they could improve their teaching by implementing differentiated/small group instruction.

### ***Recommendations Related to Inadequate Support from Administration***

It is recommended that district and school administrators develop policies that:

- Develop and offer PD regarding best practices for using RS in the classroom and make this PD available on-line for teachers to access as groups or individually as needed
- Ensure that every school has a certified reading specialist on staff
- Provide adequate time for the reading specialists to guide implementation of the reading program

## Conclusion

The goal of this policy paper was to make recommendations based on research findings help district leaders, principals, PDLTs, and teachers strengthen their practice of implementing the RS to improve student reading achievement. Findings showed that both the HPS participants and LPS participants experienced similar challenges: inadequate time for teacher collaboration, lack of alignment between the CIM, Writing Curriculum, and the RS, inadequate support from school and district leadership. Recommendations regarding leadership actions that that the school district could implement to improve the implementation of the RS reading program were developed from those findings.

- Ensure that there is adequate time dedicated for teachers to collaborate with each other, with reading specialists, and with PDLTs regarding their implementation of RS
- Create a collaborative environment where teachers, principals, reading specialists, and PDLTs work together for the benefit of the students
- Provide a comprehensive guide for teachers that aligns the CIM, the writing curriculum, and the RS
- Develop and offer PD regarding best practices for using RS in the classroom and make this PD available on-line for teachers to access as groups or individually as needed
- Ensure that every school has a certified reading specialist on staff



- Provide adequate time for the reading specialists to guide implementation of the reading program

These recommendations provide district leadership with actions they can take to support the on-going implementation of the RS reading program.

## References

- Bean, R. M., Dagen, A. S., Ippolito, J., & Kern, D. (2018). Principals' perspectives on the roles of specialized literacy professionals. *Elementary School Journal, 119*(2), 327–350. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700280>
- Beasley, K. T., & Bernadowski, C. (2019). An examination of reading specialist candidates' knowledge and self-efficacy in behavior and classroom management: An instrumental case study. *Education Sciences, 9*(2), 76. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020076>
- Çoban, Ö., & Atasoy, R. (2020). Relationship between distributed leadership, teacher collaboration and organizational innovativeness. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education, 9*(4), 903–911.
- Cunningham, P. M., Hall, D. P., & Sigmon, C. M. (1999). *The teacher's guide to the four blocks*. Carson-Dellosa.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Dijkstra, E. M., Walraven, A., Mooij, T., & Kirschner, P. A. (2017). Factors affecting intervention fidelity of differentiated instruction of kindergarten. *Research Papers in Education, 32*(2), 151-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2016.1158856>
- Dresser, R. (2012). The impact of scripted literacy instruction on teachers and students. *Issues in Teacher Education, 21*(1), 71-87.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. (2012). Guided reading: The romance and the

reality. *Reading Teacher*, 66(4), 268-284. <https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01123>

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading*. Heinemann Publishing.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2017). *Guided reading: Responsive teaching across the grades*. Heinemann Publishing.

Hasbun, T., & Stewart, S. (2010). Promoting successful readers: Scripted programs vs. a guided reading approach. *ICERI Proceedings*, 3578-3581.

Ji, C. S., Rahman, T., & Yee, D. S. (2021). *Mapping state proficiency standards onto the NAEP scales: Results from the 2019 NAEP reading and mathematics assessments* (NCES 2021-036). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics.

Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Gümüş, S. (2021). 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*, 49(3), 430–453.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220910438>

McGraw-Hill Education. (2015). *Reading mastery signature edition 2008*. McGraw-Hill Education Global Holdings.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015a). *Children living in poverty*. U.S.

Department of Education. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cce.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cce.asp)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015d). *What level of knowledge and skills have the nation's students achieved?* U.S. Department of Education.

[http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/what-knowledge](http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/what-knowledge)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *Nation's report card*. U.S. Department of Education.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/itemmaps/?subj=RED&grade=4&year=2019&jurisdiction=NT&variable=SLUNCH3>

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).

Owens, R. C. (2013). *Reading recovery*. Richard C. Owens Publishers, Inc.

Pearson Education Group. (2015). *Reading street common core*. Pearson Education.

Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., & Correll, P. (2017). Power and agency in a high poverty elementary school: how teachers experienced a scripted reading program. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 13(1), 93-124.

Prezyna, D. M., Garrison, M. J., Lockte, H. A., & Gold, C. P. (2017). Principal leadership and reading specialist role understanding in the era of test-based accountability policies. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 12(2).

Puzio, K., Colby, G. T., & Algeo-Nichols, D. (2020). Differentiated literacy instruction: boondoggle or best practice? *Review of Educational Research*, 90(4), 459–498.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320933536>

Randall, R., & Marangell, J. (2021). Changing what we might have done on our own: improving classroom culture and learning through teacher collaboration. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 94(1), 38–46.

- Savino-Garzon, D. (2013). *Teacher evaluation of the scripted reading street program and the level of satisfaction among its sub-scale components* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Seton Hall University. <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1912>
- Stover, K., Yearta, L., & Harris, C. (2016). Formative assessment in the digital age: Blogging with third graders. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 377-381.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1420>
- Strickland, D. S., Ganske, K., & Monroe, J. K. (2002). *Supporting struggling readers and writers: Strategies for classroom intervention*, 3-6. Stenhouse.
- Success for All Foundation. (2015). *Scaling up success for all: The first 16 years*. Success for All Foundation. <https://www.successforall.org/results/research-archive/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016a). *Duncan says 82 percent of America's schools could "fail" under NCLB this year*. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/duncan-says-82-percent-americas-schools-could-fail-under-nclb-year>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016d). *No child left behind: Elementary and secondary education act*. U.S. Department of Education.
- White, P., Raphael, J., Hannigan, S., & Clark, J. C. (2020). Entangling our thinking and practice: a model for collaboration in teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(8), 93–110.

## Policy Paper Evaluation

Thank you for attending the presentation of this Policy Paper. For those who were not able to attend, but read through the policy paper, thank you for your attention. If you would like to share the information with other colleagues or stakeholders, please feel free to do so. I would appreciate it if you would be able to answer a few questions for me on a Google Form that I will provide you the link for. You can fill it out now or if you would like to review the policy paper again and then respond, please do so at your convenience.

Thank you,

Donna West, EdD

Please rate the following items on a scale of 1 to 5 by circling your evaluation.

### **Evaluation Questions:**

1. The presentation was clear and concise.
  - 1- Completely agree
  - 2- Agree
  - 3- Neither agree nor disagree
  - 4- Disagree
  - 5- Completely disagree
  
2. The policy paper provides guidance for principals and school district leadership.
  - 1- Completely agree
  - 2- Agree
  - 3- Neither agree nor disagree
  - 4- Disagree
  - 5- Completely disagree

3. The policy paper provides information about teachers, principals, and PDLTs experiences with the implementation of the RS reading program.

- 1- Completely agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Completely disagree

4. How would you rate this research policy paper and the recommendations that were provided?

- 1- Highly Effective
- 2- Effective
- 3- Neither effective nor ineffective
- 4- Somewhat Effective
- 5- Ineffective

5. Please use the space below to provide any additional comments.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

Research questions guiding the interview questions:

RQ1: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 2: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS experience implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ3: How did teachers at four HPS and four LPS compare in terms their experiences with implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 4: How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?

RQ 5: How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 students' reading achievement in the NBPSD?

Teacher Interview Questions:

1. (Schools A, B, C, and D) Since the implementation of RS, the *advanced* level demonstrated an average increase of 43.5% while the *basic* level demonstrated an average decrease of 10.9%. How would you explain that apparent success? What was different after the implementation of RS that would lead to that success?

(Schools G, H, I, and J) Since the implementation of RS, the *advanced* level demonstrated an average increase of 7.4% while the *basic* level demonstrated an average increase of 15.2%. How would you explain the increase in the *advanced*



- levels and the increase in the *basic* level? What was different after the implementation of RS that would lead to the increase in these levels?
2. Did the RS reading program change your teaching practices? How?
  3. Talk about your experiences that you had while implementing RS in your classroom?
  4. I would like you to think back to the first year of teaching this program and reflect for a moment. Then, tell me about your reflection.
  5. How has RS changed your teaching and what do you think about that?
  6. In implementing the RS reading program next year, what are some instructional changes you would make in order to impact your students' reading achievement?
  7. What challenges did you encounter when implementing the RS reading program?
  8. What resources and supports such as professional development opportunities were you provided to help you implement the RS reading program during the first year of implementation? Please describe these supports.

Principal and PDLT Interview Questions:

1. (Schools A, B, C, and D) Since the implementation of RS, the *advanced* level demonstrated an average increase of 43.5% while the *basic* level demonstrated an average decrease of 10.9%. What do you attribute to the teachers' success in the implementation of the RS reading program?

(Schools G, H, I, and J) Since the implementation of RS, the *advanced* level demonstrated an average increase of 7.4% while the *basic* level demonstrated an

- average increase of 15.2%. What do you attribute to the increase in the *advanced* levels and the increase in the *basic* levels?
2. What factors contributed to the implementation of the RS reading program (such as teacher attrition, student mobility, classroom management, parental involvement)?
  3. What did you perceive that the teachers needed from administration to successfully implement the RS reading program?
  4. As the administrator, what supports were put in place to support the teachers?
  5. What challenges do you think the teachers encountered while implementing the RS reading program?

## Appendix C: Research and Interview Matrix

*Research and Interview Questions Matrix*

Research Questions	Teacher Interview Questions	PDLT and Principal Interview Questions
<p>1. How did teachers at four HPS and teachers at four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?</p> <p>2. How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and principals at four LPS experience the implementation of the RS reading program?</p> <p>3. How do teachers at four HPS and teachers at four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?</p> <p>4. How did principals and PDLTs at four HPS and principals and PDLTs at the four LPS compare regarding their experience with the implementation of the RS reading program?</p>	<p>1. (Schools A, B, C, and D) Since the implementation of RS, the <i>advanced</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 41.5% while the <i>basic</i> level demonstrated an average decrease of 10.9%. How would you explain that apparent success? What was different after the implementation of RS that would lead to that success? (Schools G, H, I, and J) Since the implementation of RS, the <i>advanced</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 10.2% while the <i>basic</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 12.2%. How would you explain the increase in the <i>advanced</i> levels and the increase in the <i>basic</i> level? What was different after the implementation of RS that would lead to the increase in these levels?</p> <p>2. Did the RS reading program change your teaching practices? How?</p> <p>3. Talk about your experiences that you had while implementing RS in your classroom?</p> <p>4. I would like you to think back to the first year of teaching this program and reflect for a moment. Then, tell me about your reflection.</p> <p>5. How has RS changed your teaching and what do you think about that?</p>	<p>1. (Schools A, B, C, and D) Since the implementation of RS, the <i>advanced</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 41.5% while the <i>basic</i> level demonstrated an average decrease of 10.9%. What do you attribute to the teachers' success in the implementation of the RS reading program? (Schools G, H, I, and J) Since the implementation of RS, the <i>advanced</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 10.2% while the <i>basic</i> level demonstrated an average increase of 12.2%. What do you attribute to the increase in the <i>advanced</i> levels and the increase in the <i>basic</i> levels?</p> <p>2. What factors contributed to the implementation of the RS reading program?</p> <p>3. What did you perceive that the teachers needed from you to successfully implement the RS reading program?</p> <p>4. As the administrator, what supports were put in place to support the teachers?</p>

5. How did these comparisons explain the uneven effect of the implementation of the RS reading program on elementary level Title 1 student reading achievement in the NBPSD?

6. In implementing the RS reading program next year, what are some instructional changes you would make in order to impact your students' reading achievement?

7. What challenges did you encounter when implementing the RS reading program?

8. What resources and supports such as professional development opportunities were you provided to help you implement the RS reading program during the first year of implementation? Please describe these supports.

---

5. What challenges did you think the teachers encountered while implementing the RS reading program?

## Appendix D: Provisional Codes

1. Ethnicity
2. Parental educational status
3. Lack of exposure to learning
4. Homeownership
5. Healthcare
6. School building conditions
7. School culture
8. Teacher beliefs
9. Teacher qualifications
10. Teacher understanding of low socioeconomic students
11. Vocabulary Instruction
12. Phonological awareness strategies
13. Reading comprehension strategies
14. Employing data to drive instruction
15. Differentiating instruction
16. Instruction to promote reading achievement of low socioeconomic students
17. Curriculum
18. Reading Street
19. Administrative support
20. Parental involvement