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Fourth Grade Teachers' Experiences Addressing Low Reading Achievement

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Sametria Alexander

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.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Fourth Grade Teachers' Experiences Addressing Low Reading Achievement

by

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MA, University of Phoenix, 2014

BS, Lemoyne-Owen College, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Reading, Literacy, and Assessment

Walden University

August 2024

Abstract

The research problem addressed in this study was the low reading achievement scores of fourth grade students and fourth grade reading teachers' struggles raising reading achievement. The purpose of the study was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement. The theoretical frameworks were Gough and Tunmer's simple view of reading and Chall's stages of reading development. The research questions addressed fourth grade reading teachers' use of strategies and approaches and fourth grade reading teachers' beliefs about school support. The study used a basic qualitative approach with semistructured interviews from 10 U.S. fourth grade reading teachers. Through thematic analysis, the study yielded the following eight themes: Fourth grade reading teachers used close reading, response to intervention (RtI), small-group instruction, and the I-Ready online learning platform. Additionally, fourth grade reading teachers used echo and buddy reading, context clues and morphology instruction, and re-teaching of foundational skills. Fourth grade reading teachers also used online learning games and the Ready Reading and Wonders curricula. Last, fourth grade reading teachers desired professional development, classroom assistants, and foundational skills support for lower grade-level teachers. The findings from this study revealed that fourth grade reading teachers need help finding strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement. Fourth grade reading teachers also need more support from their school administration. The present study can promote positive social change by improving reading achievement scores enhancing understanding of teachers' struggles.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Reading is a high-stakes subject in an era of unprecedented expectations for accountability and standardized assessments (Brown et al., 2018). Despite implementing individualized reading instruction, such as I-Ready reading and response to intervention (RtI), fourth grade students in the United States continue to have low reading scores on national reading assessments. According to The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reading scores in 2022 were lower than in 2019 in fourth grade and eighth grade, comparable to initial scores in 1992 (NAEP, 2023). During NAEP reading assessments, students read several types of passages and answered comprehension questions. According to the NAEP, only 33% of fourth graders scored at or above proficient (NAEP, 2023). This information indicates that 67% of fourth grade students score below proficient in reading.

With 67% of U.S. fourth grade students scoring below NAEP proficiency standards in reading, educators have the responsibility of finding strategies and interventions to address low reading achievement in this group of students. Once educators find strategies and interventions to address low reading achievement and consistently use effective strategies, reading scores of fourth grade students may increase. The NAEP data suggests that fourth grade teachers encounter problems when finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Consequently, fourth grade teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement can be pivotal in providing insight into the struggles faced by this group of teachers.

Although teachers may document the barriers they experience, they may have few insights on successful interventions if their students all have low reading scores.

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the study: background, problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, and the study's significance. Chapter 1 consists of key conceptual definitions, the study's delimitations, assumptions, and limitations. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background

When students reach the third grade, they no longer read entertaining stories; they read nonfiction texts that require heightened reading comprehension skills (Beerwinkle et al., 2018). Consequently, by the time students get to fourth grade, teachers expect them to read to learn in lieu of learning to read. When fourth grade students struggle to read to learn, it could stifle reading achievement. Fourth grade teachers could benefit from the use of effective strategies and interventions to reach struggling fourth grade readers.

In this study, I used interviews with fourth grade teachers to explore their experiences of raising the reading achievement of fourth grade students. Teachers encounter difficulties when finding strategies and interventions for fourth grade students to improve reading achievement (Wanzek & Roberts, 2012). Consequently, when fourth grade teachers struggle with finding strategies and interventions, fourth grade students may continue to score low in reading achievement.

The challenge of finding strategies and interventions for fourth grade students' progress in reading achievement is a struggle for fourth grade teachers. These struggles

could stem from the lack of understanding and resources on fourth grade teachers' behalf to teach reading concepts in a way conducive to fourth grade students' understanding (Serry et al., 2022). If schools want to remediate the problem of low reading achievement in fourth grade students, fourth grade teachers must first feel confident in finding effective strategies and interventions to use in classrooms.

Struggling fourth grade readers may have different individual areas of deficits. Some areas of reading deficits could be foundational skills, reading fluency, or reading comprehension (Denton et al., 2022). To properly address all reading deficits, multicomponent interventions that include fundamental reading skills, reading comprehension, and fluency are necessary (Donegan & Wanzek, 2021). However, to have effective interventions for struggling readers, teachers should be knowledgeable in reading practices (McMaster et al., 2021). Whereas fourth grade teachers are not reading professionals, they may benefit from collaborating with reading specialists who can help build effective literacy instructional skills to heighten teachers' knowledge of reading, literacy, and assessment (Young & Bowers, 2018). Consequently, low reading achievement for fourth grade students may remain consistent until fourth grade reading teachers receive the knowledge they need from professional development learning opportunities and collaborations with literacy professionals (Albers et al., 2019).

The reading performance of U.S. students is lower than that of students in other evolved countries, indicating that U.S. schools have not been successful at producing reading achievement (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021). Reading teachers can rectify

this lack in attaining reading achievement when they share their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences about teaching struggling readers. However, there has yet to be qualitative research focusing on U.S. fourth grade reading teachers' experiences finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Therefore, the current study is necessary to address this gap in practice to understand fourth grade teachers' experiences finding reading strategies and interventions.

Problem Statement

The research problem was that fourth grade teachers in the United States struggled to implement effective strategies to improve student outcomes on national reading assessments. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the national reading proficiency scores in the United States remained stagnant between 1992 and 2026 and have declined since 2017. In 2022, only 33% of U.S. fourth graders performed at or above NAEP proficient in reading (NAEP, 2023). These scores reflected the low reading progress of fourth grade students, which makes the present problem relevant and urgent.

Currently, there is a gap in practice understanding the struggles of fourth grade teachers to find effective strategies and interventions for fourth grade students' reading success. Because reading is multifaceted, fourth grade teachers should be able to support students in all facets of reading to facilitate s students' reading achievement. However, many fourth grade teachers struggle in this area because most elementary reading curricula do not include fluency instruction; school administrations have failed to ensure

the proper training for teachers in oral reading fluency (ORF) (Hudson et al., 2020). The lack of training stems from associated training costs that schools deem too expensive (Donovan et al., 2021). Hence, when fourth grade teachers fail to get the support needed to find effective strategies and interventions to raise reading achievement, fourth grade students' reading achievement suffers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. I explored the general problem by investigating fourth grade teachers' experiences of difficulties encountered when raising reading achievement in fourth grade students. The basic qualitative study served as a connection between the problem addressed and fourth grade teachers' experiences raising reading achievement. The knowledge acquired from this study may inform the educational field on how fourth grade teachers' voices can shape strategies and interventions used to raise reading achievement. The insights gained from studying fourth grade teachers' experiences offer a more thorough understanding of the challenges faced when raising reading achievement.

Research Questions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fourth grade teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. I answered two main research questions (RQs) in this

study. The questions reflected the purpose in this study, which was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve the reading achievement scores of fourth grade students.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What strategies and approaches do fourth grade reading teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was based on Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development. The simplified model of reading is based on decoding sounds and letters, followed by the task of making meaning from those iterations. When struggling readers are supposed to read a passage, they may finish looking at the words and not understand what they have read (Cartwright et al., 2020). This lack of understanding could derive from spending too much time decoding words, and sounding out the letters, as recommended in the simple view of reading (see Gough & Tunmer, 1986). As a result, by the time students finish the passage, they do not understand what they have read. Therefore, they are unable to answer comprehension questions accurately. Situations like this could contribute to low reading achievement in fourth grade students.

Chall's (1983) stages of reading development is a framework that organizes reading development into five stages: pre-reading (Stage 1), confirmation and fluency

(Stage 2), reading for learning (Stage 3), multiple viewpoints (Stage 4), and construction and reconstruction (Stage 5). During the pre-reading stage, children begin to understand the concept of reading to be holding a book with pictures and listening to the sounds of words (phonological awareness) and bridge the relationship between letters and sounds (Chall, 1983). A pre-reading child will pretend to read by moving his or her finger along with the words of a book. During the confirmation and fluency stage, a child will read simple stories with familiar words because they have grasped early-level sight words and decoding skills (Chall, 1983). The use of decodable books in classrooms is an example of this stage.

During the reading for learning stage, children are no longer reading for entertainment; they read to learn new information (Chall, 1983). During this stage, upper elementary teachers expand students' learning by implementing expository texts during instruction. During the multiple viewpoints stage, the focus shifts to outside resources to expand knowledge (Chall, 1983). Students may go to the library or search online to find information on topics. Lastly, the construction and reconstruction stage shift from reading as a necessity to reading for pleasure (Chall, 1983). During this stage, one may read things that are of interest to them.

Children typically follow a pattern when learning to read. According to Chall's (1983) stages of reading development, fourth grade students should be reading to learn. However, fourth grade struggling readers may still be in the initial reading and decoding

stage. A lag in the stages of reading development can cause reading deficits and students may have difficulty catching up or achieving grade level reading skills and knowledge.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative lens to conduct this study. A qualitative approach to research uncovers the perceptions and beliefs of individuals concerning the world in which they live (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In a qualitative study, the researcher collects and analyzes non-numerical data. A qualitative research design was appropriate for this research because my goal was to find strategies and interventions that fourth grade teachers could use for struggling fourth grade readers' reading proficiency. I used semistructured interviews from 10 fourth grade teachers. The educational community could use the findings of this research study to understand fourth grade teachers' views, approaches, and experiences in finding strategies and interventions when working with fourth grade struggling readers.

Definitions

This section contains keywords and definitions used in the study.

Continuous reading: Requires students to read continuously, typically for a specified amount of time (Hammerschmidt et al., 2019).

Expository text: Text that describes or explains complex and often unfamiliar topics (García et al., 2019).

i-Ready personalized instruction: Delivers online lessons for grade K-8 students that provide instruction adapted to each student's level (Cook & Ross, 2022).

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): A common measure of student achievement nationwide in mathematics, reading, science, and many other subjects. National, state, and some district-level results, and results for different demographic groups are information on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2023).

Non-repetitive reading: Intervention in which students read one or more texts without engaging in additional readings of those texts (Zimmermann et al., 2021).

Oral reading fluency (ORF): A measure of words read correctly per minute (Liceralde et al., 2022).

Reading comprehension: The ability to comprehend what is read (Rose, 2019).

Repeated reading: Intervention in which students read the same segment, page, or passage of text multiple times (Hammerschmidt et al., 2019).

Response to intervention: A multilevel prevention system that has three levels or tiers (Tier 1, 2, and 3) with the quality and intensity of the intervention increasing per tier (Jiménez et al., 2021).

Assumptions

In this research, I made two assumptions. First, I assumed that the fourth grade teachers participating in the research saw the benefits of the research because they encountered struggling fourth grade readers daily. Therefore, the teachers participating in the research took the interview questions seriously and gave truthful and thought-provoking answers. It was necessary for me to make this assumption to ensure research

integrity. Secondly, I assumed that fourth grade teachers participating in the research had already thought about and identified contributors of low reading progress in fourth grade students. It was necessary for me to make this assumption to ensure the integrity of fourth grade teachers' responses. Additionally, it was necessary for me to make this assumption to ensure the fidelity of RQ1.

Scope and Delimitations

The research study was based on fourth grade teachers' experiences of remediating low reading achievement. To develop insight on fourth grade teachers' struggles in finding strategies and interventions to raise reading achievement, I explored fourth grade teachers' experiences finding strategies and interventions for struggling fourth grade readers.

The purpose of this research was not to debate low reading achievement in fourth grade students, but to understand fourth grade teachers' experiences finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Therefore, delimitations of the study were fourth grade reading teachers in the United States. Fourth grade reading teachers were obvious choices for this research because they work directly with fourth grade students and can give first-hand, personal insight regarding their experiences finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students.

Elementary school districts could use the findings from this research. Elementary school teachers, principals, and administrative staff may find this research relevant to

their settings for teaching reading. Since research shows that teachers in every grade level encounters students who have low reading progress, teachers could benefit from the study by understanding what contributes to low reading progress and help students achieve reading proficiency.

Limitations

This basic qualitative research study had two limitations. The first limitation was that I was the only interviewer. The second limitation was that I questioned only 10 fourth grade reading teachers as the sample. Being the only interviewer for the research study presented limitations due to personal biases on my behalf. For example, I had first-hand experience teaching fourth grade struggling readers. As such, I had struggled to find effective strategies and interventions for struggling readers. Thus, I was familiar with the feelings and experiences of fourth grade reading teachers when finding effective strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. To address personal biases, transparency with study participants about my background was necessary. Hence, I gave participants information about my educational background before administering the interview questions. Additionally, I allowed participants to review their answers at the completion of all interviews.

Enrolling only 10 participating teachers was a limitation in the research study because it had the potential to put constraints on the transferability of the research findings. Also, this limitation constrained the number of responses from participants. To

address this limitation, I asked open-ended, broad interview questions. Using open-ended questions ensured that each participant gave personal accounts of their experiences.

Significance

I conducted this study to examine fourth grade teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. The research could fill a gap in understanding related to the struggles that fourth grade reading teachers face when finding effective strategies and interventions for fourth grade students' reading success. The research study findings could inform school districts to understand the struggles that fourth grade reading teachers face with struggling readers and finding strategies and interventions to raise reading achievement.

Procedures and processes fourth grade teachers follow when finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement are information provided in this study. Understanding fourth grade teachers' procedures and processes could inform district leaders on effective ways to support fourth grade teachers as they find strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. The study's findings have the potential to inform elementary school districts about the needs that reading teachers have when trying to raise students' reading scores.

Summary

In this chapter, I focused on the study's possible importance to the educational field by highlighting the following: (a) background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose, (d) research questions, (e) conceptual framework, (f) nature of the study, (g) definitions,

(h) assumptions, (i) scope and delimitations, (j) limitations, and (k) significance. The background of the study included information on the importance of heightened comprehension skills, fourth grade teachers' lack of understanding of reading concepts, and lack of access to resources. Last, background information included an explanation of the importance of effective reading interventions.

The problem that I addressed in this study is that fourth grade students in the United States have low reading achievement scores on national reading assessments, and fourth grade teachers struggle to find strategies and interventions to remedy the problem. The purpose of the research study was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and intervention to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. The research questions were (a) what strategies and approaches do fourth grade teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students? and (b) what supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to address low reading achievement in fourth grade students?

The conceptual framework was based on Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development. The simple view of reading reflects the process of decoding sounds and letters, followed by the task of making meaning from those iterations. The stages of reading development depict the five stages in which reading occurs.

The nature of the study centered around the qualitative approach of the research and using fourth grade teachers' experiences to answer the study's research questions.

The assumptions of the research study were that fourth grade teachers could benefit from the study and that fourth grade teachers had already thought about and identified factors contributing to low reading achievement in fourth grade students. The scope of the study involved fourth grade teachers' experiences and did not debate low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Delimitations of the study was fourth grade teachers in the United States.

The limitations of the study were that I was the only interviewer and that I only used 10 fourth grade teachers in the study's sample. The significance of the study was that it could fill a gap in understanding what struggles fourth grade teachers face when finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Additionally, the research study could inform school districts about procedures and processes fourth grade teachers follow when finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students.

Chapter 2 includes an introduction, a literature review, and a literature review search strategy, including databases and resources used to conduct the study. Additionally, Chapter 2 includes a more detailed look at the conceptual frameworks mentioned in Chapter 1. Lastly, Chapter 2 includes a summary of the major constructs used in the research study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem that I addressed in the study was that fourth grade teachers in the United States struggle to implement effective strategies to improve student outcomes on national reading assessments. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fourth grade teachers' challenges addressing low reading achievement in fourth grade students. There is a need for fourth grade reading teachers to have access to proven reading interventions and techniques to address reading deficits in fourth grade students (see Tunmar & Hoover, 2019). Additionally, there is a need for fourth grade teachers to possess expanded proficiency in reading interventions and techniques (see McMaster et al., 2021).

Chapter 2 includes information about the literature search strategy used in the research, an in-depth explanation of the conceptual framework, and current reviews from peer-reviewed articles pertaining to the study's topic. Additionally, Chapter 2 includes a summary of the major themes found in the literature and a conclusion of how the present study could fill a gap in the literature and extend knowledge related to practice in the discipline.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search pertained to strategies and interventions that improve reading achievement scores of upper elementary school students. I used Walden Library and Google Scholar. Within Walden Library, I used the database to search for peer-reviewed articles by subject. I also searched for journals, dissertations, and other research by

subject to find educational articles about the research topic. I used all peer-reviewed literature published between 2018 and later.

Some key terms and combinations of search terms that I used to conduct the literature research included *reading strategies*, *reading instructional practices*, *reading comprehension interventions*, *reading improvement*, *reading challenges*, *reading teacher competence*, *challenges and supports for reading teachers*, and *professional development for reading teachers*. In each database, I conducted an advanced search that included literature about upper elementary schools in the United States. In the case that the search did not yield sufficient articles, I used references from previously identified articles. Using these references allowed me to broaden my search for peer-reviewed articles using an author's name or title of a peer reviewed article.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was based on Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development. The simplified model of reading is based on decoding sounds and letters, followed by the task of making meaning from those iterations. Stages of reading development is a framework that organizes reading development into five stages: pre-reading (Stage 1), confirmation and fluency (Stage 2), reading for learning (Stage 3), multiple viewpoints (Stage 4), and construction and reconstruction (Stage 5).

The simple view of reading asserts that to be adept in reading comprehension, one must be skillful in decoding and linguistic comprehension, the latter is the ability to

understand written texts read aloud (Lonigan et al., 2018). The simple view of reading suggests that reading requires more than decoding and comprehension (Lonigan et al., 2018). For example, in their study of the simple view of reading, Apel (2022) suggested that reading comprehension requires the ability to appropriately arrange words in a sentence, break words apart to understand the meaning, and draw inferences from implied spoken words. Teachers can reference the simple view of reading by recognizing deficiencies in reading comprehension in students with language development or language processing deficits (Catts et al., 2015).

As it relates to Chall's (1983) stages of reading development, each stage of reading development serves as a conduit for successfully completing all reading stages (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Consequently, success in each stage of reading development depends on progress in the previous stage (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Thus, a model for reading that includes developmental stages and age ranges for comprehensible reading abilities is vital when understanding the reading adeptness of individuals (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

In this literature review, I explored research regarding reading strategies and interventions. The key concepts for this literature review included strategies for learning, such as oral reading, computer-adaptive reading, comprehension, and self-regulation. Additionally, this literature review included the following strategies for reading

improvement: repeated reading, teacher multicomponent reading interventions, and teacher professional development.

Elementary Reading Achievement and its Importance

Elementary reading achievement is the foundation for a student's educational growth and success (Gentilini & Greer, 2020). The degree of reading achievement in elementary school may limit a student's capacity to absorb sophisticated concepts in numerous courses later in life (Kim & Margulieux, 2020). Reading success is contingent upon students' performance on state and national reading assessments (Van Norman & Nelson, 2021). However, before students can be successful on national and state reading assessments, it would benefit students when parents involve themselves with at-home activities that raise literacy knowledge in their children, and when parents set clear expectations on literacy development in their children (Yang Dong et al., 2020).

Elementary reading achievement is significant because it has the potential to foster a lifetime love of learning. Consequently, students who enjoy and succeed at reading in their early years are more likely to regard reading as an enjoyable pastime (Brannan et al., 2020). However, reading motivation could be contingent on students' beliefs and upbringing (see Gay et al., 2021). Children who have strong relationships with others who read, feel like they read well, feel like reading is vital, and have an intrinsic desire to read tend to be more successful at reading (Barber & Klauda, 2020).

Addressing primary reading success inequalities can significantly reduce educational inequities (Scammacca et al., 2020). Consequently, students' reading

performance could be contingent on various socioeconomic backgrounds (Owens et al., 2019). Consistent with this notion, the NAEP (2023) found that reading scores were lower in students from the following groups: students who received free or reduced lunch, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native, and White students; students attending schools in cities, suburban areas, and towns, and students residing in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and Western Regions. The NAEP demographic data of reading assessment results could be a pathway for school leaders to correct the reading performance gaps that exist in education.

Factors Contributing to Low Reading Achievement

Several linked factors could contribute to children's low reading achievement, affecting their educational progress and overall literacy development. These factors include inadequate access to quality reading resources, limited exposure to language-rich environments, inappropriate teaching methods, socioeconomic inequalities, and learning difficulties (Heissel & Ladd, 2018). Children not exposed to language-rich environments outside of school may experience hindrances to their vocabulary growth, comprehension abilities, and overall enthusiasm for learning (Sonnenschein et al., 2022). However, exposure to language-rich environments outside of school can lead to more robust development of reading skills and more leisurely reading opportunities, which aids in reading success in later grades (see Rodrigues et al., 2023). A recent study found that kindergarten students who participated in an at-home shared book reading with their parents showed positive interest in reading and gains in understanding print concepts,

reading behaviors, and retelling and understanding stories (Anderson et al., 2019). Hence, caregivers can establish a language-rich environment by providing access to various reading resources and engaging in regular reading activities with their children.

Moreover, teachers can also establish language-rich environments by explicit instruction in language components, such as vocabulary, grammar, inferences, text structure, and comprehension monitoring. The literature has evidence supporting this idea, as students exposed to explicit literacy instruction outperform their peers in comprehension and vocabulary (Jiang & Logan, 2019).

Using classroom libraries to give students access to quality reading resources is vital for literacy classrooms and should include texts that interest students in various genres (see Butler, 2018). However, classroom libraries are often ineffective because of schools' inability to afford to furnish classrooms with books that interest students (Butler, 2018). Teacher-librarian collaboration could fill the need for quality reading resources. When teachers and librarians come together, they can allocate time to share resources and work together to determine how teachers will deliver reading content (see Reed & Oslund, 2018). As a result, students who participated in a teacher-guided library intervention, where the teacher and librarian worked together to choose books on students' reading level and their interests, scored higher in reading, and became more confident in their reading abilities (Weber, 2018).

Inappropriate teaching instruction could hinder reading achievement in elementary students (see Young, 2023). Most inappropriate teaching instruction derives

from (a) teachers' inability to produce effective instructional practices in literacy, (b) teachers' inability to design and arrange activities to enhance literacy learning, (c) teacher's unawareness of literacy teaching knowledge, (d) teachers' misunderstandings of how students learn at home, and (e) teachers' inability to use instructional strategies that yield understanding for students (Hudson et al., 2021b). Schools' reliance on instructional reading specialists could form instructional practices for teachers that benefit all learning types. In a qualitative study in which they used interviews Bean et al. (2018) found that principals of schools that use instructional reading specialists consider reading specialists vital in teaching and learning literacy.

School instructional reading specialists can support teacher classroom pedagogies, give immediate feedback on teaching deficiencies, and collaborate with teachers on teaching lessons (Offutt & Snead, 2021). Instructional reading specialists also help teachers gain a heightened self-efficacy regarding their teaching abilities. In a recent study, Morgan et al. (2022) found that teacher adeptness in guided reading instruction heightened after lessons with a literacy coach who focused on the amount of time, management and planning, text level, and instructional opportunities in guided reading. Consequently, when reading teachers have a positive belief about their self-efficacy as teachers, they are more apt to find continuous ways to perfect their craft, so all students reach reading achievement (Rodgers et al., 2022).

Socioeconomic disparities and inequalities can also contribute to low reading achievement (Olsen & Huang, 2022). If schools expect an increase in students' reading

scores in the United States, ensuring that teachers meet all students' learning needs, specifically students with various cultural backgrounds, would be beneficial. Students from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds have joined U.S. schools (Clark, 2020). Thus, culturally relevant texts that mirror the lives of marginalized students could be beneficial (see Colwell, 2019).

When schools implement culturally relevant texts, marginalized students, such as low-income, African American, Hispanic American, Native American, and English language learners, become more engaged in reading by recalling key details and making personal connections to texts (see Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021). When teachers read culturally relevant texts to Hispanic students, they made personal connections to their cultures; however, when they read non-cultural-related texts to them, these students became disengaged (Marquez & Colby, 2021). Similarly, a recent study found that third-grade bilingual students from refugee backgrounds could accurately make coherent inferences, use text information, and apply background knowledge when listening to culturally relevant texts (Cho & Christ, 2021). Consequently, when students engage in texts that are meaningful to them and mirror their lives, it heightens text comprehension.

Some learning difficulties derive from emotional behavior disorders (Roberts et al., 2021). Students with emotional behavior disorders cause classroom disruptions, have difficulty engaging in classroom activities, perform below grade level in reading, and perform below typical peers (see Carr et al., 2022). However, when students with emotional behavior disorders have supportive teachers who recognize their learning

deficiencies, it could push this group of students to reading proficiency. To clarify, students with attention deficits outperformed their typical peers when exposed to evidence-based strategies to build more robust vocabulary and comprehension skills in informational text reading (Stewart et al., 2023). Alternatively, one recent study showed that students with inattention deficits responded well in small group reading instruction when teachers inserted behavior supports in the reading curriculum that focused on precursory behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors (Roberts et al., 2023).

Fourth Grade Reading

In fourth grade, the focal point of reading is comprehension; therefore, reading skills are more wide-ranging in upper elementary than in lower elementary (Paly et al., 2022). Fourth grade reading requires students to display their understanding of essential viewpoints of more challenging texts and bridge them during reading (Wijekumar et al., 2020). Many fourth grade students have difficulty reading complex texts and need effective instructional support from teachers (see Reynolds & Fisher, 2022). These students may benefit from strategies and interventions that incorporate vital components of upper elementary reading. Students are particularly successful in generating the main ideas of texts through small group intervention that focuses on paraphrasing and text structure understanding (Stevens et al., 2020).

When struggling readers reach fourth grade, they usually need more motivation to read because reading motivation of students decreases as grade levels increase (Parsons et al., 2018). The lack of reading motivation could also derive from struggling readers'

inability to reach reading milestones in lower elementary grades. However, once these students lose reading motivation, changing their minds is often difficult. Many students who lack reading motivation have negative mindsets toward reading. Consequently, students with negative mindsets toward reading tend to have higher reading deficits (Tock et al., 2021).

As students move through elementary school, they learn a substantial number of multisyllabic words to comprehend texts (Filderman & Toste, 2022). Consequently, when students reach fourth grade, teachers expect them to rely on previous knowledge of decoding and understanding the meaning of multisyllabic words as texts become more complex. This understanding is necessary because explicit teaching of multisyllabic words is rare after students leave Grade 2. After Grade 2, teachers place more time and effort on students' ability to gain insight from texts (Toste et al., 2019).

Since 2013, state and local reform efforts have come into existence to ensure success in literacy for all students (Acosta & Duggins, 2019). The integration of Common Core State Standards into public schools around the United States emphasized reading comprehension, cognitive processing of information, and careful attention to words, syntax, and the structure of sentences and texts (Acosta & Duggins, 2019). Teachers can assess students' growth in reading through dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills and curriculum-based measurements (Liebfreund et al., 2022).

Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy identify students with reading deficits and allow schools to intervene by placing students in interventions and monitoring

students' reading progress (Burns et al., 2023). Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy focus on beginning reading skills, which contribute to reading proficiency, such as letter sounds and names, word segmenting, nonsense words, and reading aloud (Burns et al., 2023). On the other hand, curriculum-based measures are examples of formative assessment that monitor how well students respond to classroom instruction (Van Norman et al., 2018). Curriculum-based assessments in reading measure how many words students can read aloud in 60 seconds and are essential because words read per minute is an indicator of reading proficiency (Van Norman et al., 2018).

Teachers can use data from summative assessments, formative assessments, and standardized tests to determine which students need additional assistance with reading concepts; once identified, teachers can group students appropriately or differentiate instruction to fill learning gaps (Schmitterer & Brod, 2021). One recent study found that using small group instruction with students who have the same reading deficits is just as effective as one-to-one tutoring (Miles et al., 2022). However, another way to differentiate instruction is by incorporating blended learning, which is a culmination of learning centers and computer centers in classrooms (Kazakoff et al., 2018). When teachers meet students' instructional needs, students can reach reading proficiency and achievement (Peters et al., 2022).

Importance of Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading fluency (ORF) is the conduit to reading comprehension (van Dijk, 2018). Namely, when students have strong reading fluency skills, it becomes easier to

understand text because they do not spend time trying to decode words. Alternatively, dysfluent readers are more likely to underperform their peers in reading and continue to lag throughout their school years (Council et al., 2019). ORF can strengthen students' decoding and comprehension skills and allow teachers to effectively monitor students' reading to implement appropriate interventions for struggling readers (Robinson & Meisinger, 2022). Reading comprehension and fluency scores of dysfluent readers grew significantly with exposure to evidence-based strategies and interventions in small-group and whole-group settings (Vess et al., 2018).

Accuracy, automaticity, and prosody are the components of ORF that allow students to process text to understand better what they have read (see Stocker et al., 2023). One recent study found that students skilled in ORF more quickly applied phonics awareness when reading than their peers who were not skilled in ORF (Wold et al., 2023). However, dysfluent readers may feel thwarted in their reading as they observe their peers reading fluently and finishing their work quickly (Farra et al., 2022). One recent study found that students exposed to a reading program, Readable English, an individualized reading instruction based on students' strengths, weaknesses, and interests, exceeded in fluency and comprehension their peers not exposed to the program (Coggins, 2023).

Students with solid automaticity in reading can read without effort; however, students with lower automaticity skills need more time to access words and may need additional support (Roembke et al., 2021). Therefore, there are four practical approaches

and principles of fluency instruction, consisting of small-group and whole-group reading and oral instruction that include teacher modeling, practice and scaffolded opportunities for students, and prosody instruction (Kuhn, 2020).

Students who are skillful in prosodic reading, or reading with expression, can read with a rhythmic tone and clearly understand the importance of pausing during reading and accurately phrasing words (Quezada, 2021). One recent study found a relationship between reading comprehension and prosody; however, the two are separate components (Wolters et al., 2020). Therefore, there are multiple dimensionalities between reading prosody, word reading, and listening comprehension. However, word reading is more closely tied to prosody (Kim & Margulieux, 2020).

Reading Comprehension

As grade level increases, the importance of reading comprehension skills increases because reading comprehension in upper elementary grades is the gateway to mastery in various content areas (Oslund et al., 2018). Comprehension strategies in text structure could be beneficial in supporting upper elementary students' development of the heightened skills needed to understand more complex texts. Text structure comprises sequencing, description, compare-contrast, problem-solution, and cause-effect (Hudson et al., 2021a). Researchers have revealed how text structure strategies could benefit struggling readers in upper elementary grades. Students' understanding of texts improved when teachers used text structure strategies focusing on signal words (Meyer et al., 2018). Hence, a text structure identification test after receiving text structure strategy

instruction improves the reading comprehension of fourth and fifth grade students (Strong, 2023).

Hudson et al. (2021a), Meyer et al. (2018), and Strong (2023) focused on a text structure strategy to improve reading comprehension. However, other text structure strategies have increased reading comprehension. For example, fourth and fifth grade students showed positive gains in reading comprehension when exposed to a *read, stop, write* text structure strategy that incorporated introducing students to multiple text structures, signal words, the use of graphic organizers, and writing summaries of informational texts (Strong, 2023). One study found that reading comprehension scores of fifth grade students increased significantly after participating in explicit vocabulary instruction (Bauer & Tang, 2022).

Self-Regulation

Comprehending various texts in upper elementary school requires students to differentiate information and have a basis to substantiate assertions made during reading (Florit et al., 2020). Self-regulation strategies during learning could allow students to delve deeper into texts. Studies have highlighted the importance of higher-order thinking and reading skills in building reading proficiency and understanding of texts in elementary students. One recent study found that the reading comprehension scores of upper elementary students improved when students used metacognitive strategies that focused on higher-order thinking skills (Moir et al., 2020). Similarly, a positive increase in critical analytic thinking and the use of asking authentic questions of texts when

exposed to higher-order thinking strategies resulted in positive increases in the reading comprehension scores of upper elementary students (Murphy et al., 2018).

Students' ability to ask questions while engaged in text is essential to self-regulated reading. One recent study found that students' reading comprehension scores improved when exposed to self-questioning strategies during reading (Rouse-Billman & Alber-Morgan, 2019). Additionally, students' ability to answer open-ended questions of expository texts and metacognitive skills, along with monitoring and controlling, improved during reading (Steiner et al., 2020).

Strategies for Learning to Read

Learning to read begins with phonics and phonemic awareness, which is the understanding that letters make sounds and sounds make words (Burns et al., 2018). Many children start kindergarten with early literacy deficits and leave with the same deficits (Noltemeyer et al., 2019). Consequently, many upper elementary students have reading deficits because they did not acquire phonemic awareness skills in their early years (Paige et al., 2023).

When upper elementary students have early literacy reading deficits, it may be more difficult for reading teachers to find strategies to accommodate them. However, phonics-focused and fluency-focused literacy centers in classrooms, such as syllabication, Greek and Latin roots, affixes, Reader's Theater, and graphic novels, effectively remedied reading deficits of older struggling readers (Dilgard & Hodges, 2022). Additionally, teaching strategic word-solving skills to build students' word banks,

word reading, and spelling was also influential in remediating reading deficits (Scanlon & Anderson, 2020). However, phonics-focused strategies may not be as effective for every student with reading difficulties. One recent study found that students showed just as much reading success as students in phonics-based instruction when exposed to an integrated group program where the teacher was accompanied by an assistant, teaching small groups, and reading simple books while increasing the difficulty of the books each day (Koutsouris et al., 2021).

Some educators and educational stakeholders believe that phonics and phonemic awareness are the bridge to students' reading proficiency, and others believe in the whole language approach of learning to read, where teachers get to tap into what students already know and focus on all facets of language during reading instruction (David et al., 2020). However, reading instruction should include word-part instruction that includes affixes and instruction in word origins to build on understanding of words (Bowers & Bowers, 2018; McKeown, 2019). To clarify, word-part instruction plays a key role in learning to read, as it bridges printed words, sounds, and spelling (Rastle, 2019). Phonics instruction has been more efficacious than most approaches to teaching reading; however, it proved more beneficial when teachers integrated the study of words and word patterns into phonics instruction (Treiman, 2018). To summarize, the result of learning to read is for students to gain the skills needed to become proficient readers, such as word identification, phoneme isolation, understanding of vowel and consonant sounds, building

up high-frequency words, understanding syllables, and implementing vocabulary and comprehension strategies (Nelson et al., 2022).

Oral Reading

Reading aloud, or oral reading, is essential for a student's fluency. Students' abilities to comprehend text depend on how fluently they read aloud (Farra et al., 2022). When students read words aloud correctly with automaticity and rhythmic effects, it enhances reading fluency and proficiency (Murray et al., 2012). Furthermore, reading aloud is essential for language development and pronunciation. Students who articulate words and sentences increase their fluency and phonemic awareness, which is essential for efficient communication and literacy abilities (Gillam et al., 2023; Harpine, 2019).

Read-aloud practices increase reading comprehension and fluency in elementary school students. For example, there was high achievement in upper elementary students' text comprehension, vocabulary, and language when they participated in read-aloud interventions (Baker et al., 2020). A read-aloud practice that teachers can use in classrooms is Reader's Theater. One recent study showed that upper elementary students achieved ORF and generated an intrinsic desire to read after participating in Reader's Theater (Harpine, 2019). Similarly, another study found that students were successful in the number of words read correctly and prosody after participating in Reader's Theater (Young et al., 2020).

Another read-aloud practice that teachers can use in classrooms is partner reading. Struggling readers performed better on standardized comprehension tests after

participating in partner reading when paired with a proficient reader (Prest et al., 2019). Additionally, struggling readers read as much as four grades higher and achieved higher reading fluency and comprehension scores after partnering with a proficient reader (Downs et al., 2020).

The classroom setting is one of many places for students to strengthen their reading skills. However, parental involvement in the home setting can also help struggling readers become proficient. Consequently, students improved reading fluency and comprehension when their parents functioned as reading coaches inside their home environments (Brown et al., 2019).

Computer-Adaptive Reading

The accessibility to superior educational reading materials that technology brings to classrooms has proven beneficial for students and teachers (Cassady et al., 2018).

Computer-adaptive reading usually combines traditional print-based reading and digital or multimedia features (Yang & Spitzer, 2020). Computer-adaptive learning is based on the understanding that students have varied preferences and learning approaches and strive to accommodate these variances successfully (Kim & Margulieux, 2020).

Educators can construct a well-rounded and adaptable reading curriculum by combining traditional print materials with digital resources and embracing oral and written learning (Yang & Spitzer, 2020). This method uses technology's benefits, such as interactivity and multimedia accompaniment, to improve reading comprehension, engagement, and general literacy skills.

Students engage in computer-adaptive reading by reading traditional printed texts such as books, newspapers, or textbooks while using digital tools and resources in their reading experience. Examples of digital components include E-books, audiobooks, interactive websites, multimedia presentations, and instructional applications (Sage et al., 2019). These digital reading components open the door for students to achieve reading proficiency. For example, kindergarten through fifth grade students showed significant gains in reading test scores after exposure to reading technology during the school year (Macaruso et al., 2020). Similarly, another recent study found that fourth grade students' reading speed and comprehension skills improved when teachers integrated technology into the daily reading lesson (Campbell et al., 2021).

Teachers can use computer-adaptive reading programs for students' oral and written reading fluency, further moving students to reading proficiency. Second through fifth grade students grew significantly in ORF when exposed to a computer-assisted program called Data Mountain that monitored their reading fluency (Reed et al., 2019). Additionally, students grew significantly in ORF when exposed to a digital reading program called Great Leaps Digital Program, which uses error correction, modeled reading, and tracks students' performance (Whitney & Ackerman, 2023).

Technology integration enables a more dynamic and personalized reading experience. Educators can build reading fluency in struggling readers by using computer-assisted reading programs. Namely, computer-assisted reading programs allow students to learn to read proficiently on their reading level (Sutter et al., 2019). When students

have the autonomy to build their reading proficiency through personal digital reading programs, it could motivate them to continue learning the reading process and become more skillful readers (Martin et al., 2019).

Strategies for Improvement

Reading with the intent to understand is a result of reading (Murphy & Justice, 2019). Reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill that requires students to understand grade-level vocabulary, the arrangement of words within sentences, genres, constructive thinking, and prior knowledge (Smith et al., 2023). Some ways that reading teachers can improve reading comprehension are by (a) allowing students to ask questions before reading the text and answer questions after reading the text, (b) showing students how to determine the main idea of shorter parts of a text, (c) taking opportunities to engage students in research regarding information about what they are reading, and (d) teaching context clues strategies to find meanings of more complex words (Vaughn et al., 2022).

Students could benefit when teachers use a variety of strategies in classrooms. In particular, students significantly improved their comprehension skills when exposed to explicit instruction in close reading that focused on the main idea, text annotations, and text discussions (Mariage et al., 2020). Additionally, self-questioning strategy instruction yielded higher reading comprehension skills (Daniel & Williams, 2021). One recent study found that students' comprehension scores grew after exposure to a multi-component reading intervention focused on reading comprehension using small group settings (Wanzek et al., 2019).

Upper elementary readers will encounter new, multisyllabic words; therefore, understanding of these words is necessary to aid in text comprehension (Chan et al., 2020). Particularly, students increased their reading comprehension and vocabulary skills after participating in morphological awareness interventions (Ownby, 2020). Similarly, students increased their grapheme, phoneme, decoding, and comprehension skills after exposure to training in all domains (Vousden et al., 2022).

Many struggling readers have deficits in more than one area of reading. Consequently, it would benefit struggling readers to have access to multi-faceted reading interventions that focus on foundational skills, such as decoding and word reading, and extend to more advanced skills such as reading comprehension and text reading (Lovett et al., 2022). When teachers exposed struggling readers to multicomponent reading interventions throughout the school year, they outperformed their peers in reading (Wanzek et al., 2020).

With the pressure to ensure that teachers can successfully deliver literacy instruction that turns struggling readers into proficient readers, many schools have turned to professional development opportunities (Keane, 2021). Reading teachers may need more skills and training in evidence-based reading practices because they are unsure about which evidence-based practices to use, the execution of evidence-based practices, and how to manipulate these practices to fit various learners (Chaparro et al., 2020). Professional development could be a way to equip reading teachers in classrooms. One qualitative study using interviews found that reading teachers paid more attention to how

they taught reading comprehension to students after participating in professional development that focused on building teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension and explicit instruction of reading comprehension (Pomerantz & Pierce, 2019). Additionally, reading teachers showed more understanding of their comprehension strategies and noticed a difference in how their students responded to reading instruction after participating in professional development (Medina et al., 2021).

Many schools only provide professional development for teachers. However, school leaders can also participate in professional development opportunities in content areas where they would like to see student growth. One recent study found that reading teachers became more successful in their teaching practices and engaged more students only when school principals completed reading professional development to become literacy leaders in their schools (Townsend & Bayetto, 2022). Additionally, literacy instructional coaches can serve as professional development opportunities for reading teachers. One recent study found that struggling readers grew in early literacy when reading teachers participated in one-on-one professional development with a reading coach and received real-time feedback on their reading instruction (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018).

It is common for teachers to believe they endure the responsibility of overcoming the barriers that cause low reading achievement because of the pressure from educational policies on reading proficiency (Missall et al., 2019). As a result, a gap exists between teachers' knowledge of evidence-based practices and teachers' use of evidence-based

practices (Tare et al., 2022). On the other hand, professional development allows reading teachers to participate in training opportunities for changing instructional practices and belief systems, leading to proficient reading in students (Martin et al., 2019).

Teachers' Role in Addressing Low Reading Achievement

The reading teacher's crucial role in combating low reading achievement includes (a) having an in-depth understanding of reading comprehension processes, (b) providing direct reading comprehension instruction to students, (c) providing teacher modeling and think-aloud opportunities during instruction, and (d) providing temporary scaffolds to build on students' understanding (Davis et al., 2022). Reading teachers' roles are also to provide language-rich environments that focus on fluency-building tasks because students' ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression affects reading proficiency (Smigel, 2022). Additionally, teachers have a responsibility of identifying struggling readers as early as possible and then provide continuous progress monitoring and academic support that suits individual students' needs (Vaughn et al., 2022). When reading teachers do not teach with integrity, it affects how students take in information and students' abilities to apply the information and concepts in independent settings (Topping, 2018).

Students' ability to harbor positive mindsets to learning affects academic achievement (O'Neal et al., 2022). Therefore, ensuring the emotional well-being of students could play a crucial role in reading success. Teachers can foster positive learning mindsets with their students by individualizing relationships with each student to make

them feel closeness to their teacher, assuring them of their abilities, and encouraging them to do their best (Bryce et al., 2019).

Teachers' Experiences

Teachers' experiences of elementary reading levels and improvement play a crucial role in shaping instructional strategies, curriculum development, and support mechanisms, because their experiences are contingent upon their beliefs in their ability to teach literacy effectively (Schwab et al., 2023). Many reading teachers do not have positive experiences helping students achieve reading proficiency because they have not had opportunities to work with reading specialists to develop and implement effective literacy learning for students (Marsicek, 2022). The lack of positive experiences could also derive from new and novice teachers' portrayal of their self-efficacy in teaching reading to diverse students (Brodeur & Ortmann, 2018). One interview-based qualitative study found that preservice teachers had higher self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading (Clark, 2020). However, the same teachers' self-efficacy beliefs significantly decreased after their first year of teaching. Experienced teachers whose students perform high in reading achievement do so because they clearly understand that students' success in reading is contingent upon their reading instruction and their use of specific teaching practices to engage students in reading (Schmid, 2018).

The lack of reading engagement is common in upper elementary classrooms. Consequently, teachers continue to need help engaging students in reading. For many teachers, engaging students may require changing their teaching practices and beliefs

about reading tasks. A qualitative study using interviews found that teachers needed help promoting reading engagement because they required more aligned views of their roles as teachers and students' roles as learners (Ng & Leicht, 2019). The teachers also struggled due to misaligned beliefs about reading education and their inability to switch between old and new practices for reading.

Because there are multiple literacy components, students could benefit when teachers are well-versed in teaching instruction, strategies, and interventions that accumulate all literacy components. Consequently, preservice teachers should receive adequate instruction in teaching pedagogies and curriculum content and understand expected outcomes for students (Robertson et al., 2020). Additionally, all reading teachers should have clarification about the usefulness of instructional practices and which practices to implement in their daily lessons (Smith et al., 2023). As teachers introduce more complex texts in upper elementary schools, they may need help implementing evidence-based practices that scaffold learning to ensure understanding of texts. Many teachers do not use evidence-based reading practices during instruction because they need training or preparation (Wijekumar et al., 2019).

Reading teachers attribute their experiences to their beliefs, which determine the kind of instruction they deliver to students and affect their ability to use alternative instructions (Smith & Robinson, 2020). Consequently, teachers with higher reports of self-efficacy are more in tune with their students, understand that students have expectations, and will not hesitate to make instructional changes or individualize learning

to ensure their success (Zee et al., 2018). If teachers' levels of self-efficacy positively change, it could lead to more robust academic achievement in students.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review included fourth grade teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement. Chapter 2 included the literature search strategy and the conceptual frameworks, stages of reading development and the simple view of reading, and how these frameworks support reading achievement. In this chapter, the literature review emphasized the following themes related to reading achievement: oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, self-regulation, computer-adaptive reading, and teachers' roles in helping students reach reading achievement.

The literature review indicated that teachers' understanding of the importance of reading achievement, factors that contribute to low reading achievement, and fourth grade reading tasks have the potential to change education positively. Additionally, the literature review indicated fourth grade teachers' responsibility to use innovative techniques and scaffolds to support a positive learning environment. The literature review also revealed emergent topics to consider regarding raising reading achievement in fourth grade students, such as reading teachers' beliefs, reading teachers' self-efficacy in teaching reading, and training preservice teachers in reading education. These elements showed notability in advising the current study.

This study used a basic qualitative research design. It addressed the gap in literature, which is a limited number of studies that focused on the perspectives of fourth

grade reading teachers who strived to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students. The literature review supported the research problem of the dissertation, an increased need to understand fourth grade reading teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement. The conceptual framework and literature review indicated the importance of integrating the input of fourth grade reading teachers to determine how best to raise reading achievement.

The literature review explored fourth grade reading teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the qualitative approach. Additionally, Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness and credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, reliability, ethical practices, and a summary of the main points.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. I used a basic qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the experiences of fourth grade reading teachers. I collected data from semistructured interviews with 10 study participants. I based interview questions on the theoretical framework, the model of reading stages, and the research literature that aligned with this topic.

In this chapter, I discussed the research design and rationale. I also discussed the role of the researcher and the methodology used in the study. In the methodology section, I discussed participant selection and instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. I discussed the study's trustworthiness by evaluating the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, I discussed ethical procedures and closed the chapter with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

There were two main research questions in this study that reflected the purpose of the study, which was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: What strategies and approaches do fourth grade teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

RQ2: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

I approached this study using a basic qualitative approach. A qualitative approach in research involves researchers inserting themselves into the experiences that they are exploring (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021). Qualitative researchers seek to understand how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative approaches in research differ from quantitative approaches because quantitative approaches are objective, taking facts and evidence into consideration, while qualitative approaches are subjective and rely on the personal feelings and emotions of participants (Caelli et al., 2003). In qualitative research, researchers have the autonomy to steer away from using any one method of research and may even construct new methodologies to answer the research questions (Kahlke, 2014).

I justified a basic qualitative approach because I sought to understand fourth grade teachers' feelings about challenges finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement in fourth grade students. Therefore, I did not base my research on quantifiable factual evidence, but on the experiences and perceptions of participants. Qualitative research depends on the personal views of others (Percy et al., 2015). I interviewed fourth grade reading teachers to uncover how they make meaning of their experiences.

Role of the Researcher

I had worked as a fourth grade reading teacher in a public-school setting for the past 2 years. For the 2023-2024 school year, I was a fifth grade reading teacher. I also had previous experience as a fourth grade reading teacher in a private school setting for 2 years. In this role, I taught reading to students with specific learning disabilities. Additionally, I tutored high school students in American College Testing reading prep.

As an upper elementary school reading teacher, I had a responsibility of helping students achieve reading fluency and comprehend what they read. I also helped students with phonetics, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary mastery. Additional responsibilities included planning weekly lessons and conducting response to intervention activities with Tier 3 students. Interventions with Tier 3 students ensure that struggling readers get one-on-one time in small groups with teachers to focus on reading deficits that hinder proficiency in reading. Reading teachers can use this intervention to individualize learning using scaffolds and strategies to ensure that struggling readers have a chance to succeed in reading. Last, I administered benchmarks to evaluate student growth in reading.

Because I used convenience sampling, there was a possibility that I would have a professional relationship with some of the participants involved in the study. However, I did not function in a supervisory role, so if participants from my educational setting participated in the research, I would not have had a supervisory or instructor role over them. Because of my possible professional ties to some of the participants, it was

necessary for me to control my biases. Therefore, data reflected participants' descriptions and not my own (see Poerwandari, 2021).

To address biases, I refrained from sharing my personal teaching experiences with participants. Additionally, I separated my experiences from those of participants by using the bracketing method of qualitative research. Researchers use bracketing in qualitative research to prepare themselves before conducting interviews to ensure that they do not allude to their personal beliefs about the study's subject (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Methodology

In this basic qualitative study, I used methods that aligned with the study's purpose. Methods used to collect data in research should align with the purpose of the study (Bleiker et al., 2019). Therefore, I used methods that were useful for understanding the beliefs and experiences of participants. In this section, I described the procedures I followed during participant selection, instrumentation, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection

The study included individual interviews with teachers to explore their experience finding strategies and interventions to remedy low reading achievement. I purposely sampled 10 teachers. I used purposeful sampling for the identification of specific individuals or groups of people who could adequately address the purpose of the study (Moisey et al., 2022). Criteria for inclusion in this study were that teachers must (a) teach

in the United States, (b) teach in a public school, (c) teach fourth grade, and (d) have at least 3 years teaching experience in reading.

Instrumentation

I was the primary instrument for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from study participants. Two expert panel members approved the interview protocol (see Appendix A) used in the research study as well as peer reviewed by Walden University students before interviews began. To ensure sufficiency of data, I constructed a set of open-ended interview questions for each research question in the study. I constructed a set of questions to understand participants' experiences of finding strategies and approaches to improve reading achievement in fourth grade students (RQ1). These questions centered around participants' current use of reading strategies and the reading approaches those participants followed.

The last set of questions addressed the needs of participants (RQ2). These questions centered around what school support and resources teachers would like to see in their school environment. Additionally, the questions centered around how they believed these supports and resources aided struggling readers. I encouraged detailed responses from participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited prospective participants in multiple ways. I used Walden's Participant Pool, snowball sampling, social media, and my personal network. Snowball sampling allows researchers to access potential participants through current participants (Raifman

et al., 2021). During recruitment, I (a) ensured prospective participants did not feel forced to participate in the study, (b) emphasized the voluntary nature of the study, (c) emphasized the benefits of taking part in the study, and (d) had prospective participants sign a consent form at the beginning of the study (see McDermid et al., 2014). To reach participants via social media, I posted a flyer (see Appendix B) detailing the study. Prospective participants received an email depicting the details of the study and an attached consent form. Participants received a \$20.00 Visa gift card incentive.

I scheduled 60-minute recorded Zoom interviews based on participants' availability and sent formal invitations to participants' email. Using the Zoom platform was the best choice for this study. By using the virtual platform, participants were able to participate in the study regardless of their geographic location and in real time because the Zoom platform allows users to see and hear one another, and transcribe recorded sessions (Archibald et al., 2019).

Data Analysis Plan

Researchers use data analysis to organize the information collected during the study into common themes and patterns to maximize understanding of the research problem (Lowe et al., 2018). I used a thematic analysis approach to analyze collected data (see Jowsey et al., 2021). I used this approach to turn data into codes, categories, themes, and narratives. I used in vivo coding to analyze data. By using in vivo coding, I was able to use what participants said explicitly (see Rogers, 2018). I started by reading interview transcripts numerous times to familiarize myself with the data (see Braun &

Clark, 2006). Next, I coded the data by reading interview transcriptions to find specific phrases, language, and words that participants used and assigned codes to each one. Lastly, I grouped the codes into categories. Categorizing codes allows researchers to further break down codes according to their characteristics (see Saldaña, 2021). Thus, I sorted the codes by how they related or how they differed (see Lindgren et al., 2020).

After I categorized codes, I found dominant categories to answer the research problem (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). During this phase, I considered how data qualified as a theme, such as (a) the standard of the data as it related to answering the research question, (b) the sufficiency or insufficiency of data, and (c) the broadness of the data (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Consequently, I chose themes that had an impact on the research problem and that captured important findings from interviews with study participants. I placed each coded theme into a color-coded Excel spreadsheet to maintain organization.

Finally, data analysis included a narrative of the study's findings. I used an interpretive narrative. In an interpretive narrative, readers of the study can tell the difference between study participants' perceptions and experiences and how the researcher conveyed participants' perceptions and experiences (Younas et al., 2023). I still used discrepant cases in the research to ensure the integrity of the research findings.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research that is trustworthy provides a clear depiction of the study's process and procedures and communicates alignment of all components within the

research (Aref et al., 2021). Thus, to ensure trustworthiness of the research, I substantiated credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of research findings by describing all course of actions taken in the study. Additionally, I ensured descriptive answers from study participants, documented all records from the study, and allowed participants to share in the findings of the study.

Credibility

The credibility of this research depended on my understanding of study participants, the context of the research, and accurate processing of information. Credibility ensured that the subject of the research and the research purpose aligned with the phenomenon and the course of action taken to analyze the phenomenon, which made the research believable (Wood et al., 2020). As such, I conducted a member check after analyzing data. I wrote a summary of my findings and emailed it to all participants. I asked for written feedback pertaining to the findings and invited participants to participate in a short 15-minute member check interview. I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed all member check interviews.

Transferability

To ensure transferability, I provided rich details of research procedures, the context of the research, and research participants to make it possible to recreate the study's findings. Additionally, I asked questions to participants that encouraged descriptive answers. Transferability could only happen when answers from participants effectively highlighted their experiences in a way that researchers could apply the

research (see Stahl & King, 2020). When participants provide descriptive answers, it gives readers an opportunity to connect their experiences with the study participants.

Dependability

I used an audit trail to ensure dependability of the research. It was not sufficient for readers of the study to know the steps taken during the research; they needed to see documented, in-depth recordings of the research along with rationalizations of steps taken. By using these procedures in research, readers can make their own assessments about the quality of the research (Carcary, 2020). Therefore, I provided in-depth descriptions of the research design, data collection, data analysis, and research methodology.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, I conducted a member check. During checks for confirmability, I emailed the findings of the study to participants where they could agree or disagree with the study's findings and explanation of key information in the study (Nassaji, 2020). I also invited participants to voluntarily meet with me for 10 to 15 minutes via Zoom to share additional comments or feedback relating to the study's findings. By conducting the second member check, research participants were able to verify the study procedures, data analysis methods, and study conclusions. If participants agreed with the study procedures, data analysis methods, and study conclusion, I assumed confirmability of the research.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure I met ethical procedures, I filed an application with Walden's Institutional Review Board before recruiting participants or collecting data. After approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board, I began the recruitment and data collection process. During recruitment, participants received a consent form via email. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Additionally, I ensured confidentiality of participants by excluding the names and demographics of all participants.

To ensure the security of data storage processes, I saved password-enabled files to my personal computer. I stored any physical data away from individuals who were not participants of the research study. Lastly, I stored collected data for 5 years from date of research publication.

Summary

I approached this study through a basic qualitative lens. I was an observer in this study and the only researcher. I used 10 fourth grade reading teachers in this study. To obtain participants, I used convenience sampling, which allowed the use of fourth grade reading teachers who were available, and snowball sampling, which allowed referrals from current participants.

Data collection included semistructured recorded interviews via the Zoom platform. I used an interview protocol with open-ended questions as a guide. I held 1-hour interviews and included a 15-minute exit interview with a second member check. To

analyze data, I used interview footage, interview transcripts, and notes taken during interviews. I looked for themes and patterns to code language and phrases used by participants.

To ensure trustworthiness of the research, I conducted a member check, ensured rich details of research procedures, and maintained an audit trail. To ensure ethical parameters, I had participants sign consent forms. Participation was also voluntary, and participants could withdrawal from the study at any time and for any reason. I also ensured the privacy of participants by storing data with passwords and omitting participants' names and confidential information from the study findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 consists of the following sections: setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary of the findings. In this basic, qualitative study, I explored fourth grade teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement in fourth grade students. The two research questions that I used to guide this study were: (a) What strategies and approaches do fourth grade reading teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students? and (b) What support do fourth grade teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students? The knowledge gained from this study could bring the educational field to an understanding of how fourth grade reading teachers' voices can initiate conversations about reading materials and support that fourth grade reading teachers need for reading achievement in fourth grade students.

This chapter includes an overview of the research design used in the study and a summation of the findings. The setting includes the demographics and characteristics of study participants. The section on data collection includes an overview of the number of participants, location, frequency, and duration of data collection, and the instruments used to collect data to describe data collection. The section on data analysis includes an overview of data coding and specific codes, categories, and themes. The study's results include discussion of each research question and how they relate to the study by using data and tables to support and illustrate the findings. The section on trustworthiness includes discussion of the strategies I used to ensure the research's credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, the summary is an overview of the answers to the research questions to describe the findings.

Setting

This study included specific physical context that included interview locations and time. I used semistructured interviews via Zoom in a secluded home office. I was the only one in my office during interviews with participants. Four of the participants were alone in their classrooms during after-school hours during the Zoom interviews. Six participants were alone in a private room in their homes during the interview. I did not use the camera feature during interviews. Before starting interviews, each participant offered their availability. Then, I emailed Zoom meeting links for them to join the interview. The length of each interview ranged between 45 minutes to one hour. During the interviews, I was unaware of any organizational or personal conditions that would influence participants' answers or study results.

Demographics

The 10 participants used in the study had teaching experience ranging from 3 to 26 years. Table 1 shows characteristics of participants, including participant ID, years of teaching, grades taught, and teacher experience.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Years Teaching	Subjects Taught
P1	6	Reading, social studies
P2	10	Reading, social studies
P3	26	Reading, social studies, math, science
P4	17	Reading, social studies
P5	5	Reading, social studies
P6	8	Reading, social studies
P7	10	Reading, social studies
P8	13	Reading, social studies
P9	12	Reading, social studies
P10	3	Reading, social studies

Participants in the study were all women. All participants taught at schools within the United States. However, they were from various locations. For example, one participant was in Hawaii but had previously taught in Texas. All participants used traditional face-to-face teaching methods and resided in Tennessee, except for two, who lived in Texas and Hawaii. All participants had experience teaching only reading and social studies except for one, who had experience teaching reading, social studies, math, and science in elementary school settings. Last, all participants had been teaching fourth grade reading for at least 3 years.

Data Collection

I used semistructured interviews for data collection. Using this method allowed participants to expound on their individual experiences and perceptions of phenomena (Knott et al., 2022). I asked clarifying questions when needed and interacted with participants to understand their experiences (see Busetto et al., 2020).

I set aside 4 weeks to conduct recorded interviews with participants. Before interviews began, I pressed the *cloud recording* option and *audio transcript* option in the Zoom platform and allowed audio of the interview session to record until the interview was over and then sent a transcript of the interview to my email. I stored transcripts and audio recordings of interviews on my computer for data retrieval. All interviews lasted no more than 60 minutes. This amount of time was sufficient to extract data from participants and ask clarifying questions when needed. Also, 1 hour was not an imposition on the participants' time. I continued conducting interviews up to the point of data saturation. Before concluding the study, participants could volunteer to participate in an exit interview. During the exit interview, participants discussed the overall findings of the study.

Data Analysis

For this basic qualitative study, I focused on the purpose of the study and explored fourth grade teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. I conducted the study to collect teachers' experiences related to strategies and approaches to raising reading achievement. I used in vivo coding based on participants' responses. The data analysis process was continual and consisted of multiple approaches to organize and review data. I used Williams and Moser's (2019) coding methods which used three levels of coding—open, axial, and selective. Using these coding methods allowed me to (a) identify recognizable themes by highlighting words and series of words from participants'

answers, (b) categorize each theme into recognizable categories, and (c) pick out and synthesize recognizable categories to turn them into themes (see Williams & Moser, 2019).

To become familiar with the collected data, I listened to participants' interview recordings and reviewed interview transcripts until I had a clear enough depiction of participants' experiences to analyze the data. Instead of focusing on the breadth of topics discussed during the interviews, I focused on the depth of information from participants, which allowed me to take an in-depth look at the details of participants' experiences. Depth in qualitative research allows the researcher to form ideas and concepts of people's lived experiences (see Prasad et al., 2023). Once I checked interview transcripts for accuracy, I analyzed the data using a coding process. I categorized the data by placing interview information into codes, categories, themes, and narratives.

Results

After completing data analysis, I had 41 codes, 14 categories, and eight themes. I did not have any variations in the data collection from the plan in Chapter 3. Additionally, I did not experience any unusual circumstances during the data collection process. In this section, I present the findings of the study, which align with the two research questions. Table 2 shows codes organized into categories.

Table 2*Codes Organized Into Categories*

Codes	Categories
Ready Reading Wonders	Curriculum evaluation and implementation
I-Ready online platform Leveled Readers Response to intervention Small-group instruction Tutoring	Educational intervention and support services
Classroom assistants Instructional time Lower grade-level support Teacher training	Educational support services
Parent involvement Buddy reading Choral reading Continual reading Echo reading	Family and community engagement Fluency development and instruction
Close reading Foundational skills Phoneme instruction Phonics instruction Sight word instruction Spelling instruction	Literacy development and skills acquisition Literacy instruction and pedagogy
Text annotation Author's purpose Complex texts Main idea Text-dependent questions Text features Text structure Theme	Reading comprehension and textual analysis Reading comprehension strategies
Teacher model Online learning platforms Visual books Affixes Context clues Vocabulary words	Teaching methods and pedagogies Technology and digital literacy Visual literacy Vocabulary instruction strategies

Each theme is related to the two research questions that guided this study. The first theme showed that fourth grade reading teachers use close reading strategies to

improve reading achievement but believe it is ineffective for struggling readers. The second theme showed fourth grade reading teachers' use of Response to Intervention, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready online platform to scaffold learning. The third theme showed echo, buddy, and choral reading to build reading fluency in struggling readers. The fourth theme showed that using context clues and morphology instruction to improve fourth grade students' understanding of texts.

The fifth theme showed how fourth grade reading teachers reteach foundational skills to improve reading achievement. The sixth theme was about the use of online learning platforms to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers. The seventh theme showed fourth grade reading teachers' preference for using the Wonders and Ready Reading curriculum. Last, the eighth theme was about the various supports that fourth grade reading teachers desire from their administration team. Table 3 includes an overview of the eight themes.

Table 3*Themes Related to Research Questions*

Categories	Themes	Research Question
Curriculum evaluation and implementation	Theme 1: Fourth grade reading teachers prefer the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders reading curriculum.	RQ1: What strategies and approaches do fourth grade reading teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?
Educational intervention and support	Theme 2: Fourth grade reading teachers use response to intervention, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready online platform to scaffold learning.	
Fluency development and instruction	Theme 3: Fourth grade reading teachers use echo and buddy reading for building reading fluency skills in struggling readers.	
Literacy development and skill acquisition	Theme 4: Fourth grade reading teachers use close reading strategies to improve reading achievement but believe it is ineffective for struggling readers.	
Literacy instruction and pedagogies	Theme 5: Fourth grade reading teachers reteach foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers.	
Technology and digital literacy	Theme 6: Fourth grade reading teachers use online learning platforms to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers.	
Vocabulary instruction strategies	Theme 7: Fourth grade reading teachers use context	

Categories	Themes	Research Question
Educational support services	clues and morphology instruction to improve understanding of texts for struggling readers. Theme 8: Fourth grade reading teachers desire various support from their administration team in the form of teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower grade-level support.	RQ2: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

To ensure research credibility, it was necessary for me to show excerpts from participants. This gave readers a more in-depth look at what participants said verbatim.

Table 4 shows the themes and excerpts for RQ1.

Table 4

Themes and Excerpts Related to RQ 1

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
Theme 1: Fourth grade reading teachers use close reading strategies to improve reading achievement	1	“I start close reading by reading the text first, so students who are not on grade level with their reading have a chance to hear what the text sounds like.”
	1	“It is very effective for the students who read on grade level or one grade level below....Some students, they just struggle with being able to read words at a fourth grade level, so for them, they are not able to comprehend what they are reading.”
	2	“I read them the text on Monday, but after I read it to them, I’m having them think what the genre is....They are circling unfamiliar words that they may not know....On Tuesday, they have a summary....We hit the majors on Wednesday, like author’s purpose, and text

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
		structure, so all those major things are constantly spiraled.”
	2	“Just the constant spiral helps them a lot.”
	3	“The more you read, the more enlightenment you have.”
	3	“The key is time allotment....Teachers have to make time.”
	4	“I model fluent reading by reading through one time completely.”
	4	“It’s effective for the majority of the students....My students who are reading far below grade level need more intensive scaffolding during Tier 1 instruction because they’ll have trouble even decoding the words.”
	8	“But I was reading the text more than once; this tends to help their comprehension skills.”
	8	“If they are performing well and read fluently, it works.”
Theme 2: Fourth grade reading teachers use RTI, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready learning platform to scaffold learning.	1	“It depends on the student....You have some students who get their device and just click through it to be done.”
	1	“The I-Ready computer system will create lessons where the students are currently and then push them to go beyond that point.”
	3	“It is effective because when a student is coming to a new skill that has not been mastered, the program will alert you, which means the teacher can select remediation for that particular skill.”
	3	“I work with my students starting on Tuesdays through Thursdays in small groups because on Mondays we’re introducing the lesson, and on Fridays we’re testing.”

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
	3	“When I am providing work for my students, it’s grammar, it’s spelling, it’s reading.”
	3	“Nine times out of 10, they enjoy sitting with the teacher and having one-on-one time and not being inhibited about asking questions.”
	3	“I-Ready is a great program to home in on their needs.”
	3	“You can pull them to your table after your whole-group.”
	5	“I think we could probably get a better result if we had more time with them because it’s only 45 minutes.”
	5	“We’re taking the children, putting them in small groups and using lower-level books and teaching them word sounds first.”
	5	“It is effective if they are doing it...We are not seeing a lot of the students doing it at home or in school.
	6	“You can pull them to the table after your whole group.”
	7	“Some teachers are letting the students do the diagnostics until they show growth....They manipulate the data that way....That is an inaccurate snapshot for me.”
	7	“I use the data from assignments that we do weekly, and I do a lot of small groups around those assignments.”
	8	“I think I-Ready is effective because it caters to the different grade levels...I can assign lessons to a specific skill or grade level that they can do independently on their computers when they have technology time at home or at school.”
	8	“I think it is good for non-readers, students who are two or three grade levels behind, but I think the passages are too easy, and I do not know

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
		how far it takes them....I do not know if it takes them above grade level.”
	8	“You have to have the structure and the interest of that block because it’s a short time period for us to really home in on everybody’s needs.”
	9	“We have the built-in intervention time so that we can work in small groups maybe two or three at a time for two or three times a week meeting with me face-to-face.”
	9	“By the time we get through having breakfast, morning announcements, attendance, and all the other preliminaries, I only have about 20 to 25 minutes to delve into small groups with them.”
	10	“I like it because it meets them at their level; it is what they call <i>adaptive</i> .”
	10	“I can assign lessons to them that lead them on their grade level....It moves them or takes them down based on how they perform.”
Theme 3: Fourth grade reading teachers use echo and buddy reading to build reading fluency skills for struggling readers.	2	“We also do six-minute solutions where kids are paired with partners who use read around their same reading level....I usually do not assign their passages based on their reading lever; I go higher because I feel like if they always have to stay at their level, then they are never being challenged and never rising to the expectations.”
	4	“I will have them sit elbow-to-elbow and they will buddy read....I use the I-Ready platform to help me determine the good partners for that because when you look at a specific standard, you can also look to see what students would be good paired with each other to help each other with reading.”
	4	“I do an echo read with them where I will take chunks of the most important text, and I will

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
		read it out loud to them and have them echo it back to me.”
	8	“I make them echo read....I try not to let them read it out loud with me so the students will not struggle because it sounds choppy.”
	9	“I also allow students to partner up with students who perform at a higher level than they do.”
	10	“I pair students on different levels because maybe that higher level one may be able to assist the lower one.”
Theme 4: Fourth grade reading teachers use context clues and morphology instruction to improve understanding of texts for struggling readers.	1	“Vocabulary strategies are a big thing that I use to help students with their reading skills.”
	1	“After I am done reading, we will go over unfamiliar words....I will have some pre-selected words that I want to go through, purposely picking words that use prefixes and suffixes, then teach the students how to use those vocabulary strategies to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word.”
	1	“It helps them understand that they can use their resources in front of them to figure out what a word means rather than relying on asking the teacher....They might not have access to a dictionary or the internet.”
	2	“There is still a lot of those gaps when it comes to being able to read on grade level....They learn prefixes and suffixes, like the smallest unit of the meanings....It helps them with fluency.”
	3	“It is an essential strategy for reading.”
	3	“We focus on the use of clue words....These are words that surround a word to help the students better understand what the author wants them to know.”

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
	3	“Many times, we do not have a chance to go to the dictionary, so using words around the word itself helps give them clues as to what the word means.”
	3	“Breaking words apart....Prefixes, base words, and suffixes.”
	4	“They’ll read through a fourth time on their own to figure out what words they do not know the meaning to, then we will break them down.”
	6	“Pulling apart words and looking at syllables.”
	6	“But if they do not understand how the word fits into context with all the other unfamiliar words, then we have to teach that too....I teach all the other unfamiliar words that the students do not know because they have to form a picture in their mind of what they are reading.”
	8	“I’ll pull out vocabulary words that they might need help with, and we’ll use our context clues strategies.”
Theme 5: Fourth grade reading teachers reteach foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers.	2	“From August until December, we reincorporated phonics, which I think helps the students’ reading....I feel like when COVID hit, students lost essential reading skills.”
	3	“I have a group who I love dearly because they have to be taught the basic fundamental skills of reading.”
	4	“They need far more intensive scaffolding....We are pulling apart words, maybe as low as what sounds the letters make....We pull those words apart and then blend them back together....We break the words apart using the different sounds and then map phonemes to graphemes.”
	5	“Many students come into fourth grade who cannot read at all; they need to start from the basics....We have a teacher who comes in once a week and teaches them basic sounds....We are

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
		taking the students and teaching them word sounds first.”
	6	“In my school, we believe in the Orton-Gillingham method, which addresses phonics.”
	6	“Phonics is the building block of learning how to read, but it goes beyond that....The students must be able to simplify the words and understand vowels and letter sounds.”
	9	“Even though they are fourth graders, sometimes you have to take a step back and reach them on their level, may it be kindergarten, first-grade, or second-grade....So, I still have to sometimes go back and teach phonics and phonemes.”
	10	“I think it’s very important that our students letter sounds and can differentiate between them and practice it daily...When they are trying to figure out is, they lose the comprehension piece of reading.”
Theme 6: Fourth grade reading teachers use online learning games to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers.	3	“I utilize ReadWorks, which is another great resource where teachers can pull passages based on reading grade level....What I like about ReadWorks is that it has multiple choice questions that are set up like the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, and depending on the grade level, it will have open ended questions, which help with writing.”
	5	“We use Hooked on Phonics with students, which helps them a lot.”
	7	“I try to integrate some fun websites....There is a website called GimkitIt has a question bank that covers each reading skill that we work on in the classroom....It allows them to play a game while learning.”
	10	“There are two websites that I use to meet them at their level. I use Starfall and PS Kids.”

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
Theme 7: Fourth grade reading teachers prefer the ready reading curriculum over the wonders reading curriculum	1	“The Wonders curriculum is very vast....There are many resources that come with it, but I cannot tell you where all those resources are....There is so much that it becomes overwhelming.”
	3	“The I-Ready curriculum is laid out in a user-friendly manner....The Wonders curriculum is not planned out systematically for teachers; I spend a great amount of time pulling resources here and there and everywhere.”
	4	“Wonders has way too many skills in a single lesson....They do not control the text enough.”
	6	“I like the Wonders curriculum....Not having that curriculum and just relying on the Ready Reading curriculum is a gap in resources.”
	7	“Sometimes, when we go to the Wonders book, the skill does not match the lesson that was taught the previous week, so it makes it difficult for students to understand.”
	8	“I feel the stories are not always aligned with the standards; they are making it fit.”
	10	“Between the two programs, I think I like the Ready Reading curriculum better and that could be because there is a website where students can go to the internet and the teacher can assign lessons to them that leads them on grade level....Whereas, the Wonders curriculum does not have an actual online program.”

As stated earlier, it was necessary for me to show excerpts from participants. In doing so, it could give readers of the study an in-depth look at the lived experiences of participants. Table 5 shows the theme and excerpts for RQ2.

Table 5*Themes and Excerpts Related to RQ2*

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
Theme 8: Fourth grade reading teachers desire various support from school administration in the form of teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower grade-level support.	1	“With I-Ready, we got a lot of training on how to use the platform....There was not that much training with Wonders....So, I think training is something that teachers need to be given when they are provided with a curriculum to use....Having people to come in to show you how to use those materials would be a wonderful thing.”
	1	“Maybe somebody, like an assistant, who can pull students and work with those students in a private setting to help push them where they need to be.”
	3	“When I say manpower, it doesn’t have to be for an exorbitant amount of time....Maybe 10 hours a week.
	3	“Support in foundational skills for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade....It is inherent that they are supported for these students to be successful.”
	4	“Making sure that teachers are trained on how best to use those resources by someone who actually uses them, not just by someone who is selling it to the district.”
	7	“Maybe we have a person who could come and help with struggling students.”
	8	“By teaching more grammar skills in lower grades....I know it seems like they focus on foundational skills, but they get to upper grades and are not even writing capital letters or punctuating correctly.”

Theme	Participants	Excerpts
	9	“It would be nice if they would put assistants in fourth grade classrooms.”
	10	“They need to make sure I understand the actual setup of the program....Making sure I know the resources that are available....Having representatives from the company coming into schools to have professional development session so that teachers can understand and see what different tools are available.”
	10	“Making sure that teachers in lower grades are supported....Just making sure that the administrators are visible and there is consistent collaboration between administrators and those lower-level teachers.”

I arranged the interview questions in a way that could capture participants’ experiences and produce data that yielded insightful data to understand the two research questions presented in this study:

RQ1: What strategies and approaches do fourth grade reading teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

RQ2: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

Eight themes surfaced from the data analysis and aligned with the two research questions.

Research Question 1

RQ1 asked: What strategies and approaches do fourth grade reading teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students? Based on the research question, seven themes emerged. I structured this section based on the seven identified

themes. To answer RQ 1, I asked participants to expound on their experiences using reading strategies in the classroom to improve reading achievement. I asked participants three questions related to RQ1. Participants gave various descriptions of their experiences, which yielded the seven themes.

Theme 1

Theme 1 portrayed that fourth grade reading teachers use close reading to improve reading achievement but believe it is ineffective for struggling readers. This theme established a basis for understanding fourth grade reading teachers' different experiences and beliefs related to using close reading to improve reading achievement. Concerning the first research question, all participants confirmed using reading strategies and approaches in the classroom to raise reading achievement. Five out of the 10 participants confirmed the use of close reading strategies.

Each of the five participants used close reading based on their own beliefs. For example, Participant 1 used close reading as a means for struggling readers to understand what the text is about, stating, "I start close reading by reading the text first so students that are not on grade level with their reading have a chance to hear what the text sounds like." Similarly, Participant 8 expressed, "But I was reading the text more than once; this tends to help their comprehension skills." Also, relating to close reading, Participant 3 believed and used close reading, stating: "The more you read, the more enlightenment you have."

Although Participant 2 used close reading as a comprehension strategy, Participant 2 had a separate way of approaching close reading. For example, Participant 2 used shared reading, where students focused on one text for the week:

I read them the text on Monday, but after I read it to them, I'm having them think what the genre is....They are circling underlying words that they may not know...on Tuesday, they have a summary....We hit the majors on Wednesdays, like authors' purpose and text structure, so all those major things are constantly spiraled.

On the other hand, Participant 4 used close reading as an opportunity for her students to hear fluent reading, stating, "I model fluent reading by reading through one time completely."

Although the five participants had reasons for using close reading, most believed that close reading was ineffective in raising reading achievement. For example, Participant 1 declared:

It's very effective for the students who read on grade level or one grade level below....Some students, they just struggle with being able to read words at a fourth grade level, so for them, they are not able to comprehend what they are reading.

Moreover, Participant 4 affirmed, "It's effective for the majority of the students. My students who are reading far below grade level, though, need more intensive scaffolding during tier 1 instruction because they'll have trouble even decoding the words."

Participant 8 agreed, asserting, “If they are performing well and read fluently, it works.” Although Participant 3 used close reading as a strategy and approach to raise reading achievement, Participant 3 viewed its effectiveness differently. For example, Participant 3 mentioned there is not enough time for teachers to use close reading strategies during teaching, stating, “The key is time allotment....Teachers have to make time.” Participant 2 was the only participant out of the five who viewed close reading as effective for students, revealing, “Just the constant spiral helps them a lot.”

To summarize, fourth grade reading teachers believed in close reading strategies for students’ understanding of texts by allowing them to familiarize themselves with the text. Fourth grade reading teachers also believed in close reading for text familiarization by focusing students’ attention on critical pieces of information, such as genre, unfamiliar words, and text structure. Last, fourth grade reading teachers believed close reading allowed students to hear fluent reading and determine what the texts were about.

Theme 2

Theme 2 illustrated that fourth grade reading teachers use response to intervention, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready online platform to scaffold learning. This theme directly addressed RQ1, which inquired about strategies and approaches fourth grade teachers used to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students. With this theme, five out of the 10 participants expressed their reliance on RTI and small-group instruction to scaffold learning. For example, Participant 3 used small-group instruction after whole-group instruction, disclosing, “You can pull them to the

table after your whole group.” Participant 3 also described using small-group instruction. Participant 3 divulged, “I work with my students starting on Tuesdays through Thursdays in small groups because on Mondays we’re introducing the lesson, and on Fridays we’re testing.” Additionally, Participant 3 described the kind of work presented in small groups, articulating, “When I am providing work for my students, it’s grammar; it’s spelling; it’s reading.” Participant 3 also believed: “Nine times out of 10, they enjoy sitting with the teacher and having one-on-one time and not being inhibited about asking questions.”

Participant 5 also used small group instruction to raise reading achievement. She described “taking the children, putting them in small groups, and using lower-level books and teaching them word sounds first.” Additionally, Participant 7 described her use of small-group instruction. Participant 7 claimed, “I use the data from assignments that we do weekly, and I do a lot of small groups around those assignments.” Furthermore, Participant 8 also used small-group instruction during her response to intervention block. Participant 9 also used small group instruction, professing, “We have the built-in intervention time so that we can work in small groups, maybe two or three at a time for two or three times a week meeting with me face-to-face.”

Although these five participants believed in small-group and RTI to raise reading achievement, the other three teachers believed it needed to be more effective due to time constraints. For instance, Participant 5 expressed, “I think we can probably get a better result if we had more time with them because it’s only 45 minutes.” Similarly, Participant 8 voiced, “You have to have the structure and the interest of that block because it’s a

short time period for us to really home in on everybody's needs." Last, Participant 9 agreed, declaring, "By the time you get through doing breakfast, morning announcements, attendance, and all the other preliminaries, I only have about 20 to 25 minutes to delve into small groups with them."

Eight of the 10 participants who participated in the study relied on the I-ready online reading program for scaffolding. Each participant had reasons for using the program and how effective or ineffective it was. Participant 1 admitted to relying on I-Ready to scaffold learning, affirming, "The I-Ready computer system will create lessons where the students are currently and then push them to go beyond that point." When asked how effective or ineffective the program was, Participant 1 believed it was only effective for students who took the lessons seriously, asserting, "It depends on the student....You have some students who get on the device and just click through it to be done." Participant 5 admitted using the I-Ready computer program but said, "It is effective if they are doing it....We are not seeing a lot of the students doing it at home or in school." Participant 6 also found a contingency in the I-Ready program's effectiveness. Participant 6 communicated, "Some teachers are letting the students do the diagnostics until they show growth... They manipulate the data that way....That is an inaccurate snapshot for me." Similarly, Participant 8 did not know the long-term benefits of the program for struggling readers, revealing:

I think it is good for nonreaders, students who are two or three grade levels behind, but I think the passages are too easy, and I do not know how far it takes them....I do not know if it takes them above their grade level.

Out of the eight participants who used the I-Ready reading program, four of them used the program and believed it was adequate for students with no contingencies. For example, Participant 3 disclosed, "I-ready is a great program to home in on their needs." Participant 3 continued, "It is effective because when a student is coming to a new skill that has not been mastered, then the program will alert you, which means the teacher can select remediation for that particular skill." Additionally, Participant 7 divulged:

I think I-Ready is effective because it caters to the different grade levels....I can assign lessons to a specific skill or grade level that they can do independently on their computers when they have technology time or at home.

Participant 9 also found the I-Ready computer program beneficial to students, articulating, "I like it because it meets them at their level; it is what they call *adaptive*." Last, Participant 10 agreed with I-Ready being effective for students, claiming, "I can assign lessons to them that lead them on their grade level....It moves them or takes them down based on how they perform."

In short, fourth grade reading teachers used RTI, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready learning platform and believed in the scaffolding to benefit learning, especially for struggling readers. During RTI and small-group instruction, fourth grade reading teachers worked on reading deficits, such as foundational skills, spelling, and grammar,

with struggling readers. Fourth grade reading teachers believed the I-Ready learning platform benefited struggling readers by offering individualized lessons that adapted to students' learning.

Theme 3

Theme 3 illustrated that fourth grade reading teachers use echo and buddy reading for reading achievement. Five participants mentioned echo and buddy reading during the research study. These strategies aligned with RQ 1, which pertains to strategies and approaches fourth grade teachers use to raise reading achievement. Four of the five participants consistently strategically used buddy reading to raise reading achievement. For example, Participant 2 paired students who read at the same reading level together:

We also do six-minute solutions where kids are paired with partners that usually read around their same reading level...I usually do not assign their passages based on their instructional reading level; I go higher because I feel like if they always have to stay at their level, then they are never being challenged and never rising to the expectations.

In the same way, Participant 4 expressed:

I will have them sit elbow to elbow, and they will buddy read'....I use the I-Ready platform to help me determine the good partners for that because when you look at a specific standard, you can also look to see what students would be good paired with each other to help each other with reading.

Participant 9 was also strategic when choosing partners for buddy reading, Participant 9 voiced, “I also allow students to partner up with students who perform at a higher level than they do.” Similarly, Participant 10 said, “I pair students on different levels because maybe that higher level one may be able to assist the lower one.”

Two participants mentioned echo reading. Participant 4 declared, “I do an echo read with them where I will take chunks of the most important text, and I will read it out loud to them and have them echo it back to me.” Participant 8 affirmed, “I make them echo read....I try not to let them read it out loud with me so the students will not struggle because it sounds choppy.”

To summarize, fourth grade reading teachers believed in the benefits of echo and buddy reading. They used echo and buddy reading as a strategy for building peer-to-peer support for struggling readers. Fourth grade reading teachers believed echo and buddy reading aided in text comprehension and improved reading fluency in struggling readers.

Theme 4

Theme 4 conveyed that fourth grade reading teachers used context clues and morphology instruction to improve the understanding of texts for struggling readers. For instance, Participant 1 asserted, “Vocabulary strategies are a big thing that I use to help students with their reading skills.” Participant 1 also communicated:

After I am done reading, we will go over the unfamiliar words....I will have some pre-selected words that I want to go through, purposely picking words that use

prefixes and suffixes, then teach the students how to use those vocabulary strategies to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar words.

Participant 1 also revealed:

It helps them understand that they can use their resources in front of them to figure out what a word means rather than relying on asking the teacher...They might not have access to a dictionary or the internet.

Participant 3 also focused on context clues, disclosing, "It is an essential strategy for reading." Like Participant 1, Participant 3 used vocabulary strategies, divulging, "We focus on the use of clue words...These are words that surround a word to help the student better understand what the author wants them to know." Participant 3 also articulated, "Many times we do not have a chance to go to the dictionary, so using words around the word itself helps give them clues as to what the word means."

Participant 4 believed it was necessary to read through texts four times so that during the last read, students could choose words that they did not know the meaning of and use their context clues strategies to find out what the words mean. For example, Participant 4 stated: "[Students] read through a fourth time on their own to figure out what words they do not know the meaning to; then, we will break those down."

Participant 6 conveyed the importance of teaching unfamiliar word strategies by stating:

But if they do not understand how the word fits into context with all the other unfamiliar words, then we have to teach that too...I teach all the other unfamiliar

words that the students do not know because they have to form a picture in their mind of what they are reading.

Participant 6 seemed to justify the importance of students' understanding of texts being contingent on how well they understand what words mean. Equally, Participant 8 professed that she has her students: "Pull out vocabulary words that they might need help with, and we will use our context clues strategies."

Although most teachers used context clues for understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words, Participant 2 used morphology instruction to build fluency, claiming, "There are still a lot of those gaps when it comes to being able to read on grade level.... They learn prefixes and suffixes, like the smallest unit of the meanings....It helps with fluency." Similarly, Participant 3 believed in "breaking words apart—prefixes, base words, and suffixes." On the other hand, Participant 4 believed in "pulling apart words and looking at the syllables."

To summarize, fourth grade reading teachers believed that context clue instruction allows struggling readers to improve their comprehension of texts. Context clues instruction also allowed students to depend on the tools in front of them rather than on a dictionary, a teacher, or the internet to find the meanings of unfamiliar words. Additionally, fourth grade reading teachers believed that when students broke words into their smallest units, it bridged understanding of words' meanings, thus leading to text comprehension.

Theme 5

Theme 5 detailed that fourth grade reading teachers reteach foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers. Theme 5 conveyed how teachers felt about foundational reading skills and their importance in reading achievement. Seven out of the 10 participants found foundational skills critical in students' reading achievement success. For example, Participant 2 blamed Covid 19 on students' lack of reading achievement, stating, "From August until December, we reincorporated phonics, which I think helps the students' reading....I feel like when Covid hit, students lost essential reading skills. Participant 3 did not blame the lack of reading achievement on Covid 19, Participant 3 agreed that some students lacked foundational skills, voicing, "I have a group who I love dearly because they have to be taught the basic fundamental skills of reading."

Participant 4 also had a group of students who needed help with foundational skills. Participant 4 described the scaffolds used:

They need far more intensive scaffolding....We are pulling apart words, maybe as low as what sounds the letters make....We pull those words apart and then blend them back together....We break the words apart using the different sounds and then map phonemes to graphemes.

Likewise, Participant 5 gave a description of struggling readers in her class and the foundational skill scaffolds used in the classroom setting:

Many students come into fourth grade who cannot read at all; they need to start from the basics....We have a teacher who comes in once a week and teaches them basic sounds....We are taking the students and teaching them word sounds first.

Participant 6 even took training in Orton-Gillingham to address phonics. Participant 6 asserted, "In my school, we believe in the Orton-Gillingham method, which addresses phonics." Participant 6 believed in using Orton-Gillingham for students with phonics instruction, Participant 6 also believed reading goes beyond phonics, communicating, "Phonics is the building block of learning how to read, but it goes beyond that....The students must be able to simplify the words and understand vowels and letter sounds."

Participants 9 and 10 believed it was important for teachers to reach students where they are and believed it started with foundational skills. For example, Participant 9 revealed:

Even though they are fourth graders, sometimes you have to take a step back and reach them on their level, may it be kindergarten, first-grade, or second grade....So, I still may have to sometimes go back and teach phonics and phonemes.

Last, Participant 10 believed foundational skills were necessary, so students do not struggle to understand texts:

I think it is very important that our students learn those letter sounds and can differentiate between them and practice it daily....When they are trying to figure out what a word is, they lose the comprehension piece of reading.

To abridge the information in Theme 5, fourth grade reading teachers helped struggling readers by re-teaching foundational skills that many struggling readers did not grasp in lower-level grades. Many fourth grade struggling readers needed additional intensive scaffolding to build reading proficiency by recognizing letters and letter sounds and understanding graphemes, phonemes, and vowels.

Theme 6

Theme 6 revealed that fourth grade reading teachers use online learning games to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers. Theme 6 uncovered fourth grade reading teachers' beliefs and experiences using online learning platforms to aid in reading achievement. Only four out of the 10 participants relied on online learning for struggling readers to reach reading achievement. Mainly, Participant 3 saw the benefits of an online learning platform called ReadWorks, expressing:

I utilize ReadWorks, which is another great resource where teachers can pull passages based on reading grade level....What I like about ReadWorks is it has multiple-choice questions that are set up like the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, and depending on what grade level the teacher chooses, it will have open-ended questions, which help with writing.

Participant 5 used online learning platforms that focused on phonics. Participant 5 stated, "We use Hooked on Phonics with students, which helps them a lot." Likewise, Participant 7 successfully used an online learning platform for making learning fun for struggling readers. Participant 7 stated:

And then I try to integrate some fun websites....There is a website that students introduced me to called Gimkit....It has a question bank that covers each reading skill that we work on in the classroom....It allows them to play a game while learning.

Participant 10 used two websites to meet students on their learning levels, stating, “There are two websites I use to meet them at their level; I use Starfall and PBS Kids.”

Based on the data supporting Theme 6, fourth grade reading teachers found online learning games raised reading achievement in fourth grade students. For one, fourth grade reading teachers believed in online learning games for fourth grade students to engage in fun learning. Fourth grade reading teachers also believed in online learning games for scaffolding learning by assigning games related to specific classroom skills. Last, fourth grade reading teachers believed online learning games gave them the autonomy to assign lessons based on student’s individual learning needs.

Theme 7

Theme 7 portrayed that fourth grade reading teachers preferred the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders reading curriculum. Based on responses from the 10 participants, most participants taught at schools that used both curricula interchangeably but preferred the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders curriculum. For example, Participant 1 believed the Wonders curriculum could have been more beneficial, but there was too much information included in the material for the lessons. For example, Participant 1 expressed, “The Wonders curriculum is very

vast....There are many resources that come with it, but I cannot tell you exactly where all those resources are....There is so much that it becomes overwhelming.”

Other teachers did not like using Wonders because they believed the lessons did not match the skills and standards taught in the classroom. For instance, Participant 4 voiced, “Wonders has way too many skills in a single lesson....They do not control the text enough.” Likewise, Participant 7 said, “Sometimes, when we go to the Wonders book, the skill does not match the lesson that was taught the previous week, so it makes it difficult for students to understand.” Participant 8 declared, “I feel the stories are not always aligned with the standards; they are making it fit.”

Participants 3 and 10 had varied reasons for being partial toward the Ready Reading curriculum. Participant 3 preferred Ready Reading because more planning and resources were involved, making it easy to navigate the curriculum. For example, Participant 3 asserted, “The I-Ready curriculum is laid out in a user-friendly manner....The Wonders curriculum is not planned out systematically for teachers; I spend a great amount of time pulling resources here and there and everywhere.” Participant 10 was more concerned with students’ ability to get online, revealing:

Between the two programs, I think I like the Ready Reading curriculum a little better, and that could be because there is the website where students can go on the internet and the teacher can assign lessons to them that leads them on grade level....Whereas, the Wonders curriculum does not have an actual online program.

While the other participants were partial to the Ready Reading curriculum, Participant 6 saw the benefits of both programs, even though the school she was at did not currently use Ready Reading. Having experience with both curriculums, Participant 6 revealed, “I like the Wonders curriculum...Not having that curriculum and just relying on the Ready Reading curriculum is a gap in resources.

In summary, fourth grade reading teachers used the Ready Reading and Wonders curricula during classroom instruction. Participants analyzed the curriculums in terms of the curriculum’s vastness, user-friendliness, resources, and correlation to skills and standards taught in the classroom. Upon analyzing the two curricula, fourth grade teachers preferred the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders curriculum.

Research Question 2

RQ2 asked: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students? This question was important as it further explored the experiences of fourth grade reading teachers as it related to improving low reading achievement in fourth grade students. This question was also important because it gave readers of the study an in-depth look at the resources fourth grade reading teachers lacked when trying to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students. Based on the research question, one theme emerged. I structured this section based on one identified theme, which was Theme 8.

Theme 8 reflected how fourth grade reading teachers desire various support from their administration team in the form of teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower

grade-level support. To address RQ2, I asked participants to describe the support they believed they needed to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students. The participants answered the five interview questions that addressed RQ2, and I identified one theme based on the experiences of fourth grade teachers regarding support needed to raise reading achievement.

All participants conveyed the need for various support from their administration team. Participants mentioned teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower-grade level more than others. As it related to teacher training, three out of the 10 teachers believed they needed more training with the curriculum. As an example, Participant 1 stated:

With I-Ready, we got a lot of training on how to use the platform...there was not that much training with Wonders...So, I think training is something that teachers need to be given when they are provided with a curriculum to use...Having people to come in to show you how to use those materials would be a wonderful thing.

Similarly, Participant 4 expressed, “[I am] making sure that teachers are trained on how best to use those resources by someone who actually uses them, not just by someone who is selling it to the district.” Correspondingly, Participant 10 believed in support from curriculum representatives:

They need to make sure I understand the actual setup of the program...making sure I know the resources that are available...Having representatives from the

company coming into schools to have professional development session so that teachers can understand and see what different tools are available.

Four of the 10 participants believed classroom assistants could help with their efforts in helping struggling readers reach reading achievement. For example, Participant 1 asserted, “Maybe somebody, like an assistant, [could help] who can pull students and work with those students in a private setting to help push them where they need to be.” Participant 7 agreed, affirming, “Maybe we have a person who could come and help with struggling students.” Participants 3 and 9 also believed they would benefit from classroom assistants. Participant 3 communicated, “When I say manpower, it could be an adult, and it does not have to be an exorbitant amount of time...Maybe 10 hours a week.” Likewise, Participant 9 revealed, “It would be nice if they would put assistants in fourth grade classrooms.”

Some teachers believed that classroom support for lower-grade teachers could raise reading achievement. For example, Participant 3 believed in putting most of the focus of foundational skills on the lower grades, disclosing, “Support in foundational skills for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade...It is inherent that they are supported for these students to be successful.” Similarly, Participant 8 articulated, “By teaching more grammar skills in lower grades...I know it seems like they focus on foundational skills, but they get to upper grades and are not even writing capital letters or punctuating correctly.” Also believing that lower grade teachers need support teaching foundational skills, Participant 10 professed, “[I am] making sure that teachers in lower

grades are supported....Just making sure that the administrators are visible and there is consistent collaboration between administrators and those lower-level teachers.”

Altogether, fourth grade reading teachers desired curricula training for teachers to build their understanding of curricula resources and materials. Additionally, fourth grade reading teachers desired classroom assistants to aid reading achievement for struggling readers. Last, fourth grade reading teachers desired foundational skills support for lower-grade-level teachers to ensure students’ reading success before they reach upper elementary grades. Fourth grade reading teachers’ descriptions of what they would like to see in their schools to help them raise reading achievement closely related to RQ 2, which asked participants about the supports needed from their administration team to help students reach reading achievement.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Usually, quantitative research is considered more trustworthy than qualitative research by people in the analytical body; therefore, when conducting qualitative research, researchers should place trustworthiness at high importance (see Adler, 2022). In this case, trustworthiness consists of (a) credibility, which ensures that readers can comprehend the meaning and information in the research; (b) confirmability, which ensures that information is persistent and free of prejudice, and (c) dependability, which gives sufficient information for reproduction of the study, and (d) transferability, which evaluates the study’s results as it relates to other conditions (O’Kane et al., 2021).

The initial challenge considered for this study was limited participant availability. However, this qualitative study showed trustworthiness by ensuring information credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. My rationale behind ensuring trustworthiness in this research was so readers would not second guess the information depicted in the study (see Stahl & King, 2020).

Credibility

To secure the credibility of this study, I followed the methods of data collection described in the methodology section of my dissertation. I showed credibility by describing how, where, and when I engaged with participants and by including strong proof of the study's explanations (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021). Additionally, I used semistructured interviews with fourth grade reading teachers and developed arising codes into themes. Conducting semistructured interviews built an understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs by participants elaborating on their answers without limitation. Consequently, readers of the study could see how the information captured from participants evolved into results.

Transferability

Transferability occurs when the researcher gives such a broad account to readers of the study where readers and other researchers can formulate their interpretations of the study's findings and relate them to other conditions (Younas et al., 2023). To establish transferability, I included rich details of the research procedures used in the study. I asked clarifying questions to participants during the interview process and encouraged

descriptive answers from participants. Additionally, I used the frameworks that supported the study and in-depth accounts of participants' experiences and beliefs.

Dependability

In qualitative research, the study's dependability ensures that the researcher is cautious about the information used in the study since other researchers could view and analyze the information (Stahl & King, 2020). I used an audit trail showing the steps taken during the research process to establish dependability. To do this, I used in-depth participant recordings and conveyed rationalization for each step taken. Additionally, I noted in-depth descriptions of the research design, data collection process, data analysis process, and the research methodology.

Confirmability

Through confirmability, the researcher becomes impartial to the study's findings (Nyirenda et al., 2020). I established confirmability by providing transparency throughout the research process. I accomplished this by explaining how the study related to my research topic and revealing any personal or professional biases that could affect the findings. I also conducted a member check by emailing a summary of the study's findings to participants. Participants then had the option of participating in a short 10-to-15-minute Zoom meeting with me to give feedback or add additional comments. Of the 10 teachers who participated in the study, two participants returned email responses agreeing with the study's findings. No participants wished to participate in a Zoom meeting.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I dispensed the research study findings based on the data collection and analysis that answered the two research questions. Seven themes emerged from RQ1, and one theme emerged from RQ2. The following list includes all eight themes:

- Theme 1: Fourth grade reading teachers used close reading strategies to improve reading achievement but believed it was ineffective for struggling readers.
- Theme 2: Fourth grade reading teachers used RTI, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready learning platform to scaffold learning.
- Theme 3: Fourth grade reading teachers used echo and buddy reading to build reading fluency skills for struggling readers.
- Theme 4: Fourth grade reading teachers used context clues and morphology instruction to improve understanding of texts for struggling readers.
- Theme 5: Fourth grade reading teachers re-taught foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers.
- Theme 6: Fourth grade reading teachers used online learning games to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers.
- Theme 7: Fourth grade reading teachers preferred the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders curriculum.
- Theme 8: Fourth grade reading teachers desired various support from their school administration in the form of teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower grade-level support.

The results of my study specified the strategies and approaches that fourth grade reading teachers used to raise reading achievement and identified the support that the teachers believed they needed to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students. Participants in the study shared their beliefs and experiences related to raising reading achievement. The participants gave valuable insights regarding their experiences raising reading achievement to build stakeholder knowledge. In Chapter 5, I discuss the purpose of the study, interpretations of the findings, limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for possible social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fourth grade reading teachers' experiences of finding strategies and interventions to improve reading achievement scores for fourth grade students. The research questions for this study were the following:

RQ1: What strategies and supports do fourth grade reading teachers use to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students?

RQ2: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students?

I collected data from 10 teachers to understand the strategies and approaches used to understand the struggles fourth grade teachers encounter when raising reading achievement scores of fourth grade students. The participants used in the study needed to (a) have at least 3 years of teaching experience, (b) teach in the United States, and (c) teach fourth grade reading. By acquiring a better understanding of the strategies and approaches that fourth grade teachers use to raise reading achievement, I was able to gain insight on the struggles that fourth grade reading teachers face when raising reading achievement for fourth grade students. It was also important for me to gain a better understanding of the support fourth grade reading teachers need from school administration to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students.

After analyzing, coding, categorizing, and theming the data, I concluded data analysis with eight themes. The first seven themes related to RQ1 and were as follows:

- Theme 1: Fourth grade reading teachers used close reading strategies to improve reading achievement but believed it was ineffective for struggling readers.
- Theme 2: Fourth grade reading teachers used RTI, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready learning platform to scaffold learning.
- Theme 3: Fourth grade reading teachers used echo and buddy reading to build reading fluency skills for struggling readers.
- Theme 4: Fourth grade reading teachers used context clues and morphology instruction to improve understanding of texts for struggling readers.
- Theme 5: Fourth grade reading teachers re-taught foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers.
- Theme 6: Fourth grade reading teachers used online learning games to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers.
- Theme 7: Fourth grade reading teachers preferred the Ready Reading curriculum over the Wonders curriculum.

The eighth theme related to RQ2 and was as follows:

- Theme 8: Fourth grade reading teachers desired various support from their school administration in the form of teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower grade-level support.

In the section on interpreting the study's findings, I organize the findings according to research questions and themes. Additionally, I use the literature from Chapter 2 to confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge. Also, in Chapter 5, I explain how

the findings relate to the two conceptual frameworks used in the study. I discuss limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and then close Chapter 5 with a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

I interpreted these findings through the literature in Chapter 2 and the two conceptual frameworks that I used to ground this study. I relied on Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development to analyze the experiences of fourth grade reading teachers. Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading posits that reading consists of decoding sounds and letters and then making meaning from those words that letters and sounds make. Chall's (1983) stages of reading development asserts that learning to read happens in developmental stages, from pre-reading to construction and reconstruction. The findings from my study are consistent with the concepts aligned in both the simple view of reading and stages of reading development. In the current study, the strategies and approaches that fourth grade reading teachers use for fourth grade students' reading achievement builds capacity in fourth grade students' reading achievement scores and shares areas of needs for fourth grade reading teachers when moving students to reading proficiency.

Interpretations of RQ1

In addressing RQ1, I focused on fourth grade reading teachers' use of strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students. I identified seven total themes. All seven themes aligned to RQ1. The key findings for each theme reveal

the importance of fourth grade reading teachers using strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students.

Findings Related to RQ1

Finding 1

The first finding associated with RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers used close reading strategies during reading to improve reading achievement. First, most participants indicated that using close reading strategies bridged text comprehension in fourth grade students by students hearing texts more than once. Additionally, participants found close reading strategies useful for students when identifying text genres, unfamiliar words, authors' purpose, text structure, and summarizing texts. Even though the consensus was that close reading strategies benefited students, most participants agreed that it was ineffective for struggling readers.

My findings disconfirm those of a previous study that found that students significantly improved their comprehension skills when exposed to explicit instruction in close reading focused on the main idea, text annotations, and text discussion (Mariage et al., 2020). In this case, Mariage (2020) did not consider students who struggle with reading due to foundational skills deficits. Regarding struggling readers and close reading strategies, participants believed these students needed more intense scaffolds in foundational skills. I used this finding to connect to Wanzek's (2020) study, which found that struggling readers exposed to multi-component reading interventions outperformed their peers in reading throughout the school year.

Finding 2

The second finding related to RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers used RTI, small-group instruction, and the I-Ready online platform to scaffold learning. Most participants revealed that these resources proved beneficial because of the catered lessons and one-on-one time with teachers. This finding confirmed a study that found dysfluent readers' reading comprehension and fluency scores grew significantly when exposed to evidence-based strategies and interventions in small-group and whole-group instruction (Vess et al., 2018). The finding supported Miles et al.'s (2022) statement that small-group instruction with students with the same reading deficits is just as effective as one-on-one tutoring.

Most participants in the study revealed that they used RTI and small-group instruction to focus on foundational skills for struggling readers. Participants' use of implementing foundational skills instruction during RTI and small-group instruction corroborated Lovett et al.'s (2022) assertion that it would benefit struggling readers to access multi-faceted reading interventions focusing on foundational skills such as reading comprehension and text reading. Additionally, participants' use of implementing foundational skills instruction during RTI and small-group instruction confirms Vousden et al.'s (2022) study that students increased their grapheme, phoneme, decoding, and comprehension skills after exposure to training in all domains.

As it related to the I-Ready online learning platform, participants assigned individualized lessons that catered to students' reading grade level. Participants using the

program for their students endorse Macuruso et al.'s (2020) finding that kindergarten through fifth grade students showed more significant gains in reading test scores after exposure to reading technology during the school year. Additionally, it validates Campbell et al. (2021), who showed that fourth grade students' reading speed and comprehension skills improved when incorporating technology into the daily reading lesson. Last, because participants attested to the I-Ready online platform for students, it proved Kim and Margulieux's (2020) assertion that students have varied preferences for how they learn; therefore, teachers should strive to accommodate these variances successfully.

Finding 3

The third finding linked to RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers used echo and buddy reading to build reading fluency skills in struggling readers. In this study, participants reported that during buddy reading, they paired struggling readers with higher-level readers as a means of peer support. The participants' strategies of pairing lower readers with higher readers did not concur with Farra et al.'s (2022) contention that dysfluent readers may feel thwarted in their reading as they observe their peers reading fluently. However, fourth grade reading teachers' strategy of pairing lower readers with higher readers did align with Preast et al. (2019), who found that struggling readers performed better on standardized comprehension tests after participating in partner reading when paired with a proficient reader. On the other hand, pairing lower readers with higher readers also aligned with Downs et al.'s (2020) study, in which the

researchers found that struggling readers read as much as four times higher and achieved higher reading fluency and comprehension scores after the teacher partnered them with a proficient reader. Consequently, buddy reading could be an excellent start to building reading fluency in struggling readers. It could support Wold et al.'s (2023) findings that students skilled in ORF more quickly applied phonics awareness when reading than their peers who were not skilled in ORF.

Participants in the study who used echo reading to build reading fluency in struggling readers believed that echo reading modeled fluent reading for students. Participants did this by taking chunks of the texts and reading them aloud to students, then having them repeat the same chunks. The echo reading strategy used by participants could support Kuhn's (2020) postulation that there are four practical approaches and principles of fluency instruction, consisting of small-group and whole-group reading and oral instruction that includes teacher modeling, practice, scaffolded opportunities for students, and prosody instruction. Additionally, echo reading could also be related to a study in which the researchers found high achievement in upper elementary students' text comprehension, vocabulary, and language when they participated in read-aloud interventions (Baker et al., 2020).

Finding 4

The fourth finding associated with RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers used context clues and morphology instruction to improve fourth grade students' understanding of texts. In this study, participants stated that they focused on unfamiliar

words, prefixes, suffixes, base words, and clue words for text comprehension.

Participants' use of context clues and morphology instructions validates Ownby's (2022) results, that students increased their reading comprehension and vocabulary skills after participating in morphological awareness interventions. Additionally, it confirms Bowers and Bowers's (2018) and McKeown's (2019) submission that reading instruction should include word part instruction that includes affixes and instruction in word origins to build an understanding of words.

Fourth grade reading teachers' use of context clues and morphology instruction strengthens other claims. For example, context clues and morphology instruction support Dilgard and Hodges' (2022) discovery that phonics-focused and fluency-focused literacy centers in classrooms, such as syllabication, Greek and Latin roots, and affixes effectively remedied reading deficits of older struggling readers. Additionally, it supports Scanlon and Anderson's (2020) evaluation that teaching strategic word-solving skills to build students' word banks, word reading, and spelling was influential in remediating reading deficits.

Finding 5

The fifth finding connected to RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers re-taught foundational skills to improve reading achievement for struggling readers. In this study, participants stated that many students struggled with reading because they did not grasp essential reading skills in lower elementary grades. Hence, teachers had to re-teach the most basic skills of reading, such as phonemes, graphemes, letter sounds, and

blending sounds. Participants' re-teaching of foundational skills authenticates Burns et al. (2023) statement that beginning reading skills, such as letter sounds and names, word segmenting, nonsense words, and reading aloud, contribute to reading proficiency.

The experiences of fourth grade reading teachers re-teaching foundational skills for students' reading achievement also validated Gough and Tunmer's (1986) statement that the simple view of reading, which asserts that learning to read begins with decoding sounds and letters, and then making meaning from those iterations. Similarly, re-teaching foundational skills supported Burn et al.'s (2018) postulation that learning to read begins with phonics and phonemic awareness. Last, fourth grade reading teachers re-teaching foundational skills substantiated Nelson et al.'s (2022) claim that word identification, phoneme isolation, and understanding of vowel and consonant sounds are the skills needed when learning to read.

Finding 6

The sixth finding related to RQ1 was that fourth grade reading teachers used online learning websites to bridge the learning gap for struggling readers. Participants used websites where they could reach students at their learning levels and where students could have fun while learning. Participants' approach to using learning games to bridge learning in struggling readers corroborated Reed et al.'s (2019) results that second through fifth grade students grew significantly in ORF when exposed to a computer-assisted program called Data Mountain that monitored their reading fluency. This finding also confirmed Coggins' (2023) discovery that found that students exposed to a reading

program, Readable Englis, and individualized reading instruction based on student's strengths, weaknesses, and interests exceeded their peers in fluency and comprehension who were not exposed to the program.

Participants' approaches to using learning games also authenticates Whitney and Ackerman's (2023) investigation that found that students grew significantly in ORF when exposed to a digital program called Great Leaps, which used error correction, modeled reading, and tracked students' performance. Last, since participants agreed that teachers should meet students on their reading levels when using digital technology, it upholds Sutter's et al. (2019) belief in computer-assisted reading programs for students to learn to read proficiently on their reading levels.

Finding 7

The seventh finding linked to RQ1 was that teachers used the Ready Reading and Wonders reading curricula. However, most participants preferred the Ready Reading Curriculum over Wonders. Most participants in the study believed that the Ready Reading curriculum was user-friendly and well planned. Additionally, participants believed the online learning platform that goes with Ready Reading was beneficial for students. My findings corroborated Heissel and Ladd's (2018) assertion that inadequate access to quality reading resources contributes to children's low reading achievement. Additionally, the findings validate Young's (2023) declaration that inappropriate teaching instruction could hinder reading achievement in elementary students. Heissel and Ladd (2018) and Young (2023) showed the importance of ensuring that teachers use curricula

as practical resources for teachers to use during instruction. Last, my finding supports Young and Spitzer's (2020) submission that educators can construct a well-rounded and adaptable reading curriculum by combining traditional print materials with digital resources.

Finding Related to RQ2

The eighth finding related to RQ2 was that fourth grade reading teachers desire various support from their school administration team through teacher training, classroom assistants, and lower-grade-level support. Most teachers agreed that they would like individuals to come into their school and train them in using resources to help students read best. My study's findings agreed with Pomerantz and Pierce's (2019) findings, which indicated that reading teachers paid more attention to how they taught reading comprehension to students after participating in professional development that focused on building teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension and explicit instruction of reading comprehension. Additionally, my study's findings supported Medina et al.'s (2021) results that reading teachers showed more understanding of their comprehension strategies and noticed a difference in how their students responded to reading instruction after participating in professional development.

As it related to having teacher assistants in the classroom, most participants in the study wanted to use classroom assistants to help with struggling readers. Participants believed classroom assistants could pull struggling readers and work with them in small groups. This observation upholds Koutsouris' (2021) discovery that found that students

showed just as much reading success as students in phonics-based instruction when exposed to an integrated group program where the teacher was accompanied by an assistant, teaching small groups, and reading simple books while increasing the difficulty of the books each day. Last, participants believed their administration team needed to support lower-grade teachers in teaching foundational skills. This finding validated Paige et al.'s (2023) claim that many upper elementary students have reading deficits because they did not acquire phonemic awareness skills in their early years.

Limitations of the Study

I considered two limitations when analyzing the findings of this qualitative research study. The limitations considered for this study were: sample size and researcher bias. I used a small sample size that included 10 reading teachers who taught fourth grade in three locations within the United States. Sample size and inclusion criteria could limit the generalizability of the study. The criteria for participation in the study called for fourth grade reading teachers in the United States with at least 3 years of teaching experience. All 10 participants volunteered to be part of the study.

Researcher bias was the second limitation of this study. I considered my firsthand experiences teaching fourth grade reading when conducting the interviews. To reduce research bias and the adverse effects on the study, I ensured transparency with participants about my professional background before administering the interview questions. Additionally, I allowed participants to review their answers after completing all interviews.

Recommendations

Evidence that fourth grade reading teachers need help finding strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students is in this study. The findings from this study also indicate the need to give more administrative support to fourth grade reading teachers. Overall, the findings indicate the need for future research topics related to low reading achievement in fourth grade students for training to build fourth grade teachers' function and include teachers' voices as professionals on the front lines working with students daily.

Recommendations for Further Research

Fourth grade reading teachers' ability to address low reading achievement is essential for fourth grade students to reach reading proficiency. Using a variety of strategies and approaches provides students with scaffolds and tools for reading achievement. Because fourth grade students have varying reading deficits, fourth grade reading teachers must meet students' varying learning capacities and reading levels (see Campbell et al., 2021). As a result, additional studies in the following areas are:

- Further basic qualitative research studies on upper elementary reading teachers' experiences finding strategies and approaches to remediate reading deficits in (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) vocabulary, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehension.
- Exploration of the experiences and beliefs of upper elementary reading teachers using digital technology to raise reading achievement.

- Additional research focused on the challenges of upper elementary teachers when finding strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in upper elementary students.
- Quantitative research that focuses on upper elementary teachers' successes and outcomes relevant to using strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in upper elementary students.

Recommendations for Practice

Through interviews with fourth grade reading teachers, I identified eight themes. Based on the eight themes, I developed the following recommendations for school administrators and teachers in elementary school settings:

- School administrators should provide fourth grade reading teachers with professional development opportunities around close reading strategies for struggling readers.
- Fourth grade reading teachers should have more time to spend with struggling readers during RTI and small-group instruction, and school administrators should develop protocols and parameters to ensure every student completes 45 minutes of I-Ready lessons per week.
- School administrators should provide fourth grade reading teachers with reading fluency courses to broaden their understanding and instruction when teaching fluency strategies.

- Fourth grade reading teachers should have professional development opportunities in vocabulary instruction that extend beyond lessons in curricula.
- School administrators should devote more time to ensuring reading teachers are well versed in foundational skills and provided with required professional development opportunities in foundational skills.
- Administrators should provide reading teachers with an updated list each quarter of free learning websites for scaffolding learning.
- School administrators should provide teachers with professional development opportunities on school curricula.
- Schools should have additional funding for classroom assistants, professional development opportunities centered around instructional leadership and the five components of reading, and provide lower grade-level teachers with materials, resources, and training centered around foundational skills.

When schools implement these recommendations, fourth grade reading teachers will receive continuous support from their instructional leadership team. Next, fourth grade reading teachers could gain the support needed to help fourth grade students reach reading achievement. Last, school policymakers could use these recommendations to support teachers and school districts with best practices for teaching reading and ensuring reading proficiency for fourth grade students.

Implications

This study on fourth grade reading teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement in fourth grade students is meaningful to the field of education as teachers can give first-hand accounts to give meaning and encourage social change. This study established a framework for how fourth grade reading teachers' experiences influenced their use of strategies and approaches for fourth grade students to reach reading achievement. Moreover, the study adds invaluable insights to an ongoing field of education research by addressing how strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement may impact students by furnishing them with the scaffolds and tools needed to reach reading proficiency. Additionally, the study adds indispensable insights by addressing the needs of fourth grade reading teachers regarding raising reading achievement scores in fourth grade students. Both insights can impact reading proficiency for fourth grade students. The results indicated that fourth grade reading teachers' experiences and beliefs impacted fourth grade students reaching reading achievement.

Walden University has a culture where positive social change is at the forefront of everything they do. The findings of this research have the potential to reach school districts worldwide along with other agencies that desire to raise reading achievement in students. The information gained in the study could assist in positive social change by recommending that school districts support teachers and students by providing teachers with the tools and resources needed to raise reading achievement scores. School districts should consider teachers' input when implementing positive social change. Additionally,

school districts should discuss adopted strategies, approaches, and curricula with teachers prior to implementation.

By providing an in-depth understanding of fourth grade reading teachers' experiences and beliefs when addressing low reading achievement in fourth grade students, this study may also inform educators about the importance of providing students with scaffolds and tools for read proficiency. Additionally, the results of this study can open the door for additional studies related to raising reading achievement in upper elementary school students. The results of this study may also build insights on the importance of equipping teachers with practical tools and resources to raise reading achievement in all students.

Conclusion

This study explored fourth grade teachers' experiences addressing low reading achievement. All participants used strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students but at varied levels and capacities. The conceptual frameworks for this study comprised Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development. The simple view of reading posited that reading begins with decoding sounds and letters followed by making meaning from those iterations. The stages of reading development asserted that reading happens in developmental stages, starting from pre-birth to construction and reconstruction.

The participants in the study shared invaluable insights based on their experiences finding and using strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement in fourth grade

students. These insights from the teacher will inform the field of education on the importance of equipping fourth grade reading teachers with tools and resources to build reading proficiency in students. Participants in the study indicated that they used various strategies and approaches to raise reading achievement. Additionally, participants in the study believed they needed support from their school administration team to raise reading achievement in fourth grade students.

Through this study, administrators and teachers can view the results and use them as a roadmap for potential changes to strategies, approaches, and curricula in raising students' reading achievement. Teachers and administrators bear the responsibility of ensuring every child has access to practical strategies and approaches that meet them at their learning levels and give them the best chance to become proficient readers. Therefore, I challenge fourth grade reading teachers and administrators to continue developing strategies and approaches used in classroom settings to support students in becoming proficient readers. Additionally, I encourage classroom teachers and administrators to consider the conceptual frameworks of Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple view of reading and Chall's (1983) stages of reading development. In doing so, teachers and administrators will begin to understand the vital stages of reading and how detrimental it is to students' achievement when reading deficits arise. Through understanding the conceptual frameworks, administrators can give more support to reading teachers, thus building student capacity in reading.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Study Topic: Fourth Grade Reading Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges Finding Strategies and Interventions to Remedy Low Reading Achievement

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. My name is Sametria Alexander, and I will be conducting this interview. From reading your pre-qualification questionnaire, your skillset and professional background closely matches the study's purpose. Before we start, I would like you to know that anything you say during this interview is confidential. I will not use your name or any other personal information that could identify you. Therefore, I would like to encourage you to be as detailed as possible in your answers so I can get a clear depiction of your experiences. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have a right to withdrawal from the study at any time and for any reason.

The interview will last for approximately 1 hour. With your consent, I will record our interview. Recording the interview will allow me to transcribe your answers, ensuring data accuracy.

Interview Questions

RQ1: What strategies and approaches do fourth grade teachers use to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

1. What current reading strategies and approaches do you use in your classroom?
2. How effective or ineffective are the current strategies and approaches?

3. What makes the current reading strategies and approaches effective or ineffective?

RQ2: What supports do fourth grade reading teachers believe they need to improve reading achievement for fourth grade students?

4. What school supported reading resources are you currently using in your classroom?
5. If you are using school supported reading resources, how effective or ineffective are these resources?
6. What makes school supported resources effective or ineffective?
7. What reading resources would you like to see implemented in your educational setting?
8. What kind of support could the school administration team help you with?

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

**RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY****4th Grade Reading Teachers**

There is a new study about effective reading strategies and interventions for 4th grade students struggling with reading. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences finding reading strategies and interventions for struggling readers.

About the study

- One 30-to-60-minute phone interview that will be audio recorded (no video recording).
- You will receive a \$20 Visa gift card as a thank you.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements

- U.S. public school teacher
- 4th grade reading teacher
- At least three years of experience teaching reading

