2015

# Addressing Gaps in Student Reading: READ 180 Program Evaluation

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# Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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## Abstract

Students are reaching middle school 2 or more years behind in reading ability. As a result, they are unable to meet state testing standards. In 2007, the *READ 180* program was implemented at an urban middle school in Virginia to address the reading gaps of these middle school students. The purpose of this sequential mixed-method program evaluation was to analyze the reading success of 30 *READ 180* students and the perceptions of 4 teachers who taught the *READ 180* curriculum. The theoretical framework that served as a basis for this study was Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which holds that independent thinking is facilitated by developmentally-appropriate instruction. Research questions examined the strengths and weaknesses of the program and its effectiveness on helping the students improve their reading ability. Student scores from the program assessments were examined using a paired samples *t* test and by comparing central tendencies. An analysis showed a 15% increase in students' SRI pre- and posttest scores, noting that 6.67% of students passed the reading SOL. Themes from the teacher interviews indicated that the teachers perceived the training to be sufficient and that the materials and technology were authentic; however, updated curricula materials were needed. The quantitative and qualitative research data were used to generate an evaluation report to share explicit research findings with the school division and parents about the programs' successes and needs for improvement. Social change was supported by evaluating a reading intervention program designed to increase middle school students' reading ability.

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# Dedication

This project study is dedicated to the loving memory of the matriarch of my family, Violet Mary Etta Lyons Pittman Kittrell. She was with me when I started this journey, but unfortunately earned her heavenly wings before I finished. Undoubtedly, the love, support, and prayers that she provided contributed to my success. I am so blessed to have had such a wonderful grandmother.

Likewise, the sacrifices of a parent so often go without recognition. My mother, Jacqueline Elaine Pittman, is the author of my story. I am who I am because she is who she is. This single parent sacrificed so much to allow me to follow the dreams she had for me. She did not send me to an Ivy League school nor feed me with a silver spoon, but she has always loved, believed in, supported and PRAYED for me. She will forever be my alpha.

Finally, I dedicate this study to my children, Renoldo Jr. and Rian. It is for them that I breathe. May their tomorrows be brighter than any light that has ever shone upon me.

# Acknowledgments

A heartfelt thank you goes to my two biggest fans, my mother (Jacqueline) and husband (Renoldo Sr.). Thank you for always encouraging me and for filling in the gaps while I pursued this degree. I could not imagine enduring this process without the love and support of the two of you.

Additionally, I must acknowledge the "dream team" family that God blessed me to be born into. We are inseparable and I am so thankful for them, especially my aunts and uncles. Each of whom has shown me different perspectives on life. Through their guidance, I have learned that success is possible regardless of where you come from, to be true to who I am, the importance of education, to laugh through my tears, and the value of having a humble spirit.

As educators, when we teach with our hearts, we can never judge how lasting our impact will be on the students that we serve. Mrs. Teresa Greene, my high school business teacher and Dr. Demetria Tyner, my college advisor and professor provided not only valuable instruction, but also life lessons that helped to build my future. These ladies certainly left a lasting impression on me.

I must also thank my very best friends, Ava and Naomi. I am thankful for their encouragement, prayers, and listening ears. When I was frustrated, confused, and unmotivated, it was the two of them that I contacted to encourage me to keep pushing. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my doctoral partner, Dr. Monica Reckley, because she paved the way for me. She made the mistakes, took the hits, and then shared her experiences with me in hopes that I did not face the same challenges.

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## Introduction

### Federal and State Level Accountability for Student Achievement

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 initiated the pressures of standardized testing (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Teachers, administrators, and school officials became more accountable for ensuring that students receive an equitable and quality education (Ballard & Bates, 2008). Prior to NCLB, the standards of learning (SOL) tests required to graduate affected the student, not the school (Dee & Jacob, 2011). As of 2008, policymakers were using standardized test results, such as SOLs, in an attempt to determine which school divisions were fulfilling their obligation to provide quality education to students and which were not (Ballard & Bates, 2008). Under NCLB, student achievement is measured through state standardized testing that mandates proof of adequate yearly progress (AYP; Hoff, 2009). In addition to scoring at least 400 on the SOLs, making AYP also requires that 95% of all students within a school are tested in mathematics and reading (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

SOL in Virginia was approved by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in 1995, and the first tests were given in 1998 (VDOE, 2012). The SOL measures the Commonwealth's expectations for student learning in Grades K-12 in the areas of mathematics, reading, technology, science, history, foreign language, the fine arts, driver education, health, and physical education (VDOE, 2012). In order for schools in Virginia to be fully accredited as set by the VDOE, 70% of students must be proficient in math, science, history, and reading (VDOE, 2012), as measured by SOL assessments. When a

school is facing accreditation risks, the state allowed a school division to average student SOL results over a 3-year period to show that standards have been met (VDOE, 2012).

Before and during the initial implementation of the SOL, students in the local setting were excelling on local benchmarks but not on the SOLs (Walker, 2010). Benchmarks are common assessments given twice per year, prior to the SOLs that are given at the end of the year, to measure student progress. Benchmark scoring is on the standard scoring scale of 0 to100 with 70% or higher measured as passing. The state requires students to score a minimum of 400 on a scale of 0 to 600 on the SOLs in order to meet requirements. In addition to different scoring measures, it was also discovered that the tests were not cohesive. There was not a direct correlation between the rigor, the format, or the verbiage of the two tests (N. Dunbar, personal communication, July 11, 2013).

The benchmarks were not as rigorous as the SOLs, which made it significantly easier for the students to pass. Since benchmark tests are locally generated, the vocabulary incorporated was not as high a level as the vocabulary that students saw on the state generated SOL tests. The SOLs included vocabulary that students may not have had exposure to, so the introduction of strong vocabulary became an important part of teacher instruction (N. Dunbar, personal communication, December 27, 2013). This problem was addressed by aligning the benchmarks and SOLs to ensure that commonalities such as rigor and vocabulary were in place to properly measure student success.

**Eligibility for Federal Funding for Resources**

Schools are eligible to receive Title I funds when at least 40% of students are from economically disadvantaged families. Economically disadvantaged students are from low-income families, in foster homes, or neglected, living in families receiving temporary assistance from state governments (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Title I funding is provided by the federal government to aid in closing the achievement gap between low-income and other students by providing remedial instruction to assist all disadvantaged children to reach challenging state academic standards required of all children (Scott & U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011). Title I provides support to ensure that all children meet rigorous state educational standards (Scott & U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011), and often, financial resources associated with Title I are used to target deficiencies in the area of reading.

For this study, one school was chosen as the unit of analysis to determine the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program in this context. This inner-city middle school in Virginia serves Grades 6 through 8 and has received Title I funds since July of 2012 because it serves an at-risk student population, where 84% of students received free and reduced lunch in the school year 2010-2011 data . There are approximately 950 students, with the dominant race being African American at 86% (817 students), followed by Caucasian American at 11% (104 students), and Hispanic American at 3% (29 students). Of these percentages 41% (389 students) are Title I students. With regards to academic proficiencies, pass rates on SOL assessments were 59% in reading, 72% in math, 79% in history, and 69% in science in the 2012 school year (VDOE, 2013). While the school's

3-year average has allowed the school to remain fully accredited, there is need for improvement.

**Reading Proficiency Challenges and the Need for Intervention**

One of the primary areas of weakness nationally is reading, with 28% of middle school students reading below grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Research has shown that middle school students who are not reading on grade level are likely 2 or more years behind in reading ability; henceforth, their struggle with reading probably did not start in middle school (Cartwright, 2012). As a result of this, they are unable to meet state testing standards, which are written at grade level. Reading is also particularly critical to success across disciplines, as approximately 25% of students are not meeting state standards in math, science, and social studies due to insufficient reading skills (VDOE, 2012). The need to improve student performance on the reading SOL standardized test prompted school divisions in Virginia to help students increase their reading ability (Cartwright, 2012). Evidence of gaps in proficiency has led to schools around the nation implementing a variety of practices to successfully meet the criteria set to pass standardized tests required by the state (Winter et al., 2010).

Many local studies suggested that insufficient vocabulary plays a big part in the lack of student reading success (Flannigan, 2012). The SOL assessments include vocabulary to which students may not have had exposure, so the introduction of strong vocabulary has become an important part of teacher instruction (N. Dunbar, personal communication, December 27, 2013). Comprehension, fluency, language differences, word reading, and definition depiction are also believed to contribute to unsuccessful

middle school readers (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008).

The need to evaluate the remedial programs in place to enhance student reading has become urgent. *READ 180* is a popular reading intervention program that has been implemented in many of Virginia's school divisions.

## Definition of the Problem

### Local Problem

The division's search for methods of improving student reading led to the implementation of the *READ 180* program. While *READ 180* was the chosen program, other reading programs such as *Voyager, Soar* to *Success*, and *Horizons* were examined by the committee of school division leaders. *READ 180* was chosen because research supported the success of this program in comparison to others (R. Shirley, personal communication, July 11, 2013). The *READ 180* program was evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness towards improving student reading through the comparison of the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) pre- and posttest results, interviewing teachers, and determining if students taught using the program met the state standards as measured by the SOL assessments.

The primary goal of the *READ 180* program is to raise reading achievement for struggling readers (L. Scott, personal communication, April 10, 2013). The SRI is a computer-based program that assesses student reading and provides immediate data on students (Scholastic Read 180, 2009). SOLs are the public school's standardized testing program that provides learning and achievement expectations for specific subjects in Grades K-12 in the Commonwealth of Virginia (VDOE, 2012). Based upon the

information shared by one of the principals, the concerns that supported the implementation of *READ 180* were the increase of rigor in the testing standards and increasing weakness in student reading (N. Dunbar, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

**Larger Population or Educational Setting**

The need to pass standardized tests has left students around the nation struggling to meet the criteria (Winter et al., 2010). School division personnel have been investigating various indicators to determine where the problem with reading lies with today's students. A study of school divisions in the state has suggested that deficits in vocabulary are intrinsically related to the lack of student reading success (Flannigan, 2012). Other contributors to unsuccessful middle school readers that have been identified are comprehension, fluency, language differences, word reading, and definition description (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Although students in this division were excelling in local benchmarks, there was a need to improve on state standardized tests (Walker, 2010). The division began searching for methods for improvement and soon after implemented the *READ 180* program. The ultimate goal of this project study is to determine if the program is meeting the academic needs of students to improve reading skills.

## Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study was to determine if the *READ 180* program could increase grade level reading skills for middle school students who were previously reading one or two grade levels below. Addressing this problem has many benefits for

the schools and the school division. Determining the value this program has on the improvement of student reading skills could bring about constructive social change in that the local environment may see higher student success as measured by the SOL reading scores (N. Dunbar, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Students who are successful readers are less likely to be retained and are more prepared for future reading courses. A significant increase in reading achievement could ultimately lead to an increased graduation rate for the school division (R. Shirley, personal communication, July 11, 2013).

Local school officials have expressed a direct need to evaluate *READ 180*. This has been a topic of discussion in quarterly principal meetings and superintendent cabinet meetings for the past 3 years due to the expense of the program and the need for higher student success in reading (N. Dunbar, personal communication, December 17, 2013). While the initial results of the program have been encouraging since its implementation, the need to determine if the benefits still remained (L. Wiggins, personal communication, January 13, 2014). Additionally, the school division favors evaluating programs every few years. It is similar to a checks and balances process (M. Goodwin, personal communication, January 22, 2014). The mission of this school division is to make certain that students achieve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become lifetime learners and useful citizens. Programs such as *READ 180* are just one way of fostering student success in this endeavor.

In addition to the division's overall mission, the U.S. Department of Education (2010) has expressed the need to verify the effects of the *READ 180* program. Virginia's

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) conducted a study of third graders across the state during the 2010-2011 school year. The purpose of this audit was to evaluate reading proficiency and comprehension of third grade students since many of Virginia's children were not reading on grade level (Cartwright, 2012). After the results of the study were reviewed, one of the four recommendations for Virginia's schools was to support well-run, effective intervention and remedial programs (Cartwright, 2012). The other three recommendations were to incorporate small group differentiated instruction, to incorporate response to intervention as a reading strategy to address reading deficiencies, and to provide on-going support to teachers most critical to the effectiveness of a classroom reading program (Cartwright, 2012).

While there is existing literature that identifies the need for students to be fluent readers, there is a scarcity of research to identify programs that have proven to be effective in fostering this success. The purpose of the project study is to describe stakeholder's perceptions of the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program and investigate whether the program is improving the reading skills of students. Success has been defined as students increasing one or more performance levels in the program and successfully passing their grade level reading SOL. Given the need to have fluent readers at school age and in adulthood, it is important to find programs that enhance students' reading ability.

There are two key issues that prompted the need to improve student reading at the middle school level. Standardized testing and low reading ability are the concerns that encouraged the need to improve student reading (N. Dunbar, personal communication,

March 15, 2013).

**Standardized Testing**

Standardized testing entered public schools a little over 2 decades ago (Winter et al., 2010). Schools have been using testing scores to motivate stakeholders to pursue excellence, make decisions that affect the school environment, and in many cases to determine if a child should be promoted (Weaver, 2011). Standardized testing in the state of Virginia is conducted through the SOL (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). These results are used to measure student achievement and school quality (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009). The students who are a part of the *READ 180* program are at risk of failing the SOL in the area of reading (L. Scott, personal communication, April 16, 2013). Research has shown that students reading two or more grade levels behind have a difficult time passing the standardized tests for the state of Virginia (VDOE, 2012). If the needs of those students are met by improving their reading ability, the gap in students being left behind could decrease. Students might become better readers and more successful at passing the state test.

In order to accommodate the demands of standardized testing, available resources are being adjusted. With the focus that NCLB placed on specific subgroups, it would only make sense to provide students who are less likely to meet targets with supplemental educational material to increase the potential of proficiency (Kreig, 2011). However, this increases the chance of funds being misappropriated to accommodate certain subgroups. Teachers who are stronger and more acclaimed may be given the struggling student, leaving the weaker teachers for the remaining students (Kreig, 2011). With math and

reading as the primary subjects that determine if a school meets AYP, resources may be shifted to those subjects (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed (2009) expressed that teachers are placing focus only on the content that will bring about student proficiency as a result of standardized testing.

Standardized testing is respected because research supports that it brings forth higher student success, but there are studies that also support negative outcomes (Winter et al., 2010). The penalty that is associated with students not meeting the mark on standardized testing is one of the primary reasons that *READ 180* was implemented. The reading specialist at this middle school reported that the program awards students who are not proficient readers with additional instructional time to improve those skills (K. Settles, personal communication, May 28, 2013).

**Low Reading Ability**

School officials have expressed a direct need to nurture better student readers (R. Shirley, personal communication, July 11, 2013). The mission of this school division is to make certain that students achieve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become lifetime learners and useful citizens. In order to support this mission, the division found the need to verify the effects of successful reading programs (R. Shirley, personal communication, July 11, 2013). The concerns with student reading extend outside of the school division. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) has also expressed the need to find ways to support effective reading initiatives. As previously stated, the JLARC study conducted by the state of Virginia in every third grade classroom in the state during the 2010-2011 school year evaluated reading proficiency and comprehension of third grade

students (Cartwright, 2012). One of the four recommendations for Virginia's schools after the results of the study were reviewed was to support well-run, effective intervention and remedial programs in elementary and middle school (Cartwright, 2012).

Reading has been declared as one of the core areas of study for schools in the United States (Kay, 2009). According to Mucherah and Yoder (2008), productive citizens must be good readers. Employers are less likely to hire employees that demonstrate literacy difficulties (Comrie & Murray, 2009). Reading receives a considerable amount of focus because only 31% of learners in the United States in Grades 8 through 12 are proficient in reading (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012). Based on standardized testing results, students who struggle in reading are students who are English as Second Language Learners, Special Education, or economically disadvantaged. Conclusive statistics could not be found to compare data that excluded the three subgroups on a national level. Regardless, *READ 180* is designed to reach all learners to increase their reading ability, but specifically to support students who fall in those categories. The *READ 180* program provides reading remediation for students that will help prepare them for success on all SOLs, not just reading (K. Settles, personal communication, April 16, 2013).

There are many opinions as to why students struggle in reading. The lack of comprehension skills has been identified as the leading concern in reading (Glenberg, 2011). Good readers use comprehensive learning objectives to synthesize, draw conclusions, analyze, and compare and contrast (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009). While there are a number of ways to organize or classify learning objectives, Bloom's Taxonomy of

Learning is one of the most widely used (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009). Bloom's taxonomy is best recognized as a multitiered diagram used to encourage students to aim higher. Knowledge, comprehension, and application are on the lower levels, while the highest three levels are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009). Bloom's taxonomy requires the use of objectives such as predicting, summarizing, interrogating the text, and questioning author's purpose in order to understand what they read (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009). When students are unable to comprehend at the higher levels of the taxonomy, they are likely to struggle in reading (Glenberg, 2011).

Very poor readers must have their phonological skills reinforced because the failure to recognize speech sounds affects word recognition, spelling, and vocabulary expansion (Hansen, Collins, & Warschauer, 2009). Vocabulary is conceivably the most critical underlined aspect of general knowledge and reading. Thus, individuals with high vocabulary are less likely to be poor readers (Elbro, 2010). Students who lack a strong vocabulary and sufficient comprehension skills are highly likely to struggle in reading.

The reading curriculum requires teachers to teach a large number of objectives while following a pacing guide. A pacing guide is a time-management tool to identify the objectives and standards to be taught during a specific week (VDOE, 2013). It safeguards the teaching and assessment of every standard and objective in the classroom. The objectives define the general knowledge, understandings, and skills that are measured by the standards of learning tests, but teachers often feel that they are forced to move through the objectives too quickly (N. Dunbar, May 18, 2015). While the objectives provide a guide to teaching, the pacing guide leaves no time to nurture and

enhance basic skills, such as language, visual processing skills, memory, and reasoning that many students may not have grasped in previous grades (Rose, 2009). Regardless of the complications that may have led to reading deficiencies, students are still required to meet the demands of standardized testing in each grade level.

The purpose of this mixed-methods project study is to determine the effectiveness of *READ 180*, a reading remediation program initiated in a local middle school in Virginia. The concerns that supported the implementation of *READ 180* were the increase of rigor in the testing standards and increasing weakness in student reading. A method that can be used to determine the effectiveness of an intervention is to examine test scores (Giambo, 2010). I examined the reading SOL scores of students in this study.

## Guiding Evaluation Objectives

Objective-oriented evaluations use goals and objectives to measure the value of programs (Zohrabi, 2011). The evaluation objectives for *READ 180* are as follows:

1. To collect teacher opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of the *READ 180* program through one-on-one interviews.
2. To document change in the performance of the program participants on the SRI test.
3. To document student participant performance on the reading section of the Standards of Learning.

Past research involving the *READ 180* program has been minimal in the school division. Teachers have been required to analyze student growth on all standardized tests and common assessments (which includes *READ 180*) to drive their instruction.

However, a study of just *READ 180* students has not been done in the school division.

## Definition of Terminology

The terms below will be seen frequently throughout the study.

*Adequate yearly progress (AYP)*: A standard used to determine if a school, school division, or the state met federally approved academic goals mandated by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA/NCLB; (VDOE, 2012).

*Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*: Emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. The law authorizes federally funded education programs that are administered by the states. In 2002, Congress amended ESEA and reauthorized it as the NCLB (Riddle, 2006).

*Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)*: SRI is a reading assessment program that provides instantaneous, actionable data on students' reading levels and progress over time. SRI assists the educator to differentiate instruction, make significant interventions, predict progress toward state tests, and show accountability (Scholastic, 2009).

*Standards of Learning (SOL)*: The SOL for Virginia Public Schools set minimum requirements for what students should know and be able to perform at the end of each grade or course in English, history/social science, mathematics, technology, science, foreign language, the fine arts, driver education, and health/physical education (VDOE, 2012).

*Supplemental educational services (SES)*: Free tutoring and remediation provided to students in subjects such as reading, language arts, and math on weekends, before or

after school, or in the summer (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

*Title I*: Title I is a federal program established as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) for the underprivileged population such as ethnic and racial groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students (Scott & U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011).

*Zone of proximal development*: Zone of proximal development (ZPD), Vygotsky's theory, is the variance between what a learner can do without assistance and what he or she can do with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978).

## Significance of the Problem

Students throughout the United States are continuing to show deficiencies in reading (Zhu, Loadman, Lomax, & Moore, 2010). Many students are reaching middle school two to three grade levels behind in reading ability, even as schools are struggling to find ways to raise student reading success. School officials are implementing reading remediation programs, hiring reading personnel, and searching for research based strategies that foster reading success to bring about better achievement for students (Cartwright, 2012). The weight placed on standardized testing creates additional barriers for students to meet (Winter et al., 2010). In order for schools in Virginia to be fully accredited, 70% of students must be proficient in math, science, history, and reading (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). As a result of these challenges, educators continue to look for successful programs that will aid in student reading success.

Supplementary instruction was introduced to students who were below proficient

in reading in the 2011-2012 school year. Since that time, a new principal has been appointed; however, the focus on improving the reading skills of students to improve test scores in all subject areas has not changed (J. Thurston, personal communication, August 5, 2014). While the school has managed to remain accredited based on the average of 3 school years, the gradual decline each school year is a clear indicator that students are struggling in reading. Students in many of the subgroups are unable to meet state reading requirements. Results from 2013-2014 school year indicated that the highest deficiencies in scores are with black males (16%), English Language Learners (31.3%), and students with special needs (39.1%). The principal at the school when supplementary instruction was initially implemented explained that in order to remain accredited in reading, the students in those subgroups must show improved scores on the reading SOL. The purpose of *READ 180* is to target students in the at-risk categories and boost their reading skills to make them more successful on the Reading SOL (L. Scott, personal communication, August 30, 2011).

Past research involving the *READ 180* program has been minimal in the school division. Teachers have been required to analyze student growth on all standardized tests and common assessments (which includes *READ 180*) to drive their instruction. However, a study of just *READ 180* students had not been done in the school division. Scholastic Corporation, the publishers of *READ 180*, has incorporated a wealth of research to justify the benefit the program has on student reading. A compendium of research was written in 2011. The *READ 180* Compendium of Research is a collection of more than a decade of scientific research on *READ 180* in school divisions all over the

country. *READ 180* currently exists in over 40,000 classrooms and serves a million students each day in the United States (Scholastic, 2009). *READ 180* was found to have positive effects on comprehension and overall literacy achievement for student learners; however, conclusions could not be drawn about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of *READ 180* on students with learning disabilities (Lang et al., 2009).

While the Scholastic Incorporated (Scholastic) has provided some research about the value of the *READ 180* program as remediation for struggling readers, in order to provide data specifically about the students in our school division, additional research was needed. Students who pass the reading SOL may not be as likely to be retained and essentially better prepared for the next level reading course. This program evaluation of the *READ 180* program could also indirectly increase the graduation rate in the division.

## Guiding Research Questions

### Qualitative Research Questions

One of the guiding research questions in this study was to determine the effectiveness of the program from the stakeholder's perspective. To gauge stakeholder perspectives, interviews were conducted to address the following question:

What do teachers affiliated with *READ 180* identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

### Quantitative Research Questions

The broad quantitative research question was the following: How did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program? An analysis of the SRI pre- and posttest results

measuring student growth as a result of the program was done. A paired sample *t* test was used to test the hypotheses.

$H_0$: There will be change in *READ 180* participants' reading achievement, as measured by the program's pretest and posttest.

In an attempt to determine a change in the program participant's performance, I used the pretest and posttest scores to conduct a multiple statistics analyses. By doing so, valid data were generated on the change in student performance for each grade level and overall. The scores were compared across several indicators including measures of central tendency.

Additionally, a second question was researched. What impact does *READ 180* have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by SOL scores? This research question determined if students in the program met the minimum standards on the reading SOL.

## Review of Literature

In this section, I discuss the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and how this framework directly relates to the problems that led to the establishment of the *READ 180* program. Upon reaching saturation from the literature gathered, the need to evaluate the *READ 180* program will be justified.

The current review of literature includes peer-reviewed journal articles found in the Walden University library database. To ensure that the literature review addressed the principles of this study the following search terms were used: *reading deficiencies, standardized testing, zone of proximal development, poor reading comprehension,*

*remedial reading, reading fluency, reading vocabulary, response to intervention, reading software, best teaching practices,* and *scaffolding*. To examine the need to complete a project study of *READ 180*, over 60 sources have been used to maximize knowledge and understanding as it relates to the reading success of middle school students. Saturation was reached with the information gathered from the cited sources. Walden University's guidelines for completing a literature review were met.

## Conceptual Framework

### Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

The framework that informs this study is Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD. ZPD is defined as the variance between what a learner can do when guided and what can be done alone (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). The entire language approach to teaching reading and writing supports this notion. When children interact with others at home and at school, they develop models of communication and expression (Burns, 2011). Burns (2011) believed that this social use of language is the basis for literacy. Vygotsky and other educational theorists explained that children should be given experiences within their current level of understanding in order to advance their learning (as cited in Levykh, 2008). Levykh (2008) supported Vygotsky's theory that when students are given experiences within their comfort level or ZPD, they are encouraged to increase their individual level of learning. The ZPD is a process that reflects consistent change in the expressive connections of all participants. Levykh found that establishing and maintaining the ZPD facilitated successful learning and fostered continued development of a child's consciousness. The components of ZPD are consistent with the components

of the *READ 180* program in that they involve identifying a student's prior knowledge, the introduction of new concept, and the connection of the new concept with the prior knowledge.

**Prior knowledge.** Identifying a student's prior knowledge, discovery of what a learner already knows, is the first and most important step in applying ZPD (Shabani et al., 2010). Before a teacher can successfully determine where a student needs to go, he or she must first identify the student's current level of understanding. Through the activation of prior knowledge, students become motivated to learn more, and the teachers can easily introduce new concepts (McNamera et al., 2011). Common classroom practices that spark prior knowledge can be activated in many forms. A couple of examples are Think-Pair-Share and the use of graphic organizers. Think-Pair-Share involves the teacher posing a question, allowing students to think about the question, pairing students to discuss their answers, and then sharing with the entire class. Graphic organizers are used in a variety of ways. One of the most common uses is the incorporation of synonyms and pictures to help students remember unknown vocabulary and/or content. ZPD requires the activation of prior knowledge, but the method chosen to activate that knowledge is in the hands of the teacher (Shabani et al., 2010).

**Introduction of a new concept.** The second category of ZPD requires the teacher to introduce a new concept and build knowledge by helping students progress from what they currently know to what they should know. Teaching new concepts and ideas should allow participation and engagement to flourish in every student (DeLeon, 2008). There are a variety of ways to teach students in a classroom. Some of the best

teaching practices include incorporating the use of technology, interactive lessons, and student grouping (Jinyuan, 2011). Discovering the best ways of teaching to meet the needs of each student in the classroom is the challenge teachers face. When students develop the understanding of a new skill or concept, the second step in ZPD has been accomplished (DeLeon, 2008).

**Connection between prior knowledge and new concept.** The final step in ZPD is the guidance of students to connect the new concept learned to prior knowledge. The art of teaching requires that connections be made along the way. Each new concept should be tied to a concept that was previously learned. Students' interests are sparked when they can make those connections and they become more motivated to learn (McNamera et al., 2011).

Vygotsky believed that ZPD reflects the actual achievement and the potential achievement of a learner (as cited in Padhan & Singh, 2010). This achievement can be affected by teacher guidance and support from peers. Vygotsky further supported the significance of culture and social framework for cognitive growth (as cited in Shabani et al., 2010). The teacher should facilitate cognitive growth of students by engaging students in activities that allow them to explore and discover. School learning should be tied in with "real life" experiences for children (Levykh, 2008).

The concept of ZPD has been expanded since Vygotsky's original creation. A more current term that describes ZPD is scaffolding. By successfully applying ZPD, it is important to know where a child is currently functioning, where that child will be in the future, and how to best assist the child in understanding advanced concepts (McNamera

et al., 2011). Scaffolding evolves because it helps aim instruction within a child's ZPD to promote learning. Scaffolding involves motivating or enlisting the child's interest in a task, simplifying the task to make it more achievable for a child, providing some assistance to help the child focus on achieving the goal, openly indicating differences between the child's work and the desired result, reducing frustration, modeling, and clearly defining the expectations of the task at hand. It takes place when an adult guides a child's learning with engrossed questions and constructive interactions (Levykh, 2008). The guidance is then slowly removed as the learner requires less assistance; however, the steps leading to this are small and directed by the individual child's ability. Scaffolding is further described as the way an instructor guides a student's learning (Bamberger & Cahill, 2013). Based on this definition, several instructional programs have been created using scaffolding as the foundation.

Through the utilization of scaffolding or ZPD, traditional assessment, instruction, intervention, and remediation are united to enhance students' learning (Shabani et al., 2010). These same components are prominent in the *READ 180* program. *READ 180* uses a variety of instruments to assess students to identify their immediate needs and allow teachers and the software to adjust instruction based on those needs. Data produced from the program allows the teacher to remediate and provide interventions based on the individual needs of each student (Scholastic, 2009). Vygotsky's theory on ZPD described how children cultivate intentional control of every day concepts as a result of their social interaction with others, and this was the basis for their cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1962). The instructional model of the *READ 180* program provides a

simplistic method of organizing instruction and class activities through whole-group, small group, and individualized lessons. Students learn by using hands on approaches that involve more reading and real world experiences, with fewer lectures being persistent in achieving (Marzano, 2013). *READ 180* encompasses the same mode of learning.

*READ 180* is designed to raise reading achievement for struggling readers from Grades 4 through 12 with an inclusive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. The program is intended for any student reading two or more years below grade level to enhance reading skills using adaptive technology to customize instruction for students and provide governing data for differentiation to teachers. *READ 180* was designed to push students toward independent learning with rigorous, grade-level text. The theory is that a program with such magnitude will raise the bar for students academically by adding more rigor, more writing, more factual, and more independent practice with text that will lead to an enhanced path to college and career readiness (Scholastic, 2009). In summary, meeting students where their needs are guides them to become independent thinkers and doers as supported by ZPD.

**Lexile Scale**

Knowledge of vocabulary has one of the greatest influences on reading comprehension (DeVries, 2012). When students recognize and understand the vocabulary, they are more likely to understand the text. Yildrim et al. (2011) reported that vocabulary and reading comprehension are correlated. Their research determined that a large connection exists between vocabulary and text comprehension (Yildrim et al.,

2011). According to these findings, it is important to know where students are contextually in their reading and to provide materials that meet them there. The Lexile framework for reading is an educational instrument used to measure reading ability and a text level complexity using the same measure, which is known as the Lexile Scale (Scholastic, 2009). The Lexile Scale is a prominent component of the *READ 180* program because it aids in determining a student's reading ability. Providing instruction based on a student's current reading ability helps to identify weaknesses and meet the specific needs of a student (Hiebert, 2009).

The foundation of both ZPD range and Lexile range supports student reading growth if students read books that are level appropriate for them. Lexile Scale is one of the incorporated components of *READ 180* that support Vygotsky's ZPD theory. It is considered the most accurate way to match readers to text (Hiebert, 2012). Software programs used to identify the Lexile analyzes the frequency of words and the length of sentences to assign a Lexile measure (Glasswell & Ford, 2012). Both researchers support the notion that the Lexile measure of a text can assist with shaping the appropriate level of rigor for a reader. The text must not be too difficult that it frustrates the reader, yet challenging enough to encourage growth (Glasswell & Ford, 2012; Hiebert, 2012). *READ 180* assigns text to students based on their current reading level. Their current reading level is derived from the SRI assessment.

The benefits of the Lexile Scale are plentiful, but serious concerns have also been raised. Krashen (2001) contended that the level of difficulty in the reading rating system confines a child's choice and forces them to read books that are not of interest to them.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the formula to determine the Lexile rating is flawed (Krashen, 2001). Krashen is not alone in his reproaches of the Lexile Scale. Hiebert (2009) noted that minor deviations in punctuation resulted in substantial reclassification on the Lexile Scale. The expense associated with the use of the Lexile inventory tools is one of the disadvantages of its use. MetaMetrics, the creator of the Lexile Framework, reserved the processing of readability as intellectual property, requiring consumers, such as educators to pay for their services to attain readability levels (Hiebert, 2009).

While there are many reading remediation programs in place, the need to identify those that meet the individual needs of each student remains (Downing, 2009). Downing (2009) found that students in reading remediation programs acquire reading skills at a faster pace than the anticipated reading amount. Although *READ 180* happens to be a program that uses Lexile measure, there is a scarcity of programs that teach reading comprehension and vocabulary successfully using the Lexile measure (Downing, 2009).

In fact, this scarcity in the identification of programs that address reading comprehension and vocabulary deficiencies in student learning is just another reason why programs such as *READ 180* need to be evaluated for student success. As an element of *READ 180*, the Lexile measure and its connection to ZPD could be an underlining factor in determining the success of the program.

**Response to Intervention**

Furthermore, the response to intervention (RTI) model further supports the notion that students are more successful in reading when their needs are met at their level of comfort. RTI was created under the Individuals with Disabilities Act as a strategy that

would cater to all learners, especially those with learning disabilities (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). RTI is a multilevel system for enhancing student achievement by combining assessment of student progress with progressively intensive intervention (Vaughan & Fuchs, 2003). As important as it is to identify a student's level, it is equally important for teachers to teach to the student's level and for students to be motivated to learn (Huebner, 2010). Students who have positive attitudes and confidence about reading have higher academic success (Kaniuka, 2012). Vygotsky's theory supports this belief that emotions are significant to learning and development (Levykh, 2008). Kaniuka (2012) further noted that students who received assistance in a remedial reading program had enhanced attitudes towards reading. By meeting the individual needs of students, they are placed in their comfort zone, which in turn helps to develop motivated learners.

The basic model for RTI is a multitiered prevention system that includes tiers of intervention that focuses on a student's prior knowledge and strengths (Mellard, McKnight, & Jordan, 2010). While Mellard et al.'s (2010) research supports RTI, it also encourages the tier structures to be in alignment with other initiatives in the school. Students who participate in remedial reading are also required to take their grade level reading course, which recognizes that a single program or initiative alone will not resolve all deficiencies. Reeves et al. (2010) suggested that prevention tiers are successful when targeting the instructional needs of students. Each tier of RTI is supported in the *READ 180* program and is outlined in the next few paragraphs.

**Tier 1.** The first tier includes core instructional intervention that is provided to all

students (Bean & Lillistein, 2012). Strategies such as the constant display of visual tools and assigning a seat in an area with minimal distractions could be in the first tier (Cicek, 2012). Within the first tier, engaging materials, acknowledgment of student effort, and clarification of student understanding takes place during instruction. Assessment may come in the form of short frequent quizzes and posttest analysis with students may take place (Cicek, 2012).

Tier 1 instruction as it relates to *READ 180* includes smaller groups, increase in instructional time, and resources directly linked to the student's instructional level (Scholastic, 2009). As students advance through the *READ 180* program, consistent corrective feedback is provided to the students in the areas of reading, spelling, and comprehension (Scholastic, 2009).

**Tier 2.** The second tier provides targeted or supplemental intervention (Cicek, 2012). Tier 2 instruction typically involves small groups to ensure that learning occurs at an appropriate rate (Bean & Lillistein, 2012). Interventions such as scaffolding and self-monitoring are introduced within this tier of instruction. In some cases, functional behavioral assessments may be put into place since students who typically fall in this tier become problematic with behaviors (Beecher, 2010).

Within this tier, *READ 180* provides initial screening with the SRI test to assess the student's current reading level. Throughout the program, over 40 other detailed reports are generated that allow the teacher to ascertain areas in which students need further intervention (Scholastic, 2009).

**Tier 3.** The third tier includes intensive individual intervention (Beecher, 2010).

Instruction in the third tier typically takes place outside of the classroom and evidence based interventions are incorporated (Cicek, 2012). This tier progressed monitoring toward the referral of Special Education services (Bean & Lillistein, 2012).

Finally, Tier 3 is supported in *READ 180* with the alignment of scientifically validated and research based interventions (Scholastic, 2009). The alignment is derived from 15 key elements of effective literacy programs (Scholastic, 2009).

Student performance should be monitored to provide effective teaching to each individual student during each phase of the tiers of intervention (Electronic Education Report, 2011). The researchers of RTI support the ideals that it solidifies the effectiveness of teaching by identifying areas of deficiency, allowing the teacher to set goals, evaluating progress, and tracking student success over time (Beecher, 2010; Bein & Lillestein, 2012; Cicek, 2010). With the understanding that ZPD defines functions that may not have necessarily matured in students, once the needs of the students have been identified according to the RTI tiers, maturity should take place. *READ 180* supports this notion that students should be met where they are to further enhance their ability.

Students who are in Tier 2 or above are commonly targeted for a reading intervention program (Powers & Mandal, 2011). Reading intervention programs, such as *READ 180,* support the belief that reading programs should be designed to meet the needs of students based on their tier of intervention. Hence, recognizing that all students are not at the same level in their reading ability and implementing steps to foster growth based on individual deficiencies promotes greater success.

**Reading Intervention Software**

While many reading software programs have been implemented in schools, not all of them have been successful (Riddile, 2012). Research has supported that software programs can be very effective to manage student reading, but successful implementation is important (Hansen et al., 2009). Many schools are implementing a variety of programs to ensure that students make annual progress in Reading. Hansen et al.'s (2009) study of reading software found that programs such as the Electronic Bookshelf, Accelerated Reader (AR), and Reading Counts have attempted to address the deficiencies in student reading. While these programs may have provided successes, high quality implementation is very important (Hansen et al., 2009). It is imperative that students are effectively using all components of the program's design. Skipping steps or altering the process at all could cause a program that could otherwise be very successful to fail.

According to Riddile (2012), successful literacy programs should be in place for today's students to address comprehension deficits. Software programs are the best way to teach students to simulate while reading (Glenberg, 2011). Glenberg (2011) reported that the implementation of web-based programs that allow students to manipulate using the computer teaches a fundamental reading strategy. Reading management programs that use software to inspire, direct, and gage students' independent reading are successful and widely used across the country to improve reading comprehension (Hansen et al., 2009). Research supports that these programs are geared toward promoting higher student success on standardized testing, but most programs have not undergone evaluation to provide evidence that students are more successful.

This study of *READ 180* may determine the program's effectiveness on student academic success on state testing. Based on the results of recent studies and school data indicating that students are successfully completing the program, I believe there is some success in the *READ 180* program. Further analysis of standardized testing data and input from teachers affiliated with the program directed the study and validated the program's benefit to middle school reading students. The need to identify reading intervention programs that work remains of dire need. The indication that reading software successfully encourages reading is prevalent, but research for individual programs such as *READ 180* still needs to be addressed.

**Oral Language Development**

Just as reading comprehension and vocabulary are common denominators in student reading success, so is oral language development. Barriers in oral language may surface from a variety of areas such as language differences, phonemic awareness, or just lack of common practice (Baker, Stoolmiller, Good III, & Baker, 2011). In a study conducted on developmental reading, fluency in oral reading seemed to have higher cogency with reading comprehension than other comprehension measures (Ari, 2011). In another study that targeted English Language Learners, it was found that comprehension is affected by oral reading fluency across languages (Baker et al., 2011). Due to deficiencies in reading fluency, programs such as *READ 180* that target this deficit may increase student reading if proven to be successful. This research supports the foundation that fluency is strongly associated to comprehension. Identifying programs that will accelerate both reading fluency and comprehension need to be researched with evidence

to support its success for students.

To further substantiate the notion that fluent readers experience less difficulty in reading comprehension, Wise et al.'s (2010) study results indicated that the strongest predictor of reading comprehension suggests that real-word oral reading fluency may be an effective technique for identifying likely reading comprehension difficulties. Results from another study on reading comprehension and reading fluency supported that as students grow more efficient in the number of words they can speak correctly; their level of comprehension also increases (Neddenriep et al., 2011). Additional research remains necessary to support the efficiency of remedial reading programs to support oral language development.

**Program Evaluation**

A program evaluation is defined as a methodical process of data collection and analyses used to answer questions concerning programs, happenings, and policies. Interaction with stakeholders is necessary to evaluate their opinions. Stakeholders are the participants and staff associated with the program. Potential barriers to program evaluations are time and resources.

According to Spaulding (2008), the three major reasons to carry out a program evaluation are to gain knowledge, make improvement, or for decision-making. Evaluations conducted to make a decision focus on the level to which the program's objectives and goals have been met. Knowledge based evaluations focus on how the program works and how participants are affected as a result of the program, while improvement aligned evaluations search for the strengths and weakness of a program

(Spaulding, 2008). The need to evaluate the *READ 180* program encompasses each of the major reasons for conducting an evaluation.

To determine the type of program evaluation required, the goal of the evaluations must first be identified. Three of the commonly used forms of program evaluations are expertise, participant, and objective (Spaulding, 2008). Generally, objective-based evaluations are used to determine if the goals of a program are being met. Experience based-evaluations are carried out by an expert in the field to provide their view. When evaluations are participant focused, the program participants' needs are the focal point. This *READ 180* program evaluation is objective based.

**Data collection.** Data collection analyses and reporting can be formative or summative (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Formative assessments consists of fluid feedback that is immediately taken into consideration and reports that are usually brief and low risk (Morgenlander et al., 2009). Contrastingly, summative evaluations are generated at the end of the program and are used to determine if goals have been met. Summative evaluations can also be used to conclude the participant satisfaction, to determine effectiveness of a program, and to determine if a program should be changed or continued (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Summative evaluation data were gathered for this project study that measured a learner's development at a particular time. *READ 180* aims to improve student reading ability; hence, a summative evaluation would assess any improvement of reading as a result of this intervention.

## Implications for Project

Upon the completion of this *READ 180* project study, a compilation of the results

will be shared with the school and division leaders. In the form of a summative narrative, the data results could provide clarity as to the effectiveness of the program. Determining the program's effectiveness could inform future decision making concerning the future outcome of *READ 180*. Should the project evaluation completely validate the *READ 180* program, its continuation at the middle school level may continue (N. Dunbar, personal communication, April 19, 2013). The project study could find that adjustments need to be made to ensure proper implementation of the program to warrant its effectiveness. Finally, results could find *READ 180* to be unsuccessful and may warrant discontinuation at the middle school level within the school division.

## Transition Statement and Summary

The results of this study may be used for decision-making purposes at one local middle school. The *READ 180* program was implemented to address the low reading ability of students. Local and professional literature was reviewed with high focus on standardized testing and reading weaknesses. In addition, a portion of the literature review examined the framework deemed most appropriate for the study: Vygotsky's ZPD. Literature related to the Lexile scale, response to intervention, and reading intervention software was also explored due to the relevancy to *READ 180*.

The results may help to inform the schools as to the success of *READ 180* at the middle school level in increasing reading performance through the results of the SOLs, SRI, and interviews from stakeholders. If success is found, the recommendation to continue funding will be made. However, should the project study find the program to be ineffective, discontinuation may be recommended.

The following section provides a description of the methodology of the project study. Factors such as the research design and the sample of participants are included in this section. In the next chapter, I will share the data collection and the process of analyzing the collected data.

Section 2: The Methodology

## Introduction

The purpose of this project study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program, which was implemented into the local schools to aid in addressing student reading deficiencies. The effectiveness of *READ 180* was determined by analyzing SRI pre- and posttest data to identify changes in student reading ability. In addition, the reading SOL scores of the *READ 180* program participants were analyzed to identify the percentages of participants who met state standards. The opinions of the teachers associated with the program were also used to evaluate the effectiveness through one-on-one interviews. Within this section, a rationale to support the use of a mixed method approach has been provided. In addition, I describe the sample and setting, the role of the researcher, and the method of data collection and analysis of results.

## Research Approach

Evaluations of programs are done to answer questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of a program using a logical method of collecting and analyzing information (Spaulding, 2008). This approach is used when there is a need to determine the value of a program and make commendations to make the program more successful.

Spaulding (2008) noted that an objective or outcome based evaluation requires the evaluator to focus on a program's objectives to determine if they are being met. According to the reading specialist at one of the schools, the objectives of *READ 180* are to improve the student reading of reluctant readers through technology, whole and small group teacher directed instruction, and independent reading practice (K. Settles, personal

communication, July 15, 2013). Evaluating the *READ 180* objectives to determine if student reading has improved helped to identify the value of this program. While objective based evaluations can be conducted simultaneously as the programs' activities are transpiring, in this study, I evaluated the *READ 180* program following its conclusion at the end of the school year.

The following evaluation goals were the conclusion points for this project study:

1. To gather teacher views of the advantages and disadvantages of the *READ 180* program via one-on-one interviews.
2. To document change in the performance of the program participants on the SRI test.
3. To document student participation performance on the reading section of the SOLs.

Summative evaluation data were gathered for this project study to measure a learner's development at a particular time. The purpose of summative evaluation data is to produce information that can be used to make decisions about the overall success of the intervention (Spaulding, 2008). *READ 180* aims to improve student reading ability; hence, a summative evaluation would assess any improvement of reading as a result of this intervention. A summary of the research data as well as final thoughts of the researcher have been provided to school and division personnel at the completion of the evaluation in the form of conclusion points.

Quantitatively, the outcome is whether students show improvement on the SRI and the reading section of the SOL after participation in the *READ 180* program. Qualitative outcomes include the teachers' perspective of the program summarized from one-on-one interviews. The outcome measures that were used as indicators in gathering

the views of stakeholders are teacher interviews and student test performance. A comparison of the participants SRI pre- and post-scores and the determination of the percentage of students who passed the reading section of the 2014 SOLs were analyzed. The data from interviews have provided the teachers' perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of the program. These data collection strategies allowed me to compose a detailed evaluation statement in regard to whether *READ 180* met the goal of providing reading remediation to enhance student reading performance.

These evaluation objectives were used to convey the following research questions:

- RQ1. What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- RQ2. What impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by SOL scores?
- RQ3. How did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program?

The outcomes and performance measures used as indicators were interviews to gather stakeholder views and student test scores. I analyzed and compared participants' 2013-14 SRI pre- and posttest scores and determined the percentage of participants who met or exceeded standards on the 2014 reading SOL. These data collection strategies allowed me to make a knowledgeable evaluation statement concerning the READ 180 program meeting its goal to provide reading remediation to middle school students to assist the students in meeting or exceeding the standards on the high stakes SOL.

## Research Design

As the researcher, I completed a project study using a mixed-method sequential explanatory design to evaluate the value of the *READ 180* program. A mixed method design allows the researcher to overcome the limitations of using just a single design, such as quantitative or qualitative. By using mixed methods, the program can be scrutinized in the most comprehensive way incorporating the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2008). Because the qualitative data provided the foundation for the quantitative data and inferences were made based on the analysis of both types of data, the mixed-methods design was sequential (Creswell, 2008). For this particular project study, interviews were the qualitative strategy used. To supplement the qualitative results, some quantitative data were collected. The quantitative components included the analysis of the program's pre- and posttest results and a review of the percentage of students who met or exceeded standards on the 2014 reading SOL. It is important to collect the data from student test results as these data may support the program's effectiveness. The feedback collected from teachers about the program added richness to the data collected from test results. By analyzing both types of data, I made inferences about the success of the *READ 180* program.

### Program Evaluation

An evaluation was chosen as the problem involved the need to evaluate the effectiveness of a program that was implemented locally with the primary purpose of increasing student reading performance. A program evaluation allowed school leaders to determine stakeholder views on the advantages and disadvantages of the program and to

compare the qualitative and quantitative data.

Additionally, an evaluation was selected to allow a formal project evaluation to be conducted. By carrying out a program evaluation, I provided the school leaders with a distinctive mixed-method study that explored all aspects of the program. The one-on-one teacher interviews provided an internal view of what they feel works and what they think does not work within the program. Teacher perspective is important because they provide the supplemental instruction that ultimately leads to improved reading performance on the SOL, and they influence the experiences of the students.

In conclusion, a program evaluation was an appropriate project choice as it addresses the local problem that clearly shows the change in pre- and posttest scores for the program participants studied. The evaluation report shows a direct view of the quantitative data associated to the program. A program evaluation appropriately gathered data to assist in making an informed decision concerning the future of the *READ 180* program.

**CIPP model for evaluation**. The program evaluation model that was used in this study is the CIPP. The CIPP model for evaluation is a comprehensive framework used to guide both formative and summative evaluations of programs (Stufflebeam, 1972). The model is designed for use in any of the following types of evaluations: internal evaluations conducted by an organization's evaluators, self-evaluations conducted by project teams or individual service providers, or contracted external evaluations (Stufflebeam, 1972). As an external evaluator for this study, the CIPP model allowed me to assess and report the merit and significance of the *READ* 180 program summatively.

**Quantitative methods.** Quantitative data refer to the numerical factors that are collected during a research study (Creswell, 2008). An analysis of the SRI pre- and posttest results measured student growth as a result of the program over a 1-year period. Additionally, SOL scores of *READ 180* students were reviewed to identify those who met state standards on the 2014 reading SOL.

Pre- and posttest scores of students were compared after 1 school year of student exposure to the *READ 180* program. Lodico et al. (2010) stated that a pretest-posttest design is most appropriate when the researcher desires to compare and measure the amount of change among a group as a result of some type of treatment. This quasi-experimental comparison was used for the quantitative aspect of this study because I wanted to compare student improvement. Paired sample *t* tests and measures of central tendency were noted to gain statistical analyses on the pre- and posttests. The results of the pre- posttest analysis aided in answering the following research question: How did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program? This question was incorporated into the product component of the CIPP model to help measure the effectiveness of the program.

The 2014 scores of the participants of the *READ 180* program were analyzed to identify the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standards. Similarities and differences in the collected data were carefully analyzed and cross referenced to answer the following research question: What impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by SOL scores? As with the previous research question, the product component of the model was used to measure the

program's effectiveness.

**Qualitative method.** To support the quantitative data, qualitative data were also used to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program. Qualitative methods are used when deep exploration is necessary (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research is important when the researcher desires a better understanding of the participants' inspirations, objectives, outlooks, behaviors, values, and concerns (Creswell, 2008). Teacher interviews provided the qualitative data that were used in this study.

A qualitative data source was chosen because one of the guiding objectives in this project study is to identify the perspective of the teachers who teach *READ 180*. A huge component of the implementation of any program in a school is to yield higher academic achievement, but involving stakeholders in this process is also important (K. Settles, personal communication, April 16, 2013). The best way to understand the specific background of a research site is to "be there" (Creswell, 2008). In order to gauge the perspectives of some stakeholders who "are there" working with the program, one-on-one interviews with teachers addressed the following question: What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

**Case study.** Creswell (2008) stated that qualitative inquiry is most beneficial when the researcher seeks a deeper understanding of the participants' opinions. Case study research allows the researcher to examine a spectacle within its actual context, within the limitations of a setting, and through the mindset of a variety of people. This study was implemented using a case study approach.

Once all quantitative and qualitative data had been collected, the data were

integrated. The analysis of the SRI pre- and posttest results were compared to the list of students who passed the reading SOL to determine if the same group of students who showed growth on the SRI test also passed the SOL test. The teacher interviews were incorporated to provide a more in depth exploration of the value of the *READ 180* program. By analyzing all of the data together, interpretations about the success of the *READ 180* program were generated.

## Setting and Sample

The project study using a sequential mixed methods design took place at an inner-city middle school in Virginia. There are 981 students enrolled, with the dominant race being African American at 86%, followed by Caucasian American at 11%, and Hispanic Americans at 3% (VDOE, 2013). The current sixth, seventh, and eighth grade enrollment is almost identical in number at each level. There are approximately 525 male and 450 female students (VDOE, 2013). Of these numbers, 5% of African Americans, 1% of Caucasians, and 0.8% of Hispanic American are enrolled in the *READ 180* program.

The participants of the study were purposely chosen. In order for student responses to be collected and analyzed, they were required to be participants in the *READ 180* program (Creswell, 2008). The sample for the project study consisted of four teachers involved with the *READ 180* program. The four teachers served as research participants due to their extensive knowledge of the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program. Convenience sampling of teachers took place as the evaluator sought feedback from willing participants affiliated with the *READ 180* program.

The four teachers who have been *READ 180* trained and teach the program were

asked to participate in one-on-one interviews. *READ 180* teachers must receive initial training and ongoing support by the Scholastic division representative. In addition to the interviews, SRI pre- and posttest scores for 30 randomly selected students were included for statistical analyses.

The number 30 was selected to allow approximately half of the students from each grade level who participated in the program to be represented. Exactly 10 students from sixth grade, 10 from seventh grade, and 10 from eighth grade were randomly selected. The reading SOL scores of the same 30 students were also included to determine the percentage of students who scored 400 or above. The state has set a minimum pass score of 400. Analyzing the student scores on both the SRI and SOL was important to note similarities and differences in results for each test.

Receiving feedback from teachers was an important part of this study as they all provide a different perspective. The teachers have knowledge of the program from the beginning of its implementation. Therefore, the information that they provide is on a broader spectrum. The teacher perspective was centered on the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Information such as the student selection process, proper implementation, and teacher preparation was derived from the interviews.

## Qualitative Sequence

### Participant Access

Prior to the initiation of any research project, permission must be granted from the university in which the researcher is attending and the school division being examined in the study. I contacted school division administrators and the principal for permission to

conduct the study. After the school division officials gave permission to conduct the study, consent was requested from Walden's IRB. A request to access the participants' SRI and SOL test scores was included in the research application.

**Semistructured Interviews**

To better understand the participants' attitudes and concerns, a qualitative inquiry is most beneficial (Creswell, 2008). Semistructured interviews were conducted to gather the experiences and opinions of each teacher. Creswell noted that semistructured interviews are typically planned with a list of specific questions that need to be addressed, but the interviewer is able to follow trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide when he or she feels this is appropriate.

As the researcher, I conducted all interviews. I requested access to the four potential participants from the principal. The only criterion is that the teacher must have taught *READ 180* during the 2013-14 school year. Invitations to participate in the study were emailed to those teachers who met the criteria. Teachers were asked to respond to the invitation via email within 5 days. While I felt confident that the teachers would be willing to participate, if they were not, I would have expanded my research to a second middle school in the division with *READ 180* teachers.

The demographics of that school included SOL scores averaging 71% in reading, 80% in math, 88% in history, and 76% in science in 2012. While this school is not a Title I school because 40% of the students are not from economically disadvantaged families, 52% (364) of the students receive free and reduced lunch. There are approximately 700 students who attend this school with the predominant race being

African-American at 79% (553 students), Caucasian American at 18% (126 students), and Hispanic American at 2% (14 students). This school has two *READ 180* teachers. I would have mimicked the procedures set forth with the current school included in the study, if there had been a need to seek participants at another school.

Those who express interest in participating in the study were invited to a meeting and sent a copy of the consent form to review via email. During this meeting, I explained the study and what their role would be in the study. The meeting took place at their school after school hours. By explaining the details of the research, their role in the process, answering any questions they had and sharing my goals for the interview, a working relationship was established. After teachers had a thorough understanding of what the study entailed and were given the opportunity to ask specific questions about the consent form that was sent to them to review via email, they were given a hard copy and asked to sign the invitational consent form for participation in the research study (Appendix D).

The interview process began immediately after the quantitative data were provided by the principal (2013-14 SRI posttest and SOL Reading test results). The interview questions directly correlated to the interviewees' experiences and opinions of the *READ 180* program. All interviews were held in a private conference room in the school building in which the teachers work after school hours. An alternative location was not necessary as none of the participants requested one.

**Correlation between teacher interview and research question.** The interview questions were designed to gain the perspective of teachers who teach *READ 180.* The

feedback provided during the teacher interviews helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The teacher's feedback identified inconsistencies and provided indirect feedback as to how the program could be better managed. The correlation between the teacher interviews and the research question aided in determining that the major strengths of the program are that students experience success and the various stations, while the weakness is the outdated materials.

**Protection of Participants**

There were several procedures followed to ensure that the protection of the participants was manifested. Every attempt to maintain participants' anonymity was made. Pseudonyms instead of actual student names were used with SRI or SOL scores. Pseudonyms were used instead of teacher names in the transcription of the teacher interviews. The data is secured in a locked file cabinet and a password protected computer to prevent an unintentional breach of confidentiality. In addition, teacher participants received invitations and informed consent forms.

**Role of the Researcher**

As the supervisor for career and technical education in the school division where the *READ 180* program is being evaluated, I met Spaulding (2008) definition of an *external evaluator.* I have been afforded the opportunity to build relationships with most of the teachers as a former employee in the building in which the research was conducted. I served as an assistant principal at the research site. However, I had never worked directly with or supervised the READ 180 program. I am no longer an employee at the school level in the division. The role that I served while working in that building does not

present conflicts of interest in that I am no longer an employee at the school. Additionally, the *READ 180* teachers are not at all affiliated with the group of teachers that I serve. It is my hope that the advance meeting with each interviewee allowed the teachers to ask any questions and fostered a more relaxed and informative interview.

Interview protocol was established by me as the external evaluator. A script was read to each interviewee that reminded them of the information that was signed in the consent form prior to the start of the interview. The script addressed reminders such as participation is voluntary, information will remain confidential, and the expected duration of the interview. Once the required approval was gained, I carried out the interviews created for this study.

As the researcher, the concern of nonresponse bias was present in this study. I feared that teachers would be unwilling to participate in the study for reasons such as lack of time or desire to be a part of the study. The bias that teachers felt coerced to participate for anxiety that not participating would ruin our professional relationship was also a possible bias. While not in the same building with the teachers interviewed, I work in the division and I feared that teachers would still view me as a leader; hence I reiterated in all meetings and conversations with the teacher participants that their participation was completely voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. They would not have been treated differently at their school or at the division level as a result of participating in the study. These things were verbally communicated and written in the consent form.

## Quantitative Sequence

To further substantiate this project study, two forms of quantitative data were collected in the form of SOL test results and SRI pre- and posttest. Raw data is available in table format in the results section. The reading SOL results were reviewed to identify the percentage of program participants who met or exceeded the standards on the tests. The SRI pretest was given during the first 2 weeks of school. The posttest was administered during the final 2 weeks of school.

### Standards of Learning Scores

The Virginia Department of Education has set standards for measuring student success on the reading SOL. The report of test scores provides feedback in regard to student strengths and weaknesses in the area of reading (VDOE). All students complete annual SOL tests in the areas of reading, math, science, and social studies at the middle school level each year. The tests provide information on individual student achievement including students with disabilities. The tests are given online using the Pearson testing entity.

**Validity and reliability of the SOL.** The validity and reliability of the SOL is a valuable component in the results of this study. The VDOE (2012) indicates that assessments are created through a broad process of analysis and field testing to ensure that tests are fair and of reasonable in difficulty for the specific course. The administration of SOL assessments is a collaborative effort between the VDOE, administrators, and educators in the 132 school divisions in the commonwealth.

Reliability is measured using the standard error of measurement (SEM), a

statistical phenomenon that has no correlation to the accuracy of scoring (VDOE). Any forms of test results are subject to the standard error of measurement, even when created as a standard quiz by the teacher. If there is no change in the results of a student who took the same test more than once, as well as no change in the student's level of knowledge and studying, there is a chance that the scores would be somewhat higher or somewhat lower than the score that accurately reflects the student's actual level of knowledge. Standard error of measurement is the difference between a student's score and his highest or lowest theoretical score. (VDOE).

The Virginia SOL assessment is generated from a specific blueprint that ensures that the assessment correlates with the content standards for each subject. In addition to guiding the test construction, the blueprint also helps to provide consistency about what is being assessed. The content from the blue print is derived directly from the SOL curriculum framework (VDOE).

Educator input plays a major part on SOL item development. Content specialists, Virginia educators, Pearson, VDOE and ETS are involved with creating and reviewing SOL test items (VDOE). Along with field testing, test items are evaluated by a committee review to ensure that they are measuring what they were intended to measure (VDOE). In addition, the school testing coordinator is required to keep all testing materials secure until test administration occurs. Audits from the local and state level are periodically conducted to ensure that all testing guidelines are consistently met.

**Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) Pre- and Posttests**

The SRI uses the embedded completion item format, which is similar to the fill-

in-the-blank and directly measures the reader's ability to draw inferences and make connections between the concepts in the passage. The SRI uses computer-adaptive technological software. The software monitors the student's response to each question while they are testing. Questions become easier or more difficult based on student responses to each question. The level of difficulty is adjusted to the student's ability until the student is accurately matched to a Lexile® level. Computer-adaptive technology results in quick and precise assessment avoiding "test burnout" for students (Scholastic, 2009).

**Reliability and validity of SRI pre- and posttests.** SRI has been extensively studied and is trusted to be an accurate indicator of performance on state tests. It is an adaptive based test with ten forms of the printed version. Alternate-form reliability studies the extent to which two equivalent forms of an assessment produce the same results. Test-retest reliability studies the extent to which two administrations of the same test produce similar results. When taken together, alternate-form reliability and test-retest reliability are estimates of reader measure consistency. Studies of SRI were completed to examine the reliability of reader measures with a reliability coefficient of at least 0.85 (Scholastics, 2009).

The reliability of the SRI was developed using the Rasch one-parameter item response theory model to relate a reader's aptitude to the difficulty of the items. There is a reasonable amount of error due to the violation of model assumptions linked to the SRI score (Scholastic, 2007). Bayesian procedure is used to estimate each student's reading comprehension ability. This procedure requires that prior information about students is

used to dictate the question selection and the recalculation of each student's reading ability after they answer each question (Scholastic, 2009). Computer-adaptive tests generate a different test for every student unlike a fixed-item test. Students taking these tests generally receive the same raw score or number of correct items. This occurs due to the fact that students are answering questions that are targeted for their individual ability Scholastic, 2007).

The content validity of SRI was incorporated during its development. The texts sampled for SRI are authentic and developmentally appropriate (Scholastic, 2007). Students are given specific questions about nonfiction texts instead of asked to make predictions. The Hi-Lo pool of items were created for students reading below grade level with a Lexile measure of 200L to 1000L (Scholastic, 2007). By administering these items, it can be ensured that students are reading developmentally appropriate content (Scholastics, 2007).

## Data Analysis

### Interviews

During the interview, interviewees were asked to restate and summarize information to ensure accuracy. Member checks took place during and after each interview. When member checking takes place, the researcher confirms the accuracy of findings by asking each research participants to confirm them (Creswell, 2008). Additionally, transcription took place within 3 days after each interview. Following the transcription of each interview, a report sharing all of the findings was emailed to the interviewee allowing comments for additional member checking within 5 days.

Interviewees were asked to review and return their comments to me via email within 5 days of receipt. After receiving feedback from the teachers, I coded, summarized, and made notes of analysis. I examined the teacher interviews first and made marginal notes. Cross-referencing took place to identify recurring themes. After which, all themes were placed in a chart to examine similar ideas in the feedback given by individual teacher interviews.

Identifying characteristics were excluded in the final transcripts to eliminate anyone from knowing who said what in the interviews. The teachers were labeled as *Teachers A, B, C, & D* to avoid using their real names. The data will remain locked in a password protected computer to remain off site to prevent any breaches of confidentiality.

**Student Test Scores**

Scores were evaluated to determine the percentage of program participants who met or exceeded the standards on the test. The pretest is given at the beginning of the school year prior to students receiving *READ 180* remediation and the posttest is given at the end of the school year after students have been exposed to the program. Data were used to determine if *READ 180* enhanced students' reading ability. I analyzed each grade level separately. The average pre- and posttest score and median were calculated. The average change in pre- and posttest scores was also calculated. To determine if the average difference of the pre- and posttest means was significantly different from zero, I performed a paired samples *t* test. The significance level was set at 95%. If the *p*-value is less than .05, there was a significant difference between the means of the pre- and

posttest scores. On the contrary, if the significance value is greater than .05, there was not a significant difference between the means of the pre- and posttest scores.

Data collected quantitatively and qualitatively will be stored in a locked file cabinet for five years after the completion of the study. This includes paper copies and electronic copies of data collection. Electronic information was stored on a jump drive. After the completion of the fifth year, all electronic data will be deleted from the jump drive and paper copies will be shredded.

**Data Triangulation**

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to analyze different aspects of the *READ 180* program. While the data were collected and analyzed separately, it was important to combine the findings to gain a more complete picture. Qualitative data is most reliable when triangulation and audit traces take place (Lodico et al., 2010). They defined triangulation as a method to check and institute validity in a study by evaluating a research question from multiple perspectives. The findings from each component were analyzed in the same place to identify data that both compliments and contradicts the other. Looking across various research methodologies to study a phenomenon provides triangulation (Schaap, de Bruijn, Van der Schaaf, Baartman, & Kirschner, 2011). This assisted me in gathering the understanding necessary to finalize my analyses for reporting.

I collected quantitative and qualitative data to analyze different aspects of the *READ 180* program. Student test scores were the main source of data collection. When triangulating data, multiple sources are used in data collection. This study includes data

from two forms of data: student test scores and teacher interviews. Most qualitative research includes interviews (Lodico et al., 2010). Four individual teacher interviews were conducted and used as a part of the triangulation. A transcription of the interview, themes and subthemes that emerged, and student score results are in the appendices. Additionally, audit traces established the objectivity of the study by providing the details of data analysis and some of the decisions to support the findings (Lodico et al., 2010). Triangulation of the data helped to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected.

## Results of the Study

For this project study, data were collected from individual interviews and test score analyses. A mixed-methods approach is the most comprehensive way to incorporate of the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative data were analyzed first followed by the quantitative data. By using constant comparison and marginal notes, themes and subthemes were generated from the interviews.

The quantitative data were generated from the SRI pretest that is given to students at the beginning of the school year and the posttest given at the end of the school year after students have been exposed to the *READ 180* program. Data were used to determine if the program enhanced students' reading ability. Each grade level was analyzed separately and the average pre- and posttest score, and median were calculated. The average changes in pre- and posttest scores were also calculated. The scores from the 2014 reading SOL were also analyzed to display descriptive statistics.

**Interviews**

Lodico et.al (2010) stated that most qualitative data includes interviews as a part of data collection. Interviews were used as the single source of qualitative data collection. Interviews allowed the participants of the study to express their feelings using their own words (Creswell, 2012). The qualitative data collected from the teacher interviews aligned with the second research question. I conducted four semistructured interviews with nine open ended questions. During the interview, I restated and summarized information to ensure accuracy and probes were used to elicit more information. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and member checked. When member checking takes place, the researcher confirms the accuracy of findings by asking each research participants to confirm them (Creswell, 2010). The teachers who participated in the study were emailed a copy of the transcription to make corrections and ensure accuracy. They were asked to make changes in red and return the document to me within 5 days. Three of the interviewees responded indicating that there were no changes. One of the interviewees made corrections to the misunderstanding of two words and returned the changes within 24 hours of receipt. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were utilized.

After the completion of all interviews and member checks, the transcripts were read multiple times and studied. An example of a complete interview transcript is included in Appendix E. Marginal notes were taken and phrases were used to identify key concepts in each of the interview transcripts. By using constant comparison and marginal notes, themes and subthemes were generated from the interviews. Constantly

comparing the data allowed me to develop categories of information and make direct connections (Creswell, 2012). Finally, I was able to develop themes and sub-themes that helped to gain a more detailed understanding of the collected data (Creswell, 2012). Themes and subthemes were then formed and placed in a chart to examine similar ideas in the feedback given by individual teacher interviews (Appendix F). The interviews helped to answer the following question, *what do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?*

**Theme 1: Training.** All of the teachers indicated that the initial training provided by the Scholastic's representative was high quality training. Teachers B, C, and D identified the training to last over three consecutive days. Teacher A was not sure if the training lasted two or three days. They all confirmed that there was a follow-up training mid-year that was very beneficial. Each of the teachers expressed how supportive and available the Scholastic's representative had been since the initial implementation. While Teacher A had been provided the opportunity to attend a Summer Institute one year which provided more training, the others were not afforded this opportunity. This was a perk for her as she had been selected as the *READ 180* Teacher of the Year which allowed her to attend the institute. The teachers shared that there have not been any additional trainings after the first year of training.

**Theme 2: Student identification process.** Each of the interviewees felt that the identification process was fair. Teachers B, C, and D shared that a student's SOL scores, SRI pretest score, and most recent English grade are all reviewed to identify the students that would benefit the most from the program. Teachers B and C felt that the

collaboration between all of the teachers in selecting the students made the process consistent and fair. All teachers expressed the concern that there are more students identified who need the program than there is space available. Teacher D shared that space does become available throughout the school year as students graduate from the program. Recently, a student graduated from the program because he met the goal score, but when Teacher D went to share the news she did not get the response she expected. She was reminded of the reason she loves *READ 180* so much.

Teacher D stated,

> …Seeing the children succeed. Kids that have not had success in the past feel success in the classroom. In fact today, I had a student that, at semester break, met our requirements for exiting the program, even though he's not quite on grade level, he has made so much growth that we feel we can support him now outside the program. He came in today, begging to stay in the program because it is his favorite class. What could I do? He's not on grade level, so I kept him in.

**Theme 3: Struggles in student reading.** The teachers shared a variety of reasons why students are not reading on grade level. The one struggle that all of the teachers mentioned were nonfiction text.

Teacher C stated,

> They really like fiction text, because it's easier. Non-fiction text is usually more difficult because it's on a higher reading level. When they take the SOL test, because that test is on grade level, they struggle with the test. The fiction work for *READ 180* students might be below grade level because the program is

> designed to meet students on the level they are currently reading. What I like about the *READ 180* program is that it helps with this struggle. We have nine workshops, and out of the nine workshops, seven of them are non-fiction. It really helps them focus on their non-fiction text structure, which is where they struggle.

Text structure and comprehension were also areas in which all of the interviewees mentioned as a struggle for students. Teachers A, C, and D linked many of the student's struggles in reading to lack of background knowledge and focus.

Teacher D stated,

> A lot of these kids lack background knowledge, so the anchor videos provide that background knowledge for them, the small group support they get with the teacher in their small group lesson is great.

**Theme 4: Materials and technology.** If teachers are expected to remediate students successfully they must be given the right tools (Shifrer, Callahan, & Muller, 2013). Students in the *READ 180* program all use the same materials. While all of the teachers agreed that the technology is great, they equally agreed that the materials need to be updated. Teacher B and D described the materials as relevant and authentic when the program was first unveiled.

Teacher C stated,

> Theoretically, the materials are great and amazing, but they have recently become outdated. We have the same books we had when we first started, the same anchor videos, the same technology. It is not relevant anymore. When we first started to

> say this happened two years ago, Subway Surfing, for example, happened two years ago, now it's happened ten years ago. It's not the same impact on the students. The whole hook to the kids was authentic materials. We have lost that authenticity.

As a result of this, the teachers have been forced to incorporate supplemental lessons that are more current to enhance student learning. The ability to gauge student growth as the teacher and for students to actually be able to monitor their growth makes the program phenomenal, even with outdated materials, shared Teacher D. Teacher A mentioned the occasional behavior problems and how the technology curbs the behaviors.

Teacher A stated,

> I have seen the students learn in spite of themselves. I try to minimize the horseplay at the computer but there can be a little bit of interaction with their side partners. However, the students will still learn and progress pretty fast, so I think the technology addresses a lot of the hyperactivity.

The consistent disadvantage of the program that teachers shared during the interviews was that there are not enough licenses and space to serve all of the students who could benefit from the program.

**Theme 5: Student experience success.** All teachers indicated that the best part of the program was seeing the students experience success. Teacher C specifically shared that this was the best part because of the excitement from students who had probably never achieved success in the past.

Teacher B stated:

> …Today in my class we had a celebration for a student's *READ 180* successes and during that celebration I had a student who did not want to celebrate because she was reading her book. She knew she was not going to be in school for two days and she wanted to finish it. I told her that, "I really should be mad at you right now because you are reading when I told you to do something different, but as your reading teacher I am excited that you want to read. That you would rather be reading makes me very excited." (Appendix E).

Due to the design of the program being centered around the needs of the students, most students receive tangible progress which in turn builds their confidence. Teacher A and Teacher D discussed the program's design. The small chunk of time spent at each station allows students to transition and refocus their attention on a different task while still enhancing their reading skills.

The interviews with teachers provided a clear perspective of their feelings about the program. Training provided was adequate and the ongoing support from Scholastic had a huge impact on the program's success. While teachers felt that the program did not serve all of students who could benefit from it, they indicated fair and consistent student selection processes. Teachers felt that student reading struggles stemmed from a lack of background knowledge and problems with comprehension, text structure, and focus. *READ 180* helped to address those struggles with its authentic and nonfiction text, stations, and overall program design. The teachers felt that the program allows students to actively interact which increases confidence and reading achievement.

**SRI Pre- and Posttest Scores**

Next, I gained access to SRI pre- and posttest scores of the 30 *READ 180* students examined in this study. The school principal provided the data used to offer insight related to the research question *how did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change?* The pretest was given at the beginning of the school year and the post test was given at the end of the school year after students had been exposed to the *READ 180* program. SRI scores were evaluated to determine the percentage of program participants who showed improvement in reading ability.

The list of student participants included 10 sixth graders, 10 seventh graders, and 10 eighth graders. The results were analyzed in order by grade, beginning with sixth grade. For each grade level, the average pre- and the posttest scores were calculated as well as the median and the average change in pre- and posttest scores. In addition, I performed a paired samples *t* test to determine if the average difference of the pre- and posttest means was significantly different from zero. The significance level was set at 95%. If the *p*-value was less than .05, it determined that there was a significant difference between the means of the pretest and posttest scores. If the *p*-value was greater than .05, it determined there was no significant difference between the means of the pre- and posttest scores. In order to use the *t* test, the data is assumed to be normally distributed. To verify this, the non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used to test the null hypothesis that the difference between the pre- and posttest data were normally distributed. The K-S test failed to reject the null hypotheses of normally distributed data indicating that there was a normal distribution of data.

**Sixth grade.** Table 1 displays the SPSS descriptives report of the 6th grade SRI pre- and posttest. There were 10 pre- and 10 posttest scores. The mean score increased by 87 points. Both the standard deviation and range values were smaller on the initial test versus on the posttest, indicating that posttest SRI scores had more variability and spread. The minimum was higher on the pretest than on the posttest, which is not a normal situation.

Table 2 shows a paired sample *t* test of the 6th grade pre- and posttest data that was conducted to evaluate whether the program brought forth changes in the participants' pre- and posttest scores. To determine whether the test was significant, the researcher examined the paired sample test table. The average change in the pre- and posttest scores was an increase of about 15%. Furthermore, the *t* test was significant at the .05 alpha level, t (9) = -2.987 p = .015. Because the *p* value is less than .05, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the pre- and posttest scores average difference is equal to zero at the .05 level. The results indicated that the posttest scores were significantly higher than the pretest scores for the 10 students in the 6th grade sample.

A paired sample *t* test of the 7th grade pre- and posttest data were generated to evaluate changes in the participants' pre- and posttest scores. This data is shown in Table 4. I examined the paired sample test table to determine if the test was significant at the alpha .05 level. An increase of about 13% was shown in the pre- and posttest scores. Furthermore, the *t* test was significant, t (9) = -2.047 p = .071. Because the *p* value is greater than .05, I failed to reject the null hypothesis that the pre- and posttest scores average difference is equal to zero at the .05 level. The results indicated there was not a

statistically significant difference between pre- and posttest SRI scores for the 10 students in the sam

Table 1

*6th Grade SPSS Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pretest statistic | Posttest statistic |
| Mean | 595.80 | 683.60 |
| Median | 574.00 | 695.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 112.476 | 153.973 |
| Minimum | 482 | 377 |
| Maximum | 783 | 888 |
| Range | 301 | 511 |

**Seventh grade.** Table 3 shows the seventh grade data in which there were 10 pre- and 10 posttest scores. The mean score on the sixth grade pre- and posttest increased by 75.5 points. The standard deviation and range values were smaller on the pre- than on the posttest which indicates that the posttest SRI scores had more variability and spread. The minimum score of the pretest was only one point higher than the minimum score of the posttest. The maximum score was higher on the posttest than on the pretest, indicating student growth over the course of the school year.

Table 2

*6th Grade Paired Samples t Test Results*

| | Paired differences | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | |

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest - Posttest | -87.80 | 92.943 | 29.391 | -154.287 | -21.313 | -2.987 | 9 | .015 |

*Note.* $H_o$ is: The program made no difference (means are the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$
$H_a$ is: The program made a difference (means are not the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$
Alpha is set at 0.05.

Table 3

*7th Grade SPSS Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pretest statistic | Posttest statistic |
| Mean | 561.10 | 636.60 |
| Median | 542.50 | 649.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 167.169 | 177.327 |
| Minimum | 346 | 347 |
| Maximum | 822 | 881 |
| Range | 531 | 534 |

**Eighth grade.** The 8th grade SPSS case processing summary and descriptives report is listed in Table 5. The table shows the 8th grade data in which there were 10 pre- and 10 posttest scores. The mean score on the 8th grade pre- and posttest increased by 132 points. The standard deviation and range values were smaller on the posttest than on the pretest, indicating that the SRI posttest scores had less variability. The minimum and maximum scores were higher on the posttest than on the pretest, indicating student growth over the course of the school year.

Table 6 shows the paired sample *t* test of the 8th grade pre- and posttest data that was conducted to evaluate whether the program lead to significant changes between

participants' pre- and posttest scores. To determine whether the test was significant, the researcher examined the paired sample test table. The average change in the pre- and posttest scores was an increase of about 22%. Furthermore, the *t* test was significant at alpha .05 level, $t$ (9) = -3.369 p = .008.

Table 4

*7th Grade Paired Samples t Test Results*

| | Paired differences | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pretest - Posttest | -75.50 | 116.636 | 36.884 | -158.937 | -21.313 | -2.047 | 9 | .071 |

*Note.* $H_o$ is: The program made no difference (means are the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$

$H_a$ is: The program made a difference (means are not the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$

Alpha is set at 0.05.

Because the *p* value is less than .05, I rejected the null hypothesis that the pre- and posttest scores average difference is equal to zero at the .05 level. The results indicated there was significant change in the mean SRI scores from the pretest to posttest for the 8th grade student sample.

Table 5

*8th Grade SPSS Descriptives Report*

| **Descriptives** |
|---|

| | Pretest Statistic | Posttest Statistic |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 610.80 | 742.80 |
| Median | 658.00 | 753.50 |
| Std. Deviation | 171.169 | 143.055 |
| Minimum | 218 | 442 |
| Maximum | 817 | 956 |
| Range | 526 | 514 |

Table 6

*8th Grade Paired Samples t Test Results*

| | Paired differences | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pretest - Posttest | -131.90 | 123.798 | 39.148 | -220.460 | -43.340 | -3.369 | 9 | .008 |

*Note*. $H_o$ is: The program made no difference (means are the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$

$H_a$ is: The program made a difference (means are not the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$
Alpha is set at 0.05.

A paired samples descriptives and *t*-sample data for all three grade levels combined are displayed in Tables 7 and 8. The paired samples *t* test had a sample size of 30. The pretest and posttest averages changed significantly. The pretest average score was 589.23 and the posttest average score was 687.63. The median scores increased from 593.50 to 704.50 between the pre- and posttest. The minimum and maximum scores also showed an increase. The minimum score from the pre- to posttest increased from 218 to 347 and the maximum score also increased from 822 to 956. The standard

deviation and range values were higher on the posttest than on the pretest, which indicates that the posttest SRI scores had less variability.

To evaluate whether the program led to significant changes between the overall participants' pre- and posttest scores, a paired sample *t* test was conducted. I examined the paired sample test table to determine whether the test was significant. On average, the posttest scores increased by 88.4 points from the pretest scores. The average change in the pre- and posttest scores was an increase of about 15%. The results indicated there was significant change in the mean SRI scores from the pre- to posttest for the overall student sample. The paired samples *t* test was significant at the alpha .05 level, $t$ (29) = -4.866, $p$ = .001. Since the *p* value was less than .05, I rejected the null hypothesis that the pre- and posttest scores mean difference was equal to zero at the .05 level.

Table 7

*6-8th Grade SPSS Descriptives Report*

| **Descriptives** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pretest Statistic | Posttest Statistic |
| Mean | 599.23 | 687.63 |
| Median | 593.50 | 704.50 |
| Std. Deviation | 148.794 | 159.426 |
| Minimum | 218 | 347 |
| Maximum | 822 | 956 |
| Range | 574 | 609 |

Table 8

*6-8th Grade Paired Samples t Test Results*

| Pair 1 | Paired differences | T | df | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pretest - Posttest | -98.400 | 110.751 | 20.220 | -139.755 | -57.045 | -4.866 | 29 | .000 |

*Note*. $H_o$ is: The program made no difference (means are the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$
$H_a$ is: The program made a difference (means are not the same), i.e., $\mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$
Alpha is set at 0.05.

**2014 Reading SOL test scores**

Next, I analyzed the raw and scaled scores from the 2014 reading SOL to address research question: *What impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by Standards of Learning scores*? The school principal provided the student test scores. The 6th grade SOL data for a total of 10 students were explored first. Table 9 displays the SOL data. The average score of the 6th grade program participants was 344.50. The lowest score was 274 and the maximum score was 384, with 110 being the range. The median score was 358.00 and the standard deviation was 35.750. SOL scores range from 0 to 600 with 400 being passing, hence none of the 6th graders met the minimum requirements to pass the test.

Table 9

*6th Grade Reading SOL Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Statistic |
| 6th Grade SOL Score | Mean | 344.50 |
| | Median | 358.00 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Std. Deviation | 35.750 |
| | Minimum | 274 |
| | Maximum | 384 |
| | Range | 110 |

The 7th grade data, which included scores for 10 students, was analyzed next. Table 10 displays the case summary and descriptive statistics report for the 7th grade reading SOL scores. The average score of the 7th grade program participants was 351.20. The lowest score was 283 and the highest score was 417, with 134 being the range. The standard deviation of the 7th grade reading SOL scores was 116.63642. The median score was 128.0000. One of the ten 7th graders analyzed in this study passed the reading SOL. The remaining nine students failed.

The 8th grade set of reading SOL scores were the last to be examined. Table 11 displays the case summary and descriptive statistics report for the 8th grade reading SOL scores of 10 students. The average score of the 8th grade program participants was 360. The lowest score was 317 and the highest score was 410, with 93 being the range. The standard deviation of the 8th grade reading SOL scores was 25.949. The median score was 361. One student passed the reading SOL of the 10 examined.

Table 10

*7th Grade Reading SOL Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Statistic |
| 7th Grade SOL Score | Mean | 351.20 |
| | Median | 346.00 |
| | Std. Deviation | 42.593 |
| | Minimum | 283 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Maximum | 417 |
| | Range | 134 |

Table 11

*8th Grade Reading SOL Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Statistic |
| 8th Grade SOL Score | Mean | 360.70 |
| | Median | 361.00 |
| | Std. Deviation | 25.949 |
| | Minimum | 317 |
| | Maximum | 410 |
| | Range | 93 |

Table 12 displays the case summary and descriptive statistics report for the reading SOL scores of all program participants in grades 6-8. The average overall score was 352.13 with a standard deviation of 34.847. The median score of all participants was 356.50. Among all program participants, the range in scores was 143, with the minimum score being 274 and the maximum being 417. 6.67 % of the students analyzed met the minimum performance score on the 2014 reading SOL.

Table 12

*6th – 8th Grade Reading SOL Descriptives Report*

| Descriptives | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Statistic |
| 6th-8th Grade SOL | Mean | 352.13 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Score | Median | 356.50 |
| | Std. Deviation | 34.847 |
| | Minimum | 274 |
| | Maximum | 417 |
| | Range | 143 |

## Outcomes

While the data were collected and analyzed separately, it was also important to combine the outcomes to look for similarities and differences. Looking across various research methodologies to study a phenomenon provides triangulation (Schaap, de Bruijn, Van der Schaaf, Baartman, & Kirschner, 2011), thereby, increasing the validity of the data and theory. This process assisted me in gathering the understanding necessary to conclude my analyses for the summative report (Appendix A).

As a result of the data analysis, the following themes emerged from the data analysis: training, student identification, reading struggles, materials/technology, learning stations, and students experience success. These themes were used to address the three research questions posed in Section 1. In order to determine the effect the *READ 180* program had on student reading, I wanted to know what the teachers affiliated with the program identified as the strengths and weaknesses, the impact it had on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by Standards of Learning scores, and how program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores changes after remediation in the program. The following summary encompasses the interpretation of the data in relation to the research questions of the study.

**Advantages**

The teacher interviews revealed their support of the program and the benefit it has on the students served. Teachers reported that the technology associated with the program is phenomenal and upon initial implementation in 2007, the materials were authentic. All teachers felt that the student selection process was fair. They felt that this was an important factor in that the right students must be identified for the program in order to see student improvement in reading. Teachers felt that the initial training provided to them prior to teaching the course was sufficient for implementation. Additionally, the Scholastic representative assigned to their school was an asset in that she was always available and willing to help support instruction.

Another positive aspect of the program was revealed in the paired samples *t* test results. The paired samples *t* test showed that the average scores on the posttest demonstrated significant change from the pretest average score. The program was implemented to support the participants' reading performance, and growth was evident in the SRI pre- and posttest analysis. While the K-S test validated a normal distribution of data for the individual grade levels, as well as the whole group, the null hypotheses were different. The researcher was able to reject the null hypotheses with the $6^{th}$ grade, $8^{th}$ grade, and overall group sample, however failed to reject the null hypothesis that the pre- and posttest scores average difference is equal to zero at the .05 level for the individual $7^{th}$ grade group sample. It is not uncommon for a smaller sample of data to bring about different results when separated from the larger sample.

**Disadvantages**

The interview data clearly revealed that the outdated materials used in the program made it less appealing to the students. Teachers had to pull more updated resources to supplement instruction with more up-to-date content. One teacher noted in the interview that one of the reading passages talks about "Jorvorskie Lane while he was in college." She further noted that it was a little confusing to students as he is now a professional football player. Another teacher explained that while more updated versions of the program have been released since its implementation, the school has not upgraded. The teachers felt that budget constraints prohibited the division from upgrading. Unequivocally, all teachers felt that more update software would make the program more beneficial to their students.

Student growth demonstrated in *READ 180* did not translate to successful passage of the reading SOL assessment. None of the 6$^{th}$ grade students met the minimum pass score of 400 on the test. One 7$^{th}$ and one 8$^{th}$ grade student passed the SOL. In total, 93% of the students analyzed did not meet the minimum performance score on the 2014 reading SOL. However 57% of those that did not meet the minimum requirement made a score between 350 and 393, which placed them very close to meeting the cut score.

**Limitations of Instruments**

There were some threats to the validity to this study that are worth noting. The potential of multiple treatment interference is one limitation. Students receiving other treatments, such as tutoring or participating in other reading intervention programs, would make it difficult to determine if results were due to the *READ 180* program or a

separate treatment. Maturation and natural learning could have also affected student success in reading.

In hindsight, the student sample could have included all students who received *READ 180* instruction. This would have made the *t* test more valid with a broader perspective and would not have been as labor intensive as previously assumed. It would have also been beneficial to examine the reading SOL scores of eligible *READ 180* participants that were not afforded an opportunity to participate in the program due to the limited number of licenses. The attainment of this information would provide comparative data to further substantiate the effectiveness of the program.

**Proposed Project**

Consequently, as an outcome, the project for this study will focus on evaluating the *READ 180* program. The project genre will be an evaluation report to be developed using the Context-Input-Process-Product Model of Evaluation (CIPP). The CIPP Model for evaluation is a comprehensive framework used to guide both formative and summative evaluations of programs (Stufflebeam, 1972). The model is designed for use in any of the following types of evaluations: internal evaluations conducted by an organization's evaluators, self-evaluations conducted by project teams or individual service providers, or contracted external evaluations (Stufflebeam, 1972). As an external evaluator for this study, the CIPP model will allow me to assess and report the merit and significance of the READ 180 program summatively.

Section three contains a detailed description of the proposed project, purpose of the project, a scholarly rationale of the project genre, the major outcomes, and how the

evaluation will address the local needs. A review of the literature addressing the project is included. Also, a discussion of the project including needed resources, existing supports, potential barriers, implementation proposal, and roles and responsibilities of the researcher is included. Implications include possible social change as a result of the project and the importance of the project to local stakeholders and in a larger context.

Section 3: The Project

## Introduction

In this section, I outline the products of this study and the program evaluation summary. The project is an evaluation of the *READ 180* program in one Virginia middle school. *READ 180* was implemented to increase the reading skills of struggling readers (L. Scott, personal communication, April 10, 2013). The project was conducted to determine if the program's objectives were being met. The objectives of READ 180 are to improve the student reading of reluctant readers through technology, whole and small group teacher directed instruction, and independent reading practice (Scholastics, 2011). The program evaluation summary provided feedback to the principal and instructional specialist in the local middle school of the research findings concerning *READ 180*. The SPSS statistical software was used to quantitatively analyze the student data. The summary included the analyses of student scores and teacher interviews to determine the value of the *READ 180* program. Evaluation report goals, rationale, review of supporting literature, implementation, social change, and implications are included in Section 3.

## Description and Goals

This program evaluation was conducted to evaluate a reading remediation program. Measuring the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program through test score analyses and teacher interviews was an important component to gathering insight to address student deficiencies in reading. The *READ 180* program was implemented to combat the students' struggles in reading and to aid in helping students meet state reading standards. Evaluating the program is important because 28% of middle school students

are reading below grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The evaluation objectives for *READ 180* are as follows: (a) to collect teacher opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of the *READ 180* program through one-on-one interviews, (b) to document change in the performance of the program participants on the SRI test and (c) to document student participant performance on the reading section of the SOL.

## Rationale

In order to determine the effectiveness of an important reading program established to increase student reading skills, I selected a program evaluation. Program evaluations help to determine the value of a program in order to share those findings with the stakeholders of the program (Creswell, 2012). This program evaluation allowed the principal and instructional specialist within the school to gain knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the remedial reading program and to compare the quantitative and qualitative information from the tests and interviews.

The research gave the principal and instructional specialist a distinctive mixed-method study that examined multiple aspects of the *READ 180* program. The interviews with teachers provided input from their perspective of the advantages and disadvantages of the program. Since three of the four teachers interviewed have been teaching the program at the same school since it was piloted in 2006, determining what aspects of the program they viewed as advantageous and/or undesirable was vital to measuring the effectiveness of *READ 180* (Zhu, 2014). Teacher perspective was important because they provide the instruction that will lead to improvement in student reading performance

(Zhu, 2014). Finally, the program evaluation allowed me to provide an evaluation report that clearly displayed the change in the SRI pre-and posttest scores as well as the results of the reading SOL for each program participant.

Through the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data, I found that students exposed to the *READ 180* program have shown improvement in reading. Not only do teachers support the benefit of the *READ 180* program to student reading, but overall SRI scores show that students' reading skills improved from the pre- to posttest. However, the reading SOL results did not show student success in reading as majority of the students did not meet the minimum score requirement. The SOL data analysis in this study was very limited. A quantitative experimental approach comparing a treatment group to a nontreatment group would have provided more data in regard to the effectiveness *READ 180* had the reading performance of students. The evaluation report will provide more clarity as to the data analyzed in this study and potentially help to guide future research.

Evaluation reports are used to openly communicate a program's successes and areas in need of improvement (Zhang et al., 2011). Klerman (2010) stated that objective information and the impact of the program should be defined in the evaluation report. The evaluation report that was created following the completion of this project presents the impact the *READ 180* program had on student reading achievement during the 2013-2014 school year (see Appendix A). The report includes the evaluation findings as well as recommendations to enhance student reading from exposure and experience in *READ 180*. It is important to note that recommendations in an evaluation report are specific to

the program evaluation conducted and different research methods could bring about different recommendations (Warren, Vehorn, Dohrmann, Newsom, & Taylor, 2013). A program evaluation including an evaluation report was an appropriate genre to gather and present data to help determine the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program.

## Review of the Literature

The literature review focused on the impact *READ 180* has on middle school student reading skills. *READ 180* is a reading remediation program designed to improve the reading ability of students. The format of a program evaluation served as the project for this study. The evaluation report entails the findings of the data analysis and recommendations for the stakeholders. The research design used in this study is mixed methods. By using mixed methods, the program is analyzed in the most inclusive method integrating of the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2012). In this setting, one middle school incorporated the *READ 180* program with the focus on impacting student reading.

### Development of the Project

The project study developed as a result of the local need to evaluate a remedial reading program currently being used in the division. *READ 180* was implemented to address the reading struggles for students within the school division. *READ 180* is a reading intervention program designed to provide individualized instruction to meet the reading needs of each student. The program is designed to raise reading achievement for struggling readers from Grade 4 through 12 with an inclusive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development (Whitford, 2011). *READ 180* is

intended for any student reading 2 or more years below grade level. Data are collected based on individual responses, and instruction is adjusted to meet the needs of each student at their level, accelerating their path to reading mastery (Scholastics, 2011). *READ 180* was designed to push students toward independent learning with rigorous, grade-level text.

While studies had been conducted in the past of this program, there was a need to add to what was known more specifically within this division. The program evaluation began with numerous conversations with the principal who did the initial pilot of the program. She explained the history of *READ 180* and the direction that the evaluation should go to be most relevant. The actual evaluation did not start until the local leaders and Walden IRB provided approval.

The purpose of the project was centered on determining the effectiveness of the reading remediation program initiated in a middle school in Virginia. The primary research tool was Walden University's online library. Scholarly, peer-reviewed journals were searched using *education* as the topic. Education Research Complete, ERIC, and Education from SAGE databases were used to perform the searches. The terms used in the search were *program evaluation, CIPP, contextualization, reading remediation, summative evaluation*, and *evaluation report.*

Understanding the context in which a program exists is significant to be able to adequately judge a program (Ross, 2010). The evaluator must have a clear understanding of the target population and problems that need to be addressed in the evaluation (Yong-Lynn, 2011). This clarity will aid in making the summaries of the evaluation useful to

stakeholders. The method of contextualization makes the research relevant and attempts to make connections to the stakeholders (Spillane et al., 2010). In this program study, contextualization became evident in the early stages when the setting and populations were identified through the reporting of the results.

Volkov (2011) stated that the process of contextualization begins by clearly stating the problem and ends with an interpretation of outcomes. Organizing thinking in explicit and distinctive ways are identified as methods of contextualization (Spillane et al., 2010). This program evaluation represents the ideals of contextualization as the inquiry begins with four research questions, the objectives of the program and finalizes with the summative report. The research questions are the following: (a) What affect does READ 180 have on improvement in student reading, (b) what do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program, (c) what impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by SOL scores and (d) how did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program? The objectives of the *READ 180* program are to improve the student reading of reluctant readers through technology, whole and small group teacher directed instruction, and independent reading practice.

The researcher's need to make conclusions based on the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data made a program evaluation the most appropriate genre (Zhang et al., 2011). A program evaluation allowed the local school division leaders to visualize the stakeholder views as well as student test results outlining the pros and cons

of the *READ 180*. The research-based model used to evaluate this program was the CIPP model.

**Program Evaluation**

A program evaluation is defined as a methodical process of data collection and analyses used to answer questions concerning programs, happenings, and policies. Program evaluations should provide explicit information about programs (Yong-Lynn, 2011). Interaction with stakeholders is necessary to evaluate their opinions. Stakeholders are the participants and staff associated with the program. This study shows stakeholders and other interested viewers the value *READ 180* has on improving middle school student's reading ability. Royse, Thyer, and Pagett (2010) shared that program evaluations are essential to assessing a program's ability to have impact. An evaluation was chosen to determine the impact *READ 180* had on student reading and the teacher's perception of the program.

**Relevance of a program evaluation for this study.** According to Creswell (2012), the three major reasons to carry out a program evaluation are to gain knowledge, make improvement, or for decision-making. Evaluations can serve as a powerful tool to increase the knowledge of a practitioner and to effect programmatic improvements (Robinson, Cotabish, Wood, & O'Tuel, 2014). Ball and Christ (2012) stated that program evaluations also serve as a quality utility when making instructional decisions. Evaluations become more significant when decision makers are faced with making program choices or eliminations (Ben-Elia & Shiftan, 2010). Zohrabi (2012) determined that program evaluations typically provide direction, in addition to closely examining

every aspect of a program in detail. This type of in depth analysis allows evaluations to establish a baseline for making decisions (Grigal, Dwyre, Emmett, & Emmett, 2012).

Evaluations conducted to make a decision place emphasis on the level the program's objectives and goals have been met. Knowledge based evaluations focus on how the program works and how participants are affected as a result of the program, while improvement aligned evaluations search for the strengths and weakness of a program (Zohrabi, 2012). The project evaluation was conducted to provide research findings to the school principal about the impact of the remedial reading program on middle school students. With any program evaluation, challenges such as identifying the outcome and determining the impact are encountered (Miller & Dalton, 2011). As a result of this research on program evaluations, it is an appropriate instrument to assess the *READ 180* program.

To determine the type of program evaluation required, the goal of the evaluations must first be identified (Warren et al., 2013). Three of the commonly used forms of program evaluations are expertise, participant, and objective (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Generally, the objective based evaluations are purposed with determining how well the program goals are being met (Creswell 2010). Expertise based evaluations are carried out by an expert in the field to provide feedback (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). When evaluations are centered around the participants, their needs are the focal point (Creswell, 2010). This *READ 180* program evaluation is objective based.

**CIPP model for evaluation**. The CIPP Model for evaluation is an approach used in educational settings and seeks to improve accountability in a "learning-by-doing"

method (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). The CIPP model contains four primary components: context, input, process, and product. The core components in the model are not meant to prove but to improve the program being evaluated. (Al-Khathami & Dukhail, 2012).

These components are or can be viewed as separate forms of evaluation, but they can also be viewed as steps or stages in an evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). For the purposes of this evaluation, two components of the model were used. The first component was used to describe the *READ 180* program's context, target population, problems underlying the needs, and determine if the program's goals were sufficient to address the needs. My goal for this study was to provide quality reading instruction to students reading below grade level. Tokmak et al. (2013) described this step in the CIPP model as context. The input step uses the evaluation findings to choose, flesh out, and obtain funds for a new program or to review and revise a previously adopted procedural plan (Al-Khathami & Dukhail, 2012). Because I am evaluating an existing program in which the design cannot be altered, this component was not used in this evaluation. Another step in the CIPP model not used in this evaluation was the process component. Process evaluations are typically used to monitor, document, and assess program activities as the program is being carried out (Al-Khathami & Dukhail, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the evaluation was conducted at the conclusion of the program; hence, this step was not appropriate. The product component is the final step that was used in this evaluation as it allowed me to determine and examine the outcomes and the overall merit of the program (Tokmak et al., 2013). The intended outcomes were higher

SRI scores, SOL scores, and satisfied stakeholders. As an external evaluator for this study, the CIPP model helped me to assess and report the merit and significance of the *READ 180* program.

**Summative evaluations.** Data collection analyses and reporting can be formative or summative (Lodico et al., 2010). Formative assessments consists of fluid feedback that is immediately taken into consideration and reports that are usually brief and low risk (Lodico et al., 2010). Contrastingly, summative evaluations assist with determining the outcome and long-term effect of a program (Sawyer, 2012). Summative evaluation data were gathered for this project study to measure a learner's development at a particular time. *READ 180* aims to improve student reading ability; hence, a summative evaluation would assess any improvement of reading as a result of this intervention by examining test scores. Furthermore, an investigation of teacher perception about the program was analyzed. This aligns with Glaser and Laudel's (2013) goal to examine the broader affects and benefits of a program. Most evaluations culminate into a final report. Such a report should document the evaluation's purpose while describing the approach and an overall judgment of the program (Stufflebeam, 1972). The report should be organized in a manner that best reflects the interests and needs of the intended audience and allow quick access to the parts of the report that are of most interest to them (Stufflebeam, 1972). The findings and recommendations are presented in the evaluation report.

## Evaluation Reports

This program evaluation is a deliverable evaluation report for the principal of the Virginia middle school. This evaluation report is a very vital part of this research. The

report serves the purpose of informing and educating the stakeholders who are directly involved with the academic progress of the *READ 180* students. According to Grigal et al. (2012), a research project is of limited value if others are not aware of the research involved. Evaluation reports provide an opportunity for others to profit from the researcher's findings (Grigal et al., 2012). Stakeholders can make decisions regarding program improvement based on an evaluation report as it creates direct and clear evaluation results (United Nations, 2012).

During the process of evaluating a program, the findings and suggestions are significant in improving the overall program (United Nations Population Fund, 2012). Based on the findings of this research, an evaluation report was the best deliverable product of the program evaluation project. This report will share the findings and recommendations to the school's principal and other interested division officials using section headings recommended in the CIPP model.

## Project Description

The project was a presentation of the program evaluation findings after the completion of the *READ 180* program at the end of the 2013-14 school year. In Section 2, the findings were reported in a statistical format. In the project, the findings were presented with charts and figures to make the reporting easy to read and understand by the interested stakeholders. The researcher also made recommendations regarding the future direction of the program. Volcov (2011) believed that the role of an evaluator is to make recommendations based on the evaluation that will promote change. In order to support change, sufficient monitoring and follow-up is necessary.

The needs of *READ 180* student participants were effectively addressed as suggested by the SRI results. The SRI charts for each grade level indicated that significant change in participants' reading scores occurred from the pre- to the posttest. However, the SOL results did not show similar results. The reading SOL charts in the evaluation report showed that most of the participants' scores were not in the passing range. Finally, figures were used to show the recurring themes from teacher interviews. The recurring theme mentioned by all teachers was the need for updated materials. Taking all of this into consideration, it seems to be a fair recommendation that updated materials for the program may increase the quality.

**Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

Many of the resources that are currently in place for the existing *READ 180* program can be utilized with an updated version as it only consists of authentic texts and software (Scholastics, 2011). The updated program could be taught in the same classrooms with the existing teachers who currently teach the program. Resources such as computers, headphones and small group stations would not have to be changed. Updated books and software would be needed with a newer version as the stories used for student learning are more current.

While this would not be mandatory with an upgrade, it would be the researcher's recommendation that a *READ 180* coordinator is appointed to ensure that the program is run with fidelity across the division as this is a vital requirement of the program's success. The role of the coordinator would be to observe instruction, train and support teachers, model *READ 180* lessons, and monitor the overall operation of the program.

The qualifications to serve as a coordinator would be to hold a valid teaching license in the area of English and *READ 180* trained. This could be a new position or a task added to the job description of a current position already in place.

**Potential Barriers**

Potential barriers to updating the *READ 180* program would be cost, server space, planning, and time. Server space would need to be evaluated by the school division's Department of Information Technology to determine if additional space is needed and the cost associated, if so. Cost is the barrier that is of most concern with the recent budget constraints within the division. To combat this barrier, it will be necessary to ensure that school division leaders and board members understand the benefit of the program and its impact on student reading which would require additional research. My recommendation is that the research be done either by the current Program Evaluator for the school division or the *READ 180* coordinator if the city decides to support this position, but of course planning and time would be required. This evaluation did not show that students in the program were successful on the standardized reading test; however, future research looking more specifically at students with multiple years in the program or *READ 180* students compared to students without exposure to the program could bring about different results.

**Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

With any request for change, there is a chain of command that must be followed. Arbet and Gillum (2006) shared the importance of following the proper procedures to escalate both complaints and changes. To ensure that the chain of command is followed,

the evaluation report will be shared with the school principal and instructional specialist in the spring of 2014-15. If there is interest from the principal to move forward, the evaluation findings and report will be shared with the Director of Middle School Instruction in the summer of 2014-15. If she deems necessary, the evaluation findings and report will be shared with the superintendent's cabinet in the summer of 2014-15, as well.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

The responsibilities associated with the implementation of the *READ 180* program will remain with the stakeholders. School division leaders and the principal will be responsible for continuing the program as is, discontinuing the program or implementing the changes I have recommended for the program. It will continue to be the responsibility of the instructional specialist to oversee the daily program operations and monitoring of the program within the school. The teachers will be responsible for successfully carrying out lessons as outlined in *READ 180* training that will optimize daily classes with the students. The teacher's input about the *READ 180* program was of great value. Their knowledge and experience provided a comprehensive depiction as to the value of the program (Creswell, 2010). Students are responsible for regularly attending class and striving for excellence to improve their reading skills.

## Project Implications

Social change is a significant adjustment in the behaviors and patterns of a culture (Katzenmeyer &Moller, 2001). Walden University tasks each student enrolled with making a meaningful impact on the community and world. The school division in which

the study took place embraces the philosophy of creating 21st century learners that are equipped with knowledge that will allow them to globally compete. The mission of the school division is to ensure that students achieve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become lifetime learners and useful citizens.

**Local Community**

An upgrade to the *READ 180* program would provide supplemental support to students who are not reading on grade level (Scholastic, 2011). This project study was a program evaluation that encouraged social change by evaluating the validity of a program designed to increase the reading level of students. In addition, the program evaluation informed the school principal of the strengths and challenges associated with the program. The students may become better readers with the reading support provided by the program. Additionally, the skills taught in the program could potentially strengthen the overall academics of students thus improving grades and reducing the need for remedial support or possible grade level retention. Ultimately, the program has the potential to increase the high school graduation rate (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce & Fox, 2013).

**Beyond the Local Community**

The program evaluation could potentially influence research in the United States and abroad. Program evaluations are beneficial to other researchers who may be evaluating the same or a similar program and may be able to save resources by learning from the experiences proven to be both beneficial and limiting. One example of this would be the limits of the study as it relates to student success on standardized testing. A

closer analysis of the benefit *READ 180* has on student success on the SOL would have been favorable to the study. The experiences can guide those of a future evaluator. Another extensive impact is to add to current research conducted on reading intervention programs. Huang, SuHua (2012) investigated the "effectiveness of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program on middle school students' reading achievement and motivation" (p. 235). The evaluation of *READ 180* and the evaluation report can contribute to the research available on reading intervention programs.

## Conclusion

Section 3 highlighted the project goals, rationale for the project selection, review of supporting literature, implementation, and implications including social change. The project and evaluation report communicates the benefit of *READ 180* instruction in Virginia and its effect on the students, local middle school, and surrounding community.

In the next section, conclusions and reflections will be provided. The researcher will discuss the evaluation report which outlines the strengths and limitations in addressing the reading weakness of middle school students. Additionally, recommendations for addressing some of those weaknesses will be outlined. An analysis of my doctoral experience in relation to scholarship, project development and evaluation, leadership and change will be discussed.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

## Introduction

The study *Addressing Gaps in Student Reading: READ 180 Program Evaluation* was conducted to determine the impact the implementation of *READ 180* had on improving middle school student's reading. The program was implemented to address the school division's concern with students reading one or two grade levels behind. A program evaluation was conducted to examine the effectiveness of *READ 180.* The research provides a visual perspective of the affect the program had on student reading success. Based on the results of the interviews and the analysis of the test results, it was suggested that the program be continued at the local middle school.

Section 4 will address the strengths and limitations of the program, recommendations for addressing the problems, and a summary of what was learned about scholarship, project development, and leadership. What I learned about myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer will also be shared. The general value of the project study will be discussed as well as implications, applications, and directions for future research.

## Project Strengths

The strength of this program evaluation is that it entailed both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The interviews and data analyses provided me with information to present to school division leaders. The information collected provides a tool for school division leaders to make decisions regarding the future of the program. The project study includes an evaluation report, which outlines the findings after analyzing all of the data

and my recommendations to make the program more effective and sustainable.

The broader strength of the program evaluation is that the generated data will not only support the school division in which it was conducted, but also other schools in the state and nationally using the program with the same or similar dynamics. My evaluation reveals the benefits of implementing the *READ 180* program to improve student reading at the middle school level.

## Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

The program evaluation was not without limitations. One limitation of the study was that only 30 students were selected as the sample. The test scores of a larger student sample would have made the *t* test more valid by providing a broader perspective. Another limitation is that student achievement may not have been totally attributed to the *READ 180* program as students could have received support from other remediation sources or regular classroom instruction. *READ 180* students still take their grade level English course, which could have contributed to their increase in reading ability. Additionally, some students may have received private tutoring to support their reading deficiencies.

To address the limitations, I would suggest using the data of all students enrolled in the program during the period in which it is being studied or use a smaller number as done in this study, but at multiple middle schools in the division. It would be virtually impossible to completely eliminate the multiple treatment interference, as the *READ 180* is not meant to replace a student's English course; hence, that instruction would always be provided in conjunction with the program. It would be difficult to determine if

improvement was solely a result of the intervention. However, students could be surveyed as a part of the study to provide information from a student's perspective about contributions to their success.

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Determining the effectiveness of *READ* 180 was best explored through a program evaluation. The role of an evaluator does not come without making solid recommendations base on the evaluation (Volcov, 2011). The evaluator made several recommendations in the evaluation report. The recommendations were based on the evaluation data and a review of the literature on evaluation reporting. The recommendations included continuing the *READ 180* program with updated materials and resources. Updated resources are essential when implementing educational initiatives (Sun & Yao 2012). The evaluation data found that the program helped to improve student reading ability; however, the materials were dated and less authentic. Masoumi (2015) stated that authentic materials should be used to support student learning. This recommendation stemmed from teacher interviews and SRI data.

Another suggestion is to appoint a *READ 180* coordinator to oversee the program. This recommendation was derived from teacher interviews about the need for updated materials, the importance of the program being run with fidelity, and the need for additional licenses. If an employee was responsible for monitoring the program across the city, it would be easy to address these concerns. Monitoring programs ensures that programs are being used and used in the manner intended (Kaucheck & Marcinkowski (2010). Sufficient monitoring could contribute to the success of this program.

## Scholarship

Kriner, Coffman, Adkisson, Putman, and Monaghan (2015) stated that participation in a doctoral program can be a transformative experience that molds the identity of the learner. My doctoral journey proved to me that scholarship is an intense process. My overall understanding of conducting research and scholarly writing has been forever changed. Scholarship is an intricate process combining critical thinking and involves listening, teaching, discovering, integrating, and applying (McLay, 2013). A scholar must be willing to put forth great effort and cannot be swayed to give up regardless of how difficult the process becomes. I learned to be very diligent in the pursuit of my goals and to be disciplined in the organization of my time. I was forced to prioritize and balance my responsibilities as it related to this study, my career, family, friends, and just time for myself. I was transformed into a scholar as a result of this process.

Walden's doctoral process revealed that I was not as strong of a writer as I thought. I relied on the rubric, Writing Center, and my APA manual to help guide my writing. Even with those resources in place, I still endured intense corrections to almost every draft. I learned to appreciate growth and to celebrate every success, including the small ones. I now understand scholarly writing and its value when communicating research information.

Scholarship helps one to become an independent thinker, researcher, and writer (Kriner et al., 2015). There were many occasions in which I wished for guidance that was simply not provided in this type of process. I learned to read, research, reread, and

research more to find answers to my own questions. I discovered how to build a foundation of knowledge that will help me contribute to the field of education by becoming a developer of new information.

## Project Development and Evaluation

Project development was a very detailed process. I began the process by discussing possible project options with the principal of the school in which I was working. She presented three programs that needed evaluating. It was difficult to decide which one to evaluate, but I made my selection by following my passion. From there, I made sure my project would be relevant by verifying that I would be able to communicate the findings in a way that would connect the problem. It was important to design the project in a way that would bring about the best results. To do this, I talked through my ideas with the school principal and instructional specialist. They shared valuable information and I used several of their suggestions throughout my project.

A component of my project required the creation of an evaluation report to share the findings of the program evaluation. As I developed the project, it was imperative that I kept in mind the information that would be most beneficial to my school division. I carefully analyzed every detail of my findings and to make the necessary connections between the interviews and the student test data. The evaluation report allowed me to present critical information to the school division leaders that would allow them to make informed decisions about the *READ 180* program.

## Leadership and Change

Leaders are responsible for making decisions that will bring forth change to

benefit the needs of the stakeholders being served (Braxton & Luckey, 2010). Braxton and Luckey (2010) believed that leaders should bring change in the form of solving current and relevant problems. With the expectation that leaders will make decisions that will influence change in the school environment and the local community (Braxton & Luckey, 2010), this experience has prepared me for this challenge. I have become a scholarly leader, which has enabled me to not only bring change but also positively impact public discussion (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997).

This doctoral process has taught me that effective leadership promotes positive change. Although I served as a leader in many capacities prior to this journey, my philosophy on leadership was confirmed. A great leader is a visionary and must be able to move a process forward with the end in mind. There were many days when I did not believe that the end existed, but reminding myself of my purpose and my belief in the power of lifelong learning guided me through the journey.

## Analysis of Self as Scholar

The word *scholar* means something completely different to me now than at the beginning of this journey. So many aspects of my life both personally and professionally have changed as a result of this doctoral experience. From the proposal of a research topic to the reporting of findings, I am now able to produce meaningful data that could provide support and insight to many. I discovered the process of obtaining a deeper understanding of the problems that surround a topic as well as the ability to think at a level high enough to provide effective solutions and valuable outcomes. I have learned a set of research skills that have empowered me to bring about social change in the

educational setting.

The balance of work, home, and school was the most overwhelming aspect of this journey. It was because of my followers, grace and mercy, that I was able to sustain. Throughout this journey, I maintained a household with two active boys under the age of 10, two promotions, the purchase of a second home, and the death of the matriarch of my family. Each experience slowed down my progress and tainted my drive to move forward, but giving up was never an option. Through it all, I have become a critical reader, stronger writer, better manager of time, and a more humbled individual.

## Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As the practitioner, I applied the skills learned on this journey to complete a final project. The project included the evaluation of a program and a summative evaluation report of the findings. I have always credited myself for being a lifelong learner, always reading educational articles and staying abreast of current information as it related to my profession. However, so much of my learning prior to this experience was theory based. I realized that there were very few opportunities to practice in my past educational opportunities. This doctoral experience allowed me to combine the theory and the practice as I created my project. It actually was not until the end of my project as I created my evaluation report that it all came full circle for me. All that I learned was solidified as I was able to analyze and explain what my research meant. The value of theory and practice became relevant.

As an educational leader, I have been able to apply so many of the skills that I have learned on my doctoral journey to this role. I have learned that when starting new

initiatives in a school or division, follow up training and efficient monitoring is key. As leaders, we tend to find solutions, implement them, train the stakeholders involved, and then walk away. Effective monitoring and sufficient follow-up does not always happen on the level that it should. This journey has taught me the importance of not just sharing and implementing new ideas and concepts, but also making the monitoring and follow-up a step in that process.

## Analysis of Self as Project Developer

The project development was probably the most confusing part of the process. It took a lot of research and repeated reading of the rubric and other resources to understand the expectation and requirements of creating a project. Once I gathered the understanding that the evaluation report was merely a summarization of my findings without all of the research it took to get those findings, it all resonated for me.

To reach the point of creating the evaluation report, I first had to make sure that it was relevant and research-based. The test data were fairly cut and dry and easy to incorporate into a report. I spent a great deal of time reviewing literature and reflecting upon the themes and subthemes from the teacher interviews to include in the evaluation report. My love of the middle school student combined with my passion for creating successful readers made this project study exciting and rewarding for me.

## The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This project study determined the value a reading program has on improving student reading in a Virginia middle school. The study revealed that the *READ 180* program had a positive effect on the improvement of student reading. The evaluation of

the program focused on the SRI and SOL scores of students who had been exposed to the program for 1 school year and the opinions about the success of the program as reported by the teachers who taught *READ 180.* Although this study focused on only one school, research and literature exists that show the need to improve student reading across the nation.

The results of my program evaluation produced promising results about the impact *READ 180* had on improving student reading. The feedback provided by the teachers and the results of the student's SRI pre- and posttest show that the program has positively enhanced the student's reading ability. The SOL scores did not show that the program had an effect, but this could be due to the limitations of the type of research conducted. This limitation will be further discussed in the next subsection.

My evaluation report, which comprised the project findings and recommendations for improvement, identifies the effectiveness of *READ 180* in meeting the reading needs of middle school students. With the proper implementation, my recommendations, and the possible recommendations of future researchers, *READ 180* could provide school leaders locally and nationally an intervention to improve student reading. Social change will occur as finding the right reading intervention(s) for struggling students may better prepare students for on-grade level instruction, lead to reduced grade retention, increase the graduation rate, positively impact SOL reading scores, and ultimately, impact students' postsecondary opportunities in life.

## Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

In the study, I examined the effect of a remedial reading program on student

success at one middle school; however, the results could benefit other middle schools in the division as well. Although the research site is significantly different from most others in the division with the high number of economically disadvantaged students, others could benefit from the program evaluation and project development as the *READ 180* program exists in all of the middle schools. While the study may bring about different results at other schools based on the overall dynamics of the schools, my study could serve as a model for other evaluations.

The data included in this research were limited to the test results of 30 students and perception of four program teachers at one middle school. Future research could be expanded to other schools in the division, state, or nation to provide a broader demographic scope from more diverse school settings. Determining the affect the program has on students in more affluent communities could bring about totally different results. Additional research would certainly be beneficial in determining the value the program has on reading SOL scores. The data analyzed in this study was very limited. A quantitative experimental approach comparing a treatment group to a nontreatment group would provide more valuable data in regard to the effectiveness *READ 180* had the reading performance of students.

As I reflect this doctoral journey, I ponder the reasons I actually started this journey. It was not to make an impact on education, obtain a higher degree, or prepare myself for a future job title. There were many days that I questioned my ability to finish the journey and became frustrated to have started such a time consuming and expensive endeavor. While I am still unable to pinpoint my exact reason for starting, I have been

convinced of my reason to finish. I am humbled by the experience and all of the valuable lessons that I have learned. I am a better wife, mother, daughter, leader, learner, researcher, and overall person as a result of the perseverance, time management skills, mental strength, and leadership expertise I have developed. The attainment of the doctoral degree is phenomenal, but the research and support that I was able to provide my school division to help at-promise students is priceless and undoubtedly the reason I finished.

## Conclusion

This section provided a reflection of my study, the process, and myself as a researcher. The program evaluation acknowledged that student participants made reasonable gains in reading which supports the value of the *READ 180* program. A mixed-methods approach was used to determine the effectiveness through student test data and teacher interviews. Triangulation of this data allowed me to obtain a more complete picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. As a result of the evaluation findings, an evaluation report was selected as the doctoral project.

Reflections within this section also include an analysis of scholarship, project development, leadership, and social change. A summary of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer is included based on my personal experiences throughout this journey. Finally, implications for future research were shared.

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Appendix A: Evaluation Report

# Evaluation of the *READ 180* Program

Report findings based on the 2013-14 school year in a Virginia Middle School

Doctoral Candidate at Walden University

By

Shonda Pittman-Windham

June 2015

Using the Context, Input, Process, and Product Evaluation Model to Guide the Evaluation of the READ 180 Program

| *CIPP Evaluation Model Components Evaluation used in this Evaluation* | *Methods used in READ 180* |
|---|---|
| **Component I: Context Evaluation**<br><br>Identify the needs, assets, and the problem. | • Identify the problem<br>• Review relevant literature<br>• Compile and assess background information about the READ 180 program<br>• Discuss with principal the purpose the program is intended to serve |
| **Component II: Product Evaluation**<br>Measure, interpret, and judge program outcomes and interpret their merit. | • Interview teachers to determine the program's positive and negative outcomes<br>• Analyze results of the SRI Pre- and Posttest of 30 randomly selected students<br>• Analyze results of the SOL reading scores of the same 30 students<br>• Assess the impact does *READ 180* had on student success as measured by SOL scores<br>• Assess how program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores changed after *READ 180*<br>• Share a summative evaluation report with the principal and other interested stakeholders |

## Introduction

As a doctoral candidate for Walden University, I would like to present this Program Evaluation Report to the participating school division. This report includes evaluation data about the *READ 180* program at a Virginia middle school. The program was implemented in 2007 to raise reading achievement for struggling middle school readers. The principal at the participating school wanted to know if student reading skills were improving as a result of the *READ 180* program. Within this report, the findings of a program evaluation based on the 2013-14 Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) pre- and posttest results, Standards of Learning (SOL) reading results, and teacher interviews are discussed.

## Context of the Evaluation

### Population

One Virginia middle school was chosen as the unit of analysis to determine the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program in this context. The inner-city school serves Grades 6 through 8 and has received Title I funds since July of 2012 because it serves an at-risk student population, where 84% of students receive free and reduced lunch based on 2010-2011 data. There are approximately 950 students, with the dominant race being African American at 86% (817 students), followed by Caucasian American at 11% (104 students), and Hispanic American at 3% (29 students). Of these percentages 41% (389 students) are Title I students. With regards to academic proficiencies, pass rates on SOL assessments were 59% in reading, 72% in math, 79% in history, and 69% in science in the 2012 school year (VDOE, 2013). While the school's three-year average has allowed

the school to remain fully accredited, there is need for improvement.

**The Problem**

The division's search for methods to improve student reading led to the implementation of the *READ 180* program. While *READ 180* was the chosen program, other reading programs such as *Voyager, Soar* to *Success*, and *Horizons* were examined by the committee of school division officials. *READ 180* was chosen because research supported the success of this program in comparison to others (R. Shirley, personal communication, July 11, 2013). Students are identified for the *READ 180* program based on their SRI score. The SRI is a computer-based program that assesses student reading and provides immediate data on students (Scholastic Read 180, 2009). SOLs are the public school's standardized testing program that provide learning and achievement expectations for specific subjects in grades K-12 in the Commonwealth of Virginia (VDOE, 2012).

The need to pass standardized tests has left students around the nation struggling to meet the criteria (Winter et al., 2010). School division leaders have been investigating various indicators to determine where the problem with reading lies with today's students. A local study in this school division suggests that deficits in vocabulary are intrinsically related to the lack of student reading success (Flannigan, 2012). Other contributors to unsuccessful middle school readers that have been identified are comprehension, fluency, language differences, word reading, and definition description (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Although students in this division were excelling in local benchmarks, there was a need to improve on state standardized tests (Walker, 2010). The

division began searching for methods for improvement and soon after implemented the *READ 180* program. The ultimate goal of this program evaluation was to determine if the program is meeting the academic needs of students to improve reading skills.

**READ 180**

*READ 180* is a reading intervention program designed to provide individualized instruction to meet the reading needs of each student. The program is designed to raise reading achievement for struggling readers from grade 4 through 12 with an inclusive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development (Scholastics, 2009). *READ 180* is intended for any student reading two or more years below grade level. Data is collected based on individual responses and instruction is adjusted to meet the needs of each student at their level, accelerating their path to reading mastery (Scholastics, 2009). *READ 180* was designed to push students toward independent learning with rigorous, grade-level text.

During a *READ 180* lesson, students are exposed to a variety of learning stations. Teachers begin and end each class session with whole-group instruction. After which, the students break into one of three rotations. First, the teacher leads small-group instruction using the *READ 180* work text and monitors reading and differentiated instruction based on students' needs. Second, students work independently in the *READ 180* software. The software guides students through five Learning Zones: the Reading Zone, the Word Zone, the Spelling Zone, the Success Zone, and the Writing Zone. Independent student reading is the next step. Students select from the *READ 180* paperback or audiobook library and read a fiction or nonfiction book. Finally, students go back to whole-group instruction to

wrap up. Data produced from the program allows the teacher to remediate and provide interventions based on the individual needs of each student (Scholastic, 2009).

**Data Collection/Analyses**

A program evaluation using mixed methods was completed on the *READ 180* program. Program evaluations are completed to explore specific information about the success of programs (Yong-Lynn, 2011). Summative evaluations are used to conclude the participant satisfaction, effectiveness of a program, and whether a program should be replaced or sustained (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Summative evaluation data were gathered on *READ 180* to measure a learner's development in reading ability at a particular time.

As an external evaluator for this study, the Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) Model was used to assess and report the merit and significance of the *READ 180* program. The CIPP model for evaluation is a comprehensive framework used to guide the evaluations of programs (Stufflebeam, 1972). This model contains four primary components; context, input, process and product. These components can be viewed as separate forms of evaluation (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). For the purposes of this evaluation, only two components of the model were used.

This study highlights for school division leaders the success of a method used to improve student reading. The evaluation of the *READ 180* program was conducted to determine the program's effectiveness in improving student reading as measured by the SRI and SOL assessments for middle school students at one local middle school. The evaluation objectives were as follows:

- To collect teacher opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of the *READ 180* program through one-on-one interviews
- To document change in the performance of the program participants on the SRI test
- To document student participant performance on the reading section of the Standards of Learning

The evaluation objectives were used to derive the following research questions:

1. What affect does *READ 180* have on improvement in student reading?
2. What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
3. What impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by Standards of Learning scores?
4. How did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program?

In order to gather the perspective of the teachers who teach *READ 180*, four informal interviews were conducted with program teachers. A paired sample *t* test analyzing the pre and post SRI scores of 30 students was used to determine if there was significant change in student performance. Data were used to determine if the program enhanced students' reading ability. Each grade level was analyzed separately and the average pre- and posttest score, median and mode was calculated. The average change in pre- and posttest scores was also calculated. Finally, descriptive statistics were generated on the student's 2014 reading SOL scores of the same 30 students.

## Product of the Evaluation

### Evaluation Findings

The qualitative portion of the research disclosed the findings from the four individual teacher interviews. They provided their perception of the *READ 180* program and its effectiveness on student reading. Six themes emerged from the guided interviews with the *READ 180* teachers. The teachers provided very detailed responses about their experiences with the program. Figure 1 displays the subthemes that emerged about the training opportunities for teachers with regard to the remedial reading program. Only one of the four teachers interviewed was able to attend the Summer Institute. This was bonus training as the teacher was elected as the *READ 180* Teacher of the Year. It was apparent that all teachers felt the training provided was sufficient and that the ongoing support from Scholastic is essential.

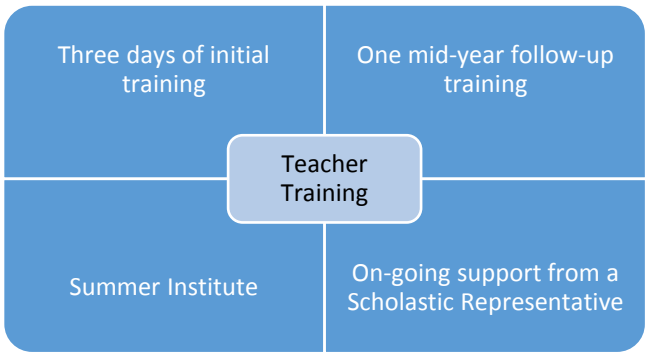



*Figure 1*. Shows the four specific subthemes that emerged from teacher interviews with regard to *READ 180* training provided to teachers.

Based upon the teacher responses, the process used to identify students for the program is consistent (See Figure 2). There are sometimes other factors that must be considered such as other remediation needs and exceptions that may be made to place

students in or allow them to remain in the program, but there are three areas that are consistently examined and have been identified as subthemes.

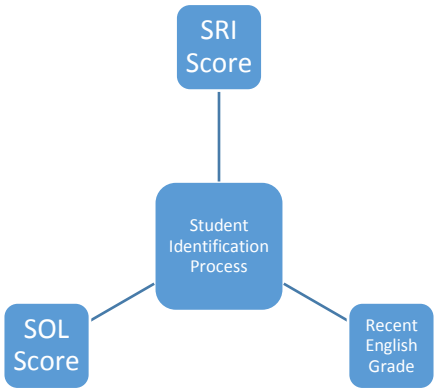



*Figure 2.* Shows the three areas examined when selecting students to participate in the *READ 180* program.

Teachers presented a number of reasons why students struggle in reading. While all teachers felt that nonfiction text presented the biggest struggle from students, majority of the teachers also attributed poor comprehension, lack of background knowledge and focus as struggles. Teachers shared that the *READ 180* program is designed to combat many of these struggles for students. For example, because nonfiction text is more difficult for students, the program includes a large number of nonfiction reading to offer students more experience with the text.

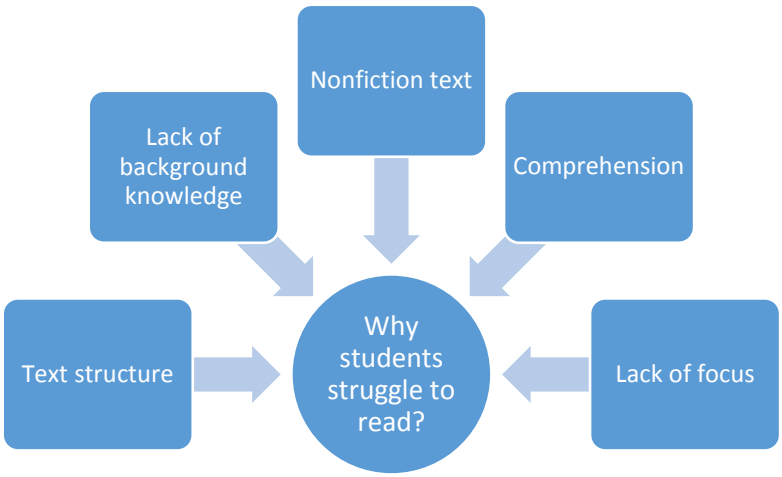


*Figure 3.* Illustrates the five reasons teachers feel students struggle to read.

The teachers felt that the materials and technology used in the *READ 180* classroom are theoretically amazing, more so when the program initially started in 2007. Over time the materials have become outdated. The extended time without an upgrade in materials has forced the program to lose its authenticity. Teachers have always supplemented their lessons with additional activities, but have to do so more often than not as materials become more outdated. While it was evident that the outdated materials were a huge concern for each teacher interviewed, they remained supportive of the overall value of the program to students. In fact, teachers shared that limited licenses available for the program have eliminated students that could really benefit from the program (See Figure 4).

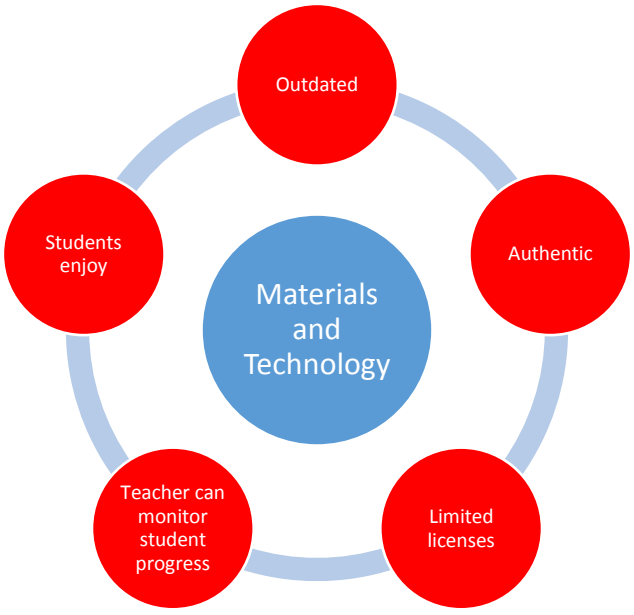



*Figure 4*. Illustrates the five subthemes that emerged when teachers were interviewed about the material and technology used in the program.

Following the teacher's perspective about their favorite part of the *READ 180*

process, two themes emerged. All four teachers discussed the benefit that the small increments of time students spend at each station had on student success. Students tend to remain focused as a result of the variety of stations explored during the class (see Figure 5). Each of the four teachers interviewed also shared that having students experience success is another great part of the program. One teacher shared that many students in the program have never experienced success. Seeing the students excited about independent reading time and actively monitoring their own progress is priceless (See Figure 5).

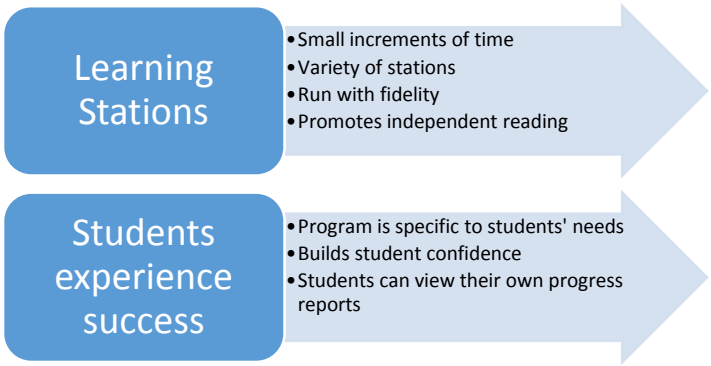



*Figure 5*. Displays two themes and the subthemes of each derived from the teacher interview question asking teachers to share their favorite part of the program.

**Quantitative results.** The quantitative results are shown using graphics for visual representations. The charts are presented by grade level followed by the overall results of all grade levels combined. Charts 1-7 represent the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) pre- and posttest results from the student sample of program participants. The analyses of the SOL reading scores of the program participants are shown in charts 8-11.

**SRI Results.** Chart 1 shows that of the ten students, all but two showed growth from the pre- to the posttest. Oddly, chart 2 shows that the minimum score was lower on

the posttest than on the pretest. The mean score for 6th grade students showed an increase of 87 points indicating that reading achievement for students did improve.

Seventh grade students showed similar results as the sixth grade. All students showed growth in pre- to posttest results with the exception of two as shown in Chart 3. The mean score increased by 75 points indicating student growth in reading. The data in Chart 4 indicates that the minimum score did not change from the pre-to posttest. This type of consistency in scores is not normal. Typically there is an increase in the posttest score.

Chart 1

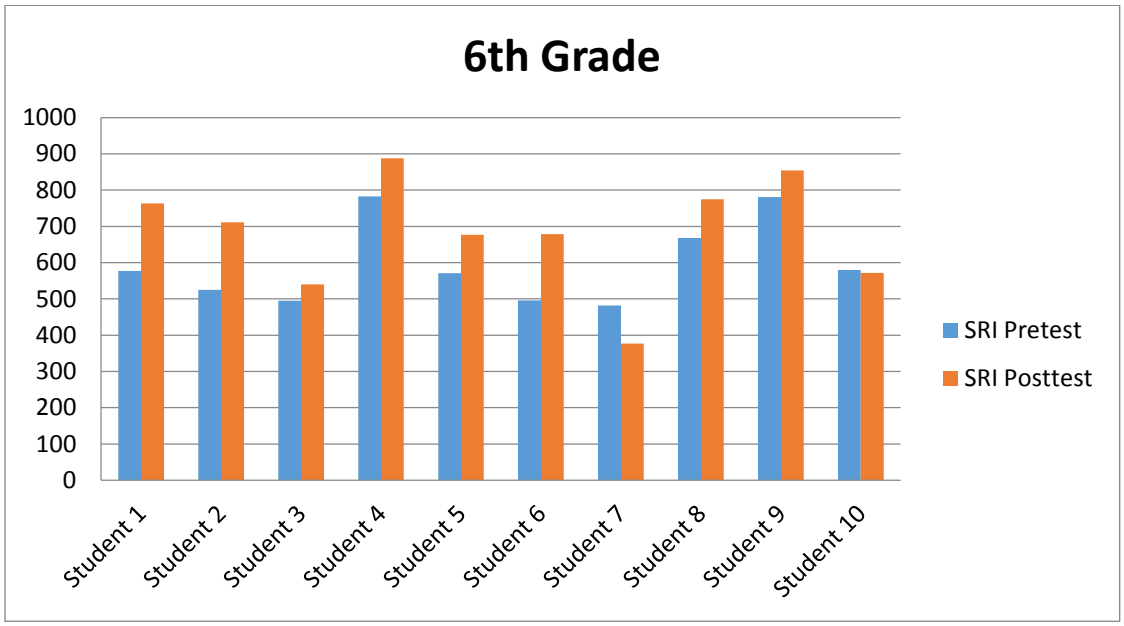


Chart 2

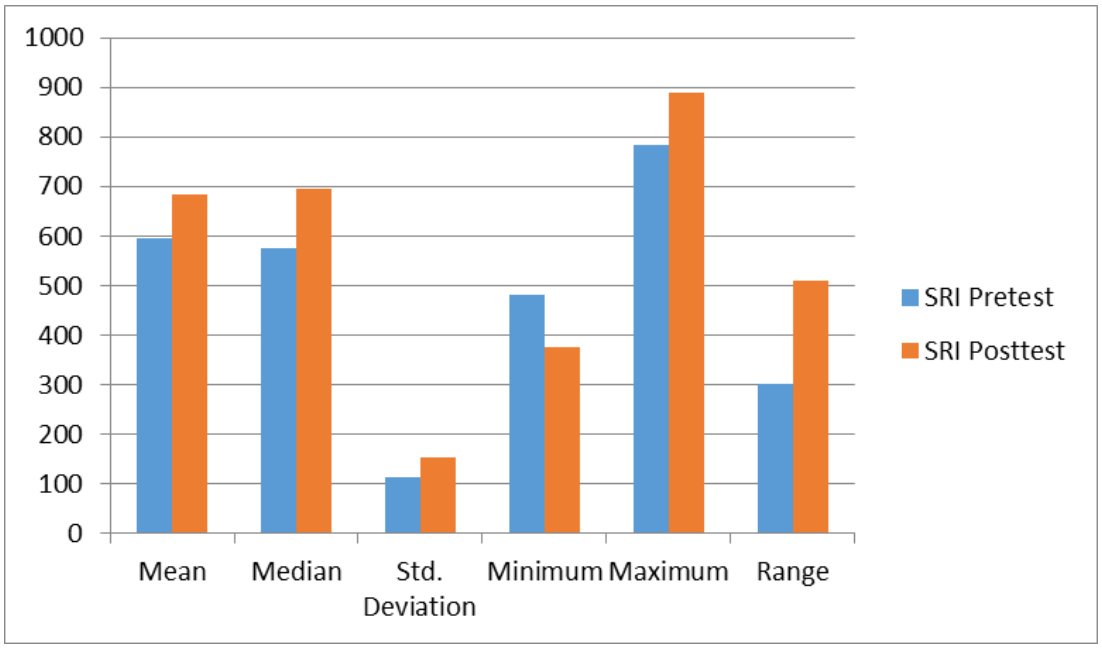



Chart 3

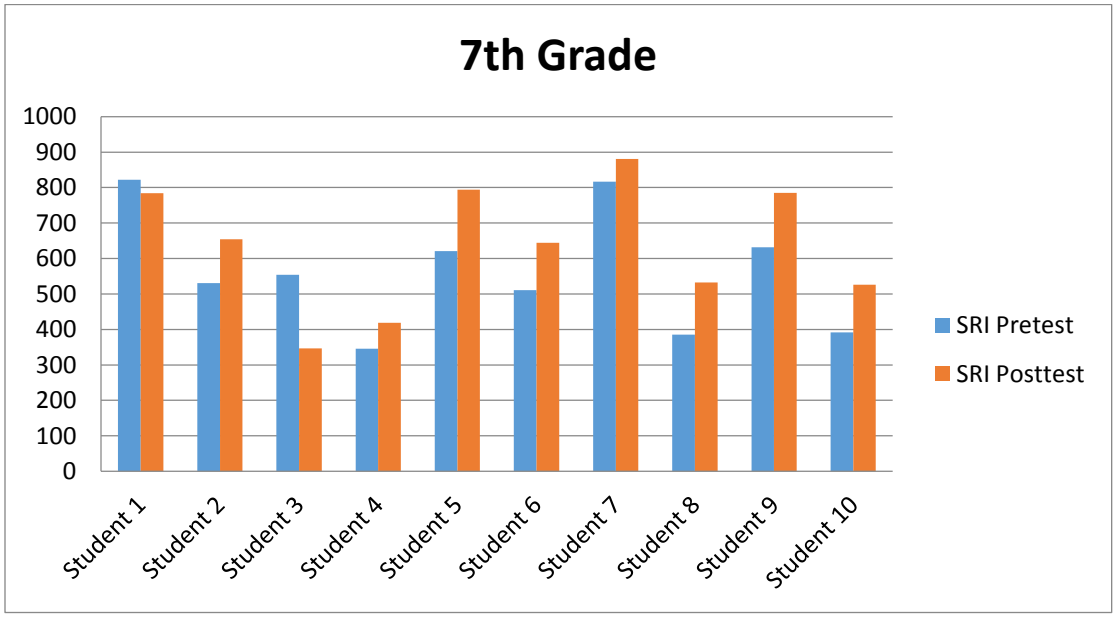


Chart 4

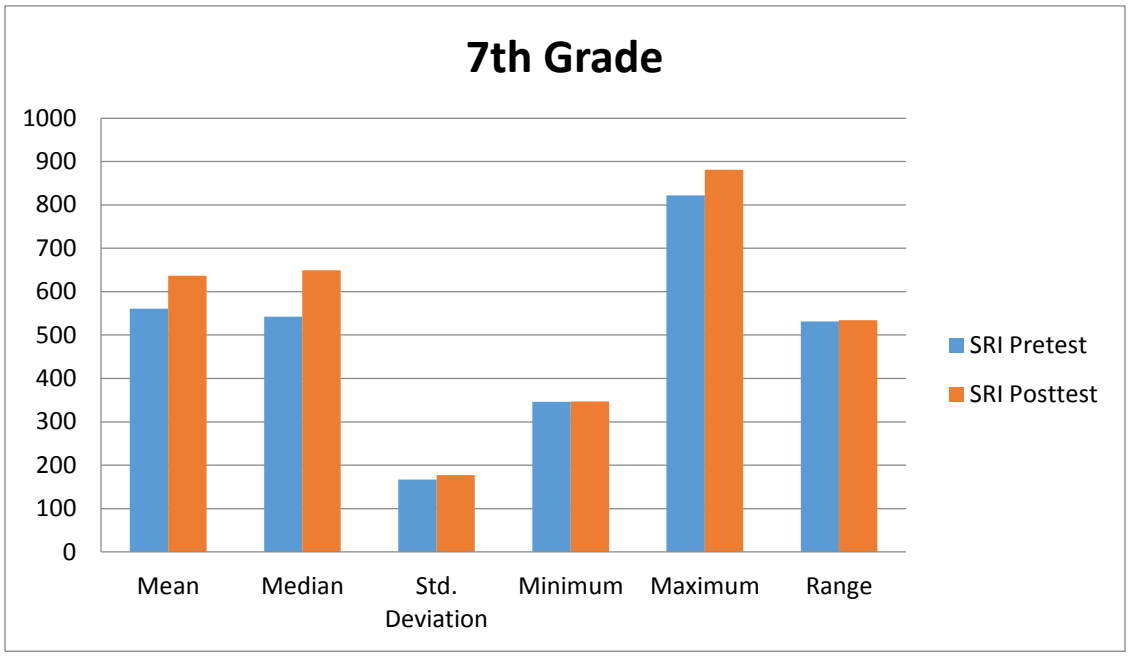
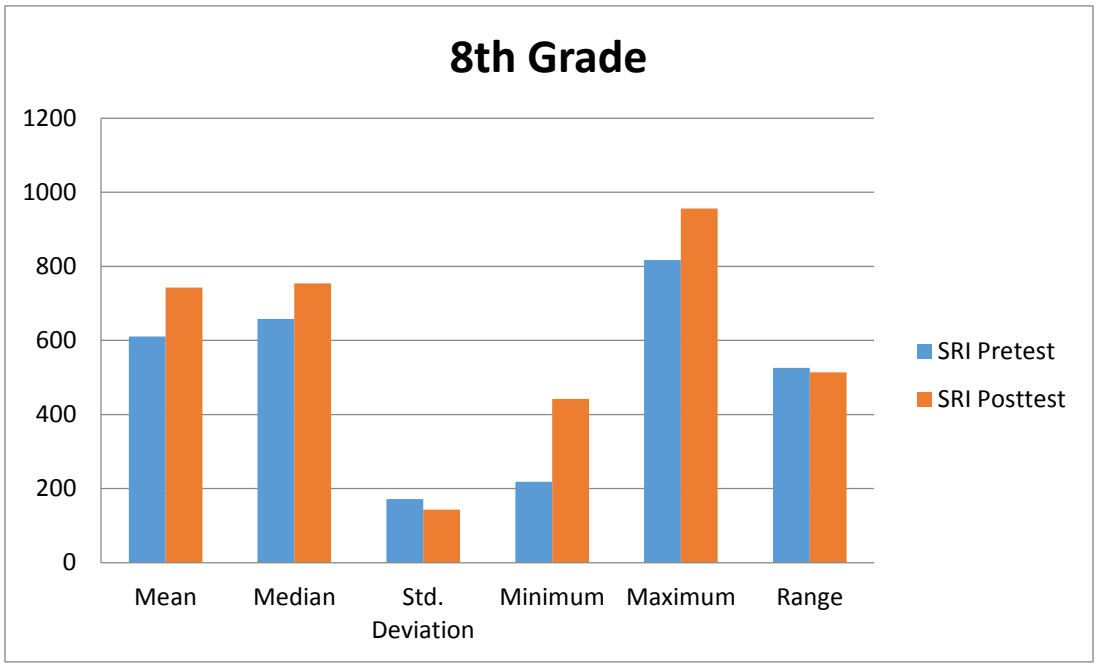



Chart 5



The 8th grade SRI data showed a 132 point gain in the mean score, also indicating student growth in reading. Chart 6 demonstrates growth from each student with the exception of one. Both the minimum and maximum scores increased for 8th grade students on the pre-and posttest.

Chart 7 shows a visual image the SRI pre- and posttest results for the full sample of thirty 6th through 8th grade students. The pretest average score was 589.23 and the posttest average score was 687.63, hence there was significant improvement in student reading. The median scores increased from 593.50 to 704.50 between the pre- and posttest. The minimum score from the pre- to posttest increased from 218 to 347 and the maximum score also increased from 822 to 956.

Chart 6

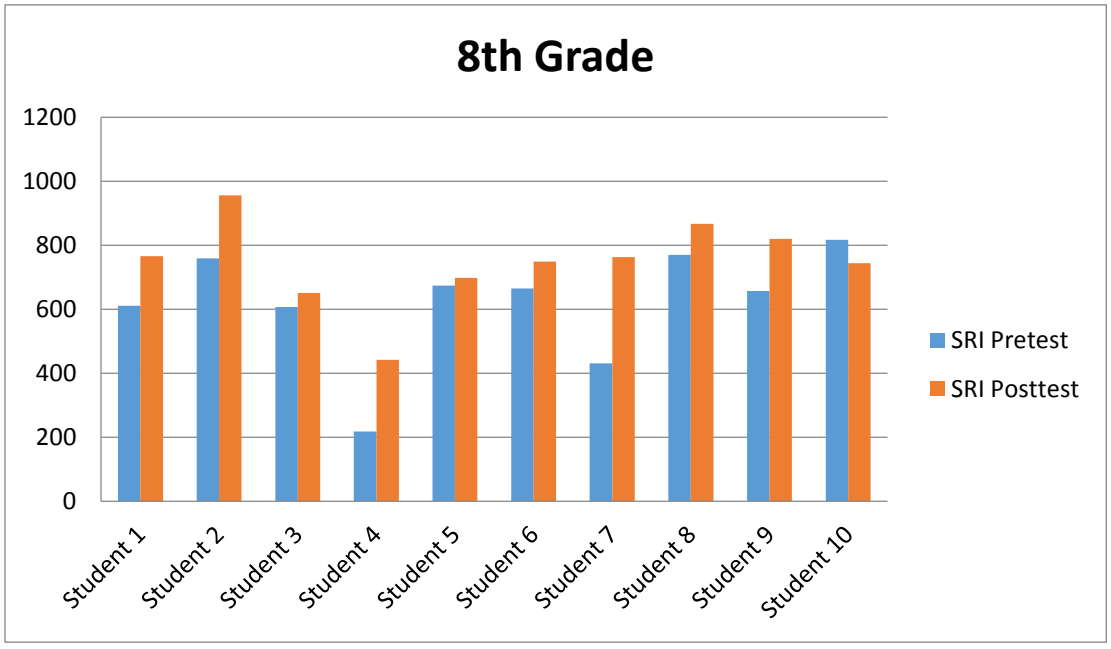
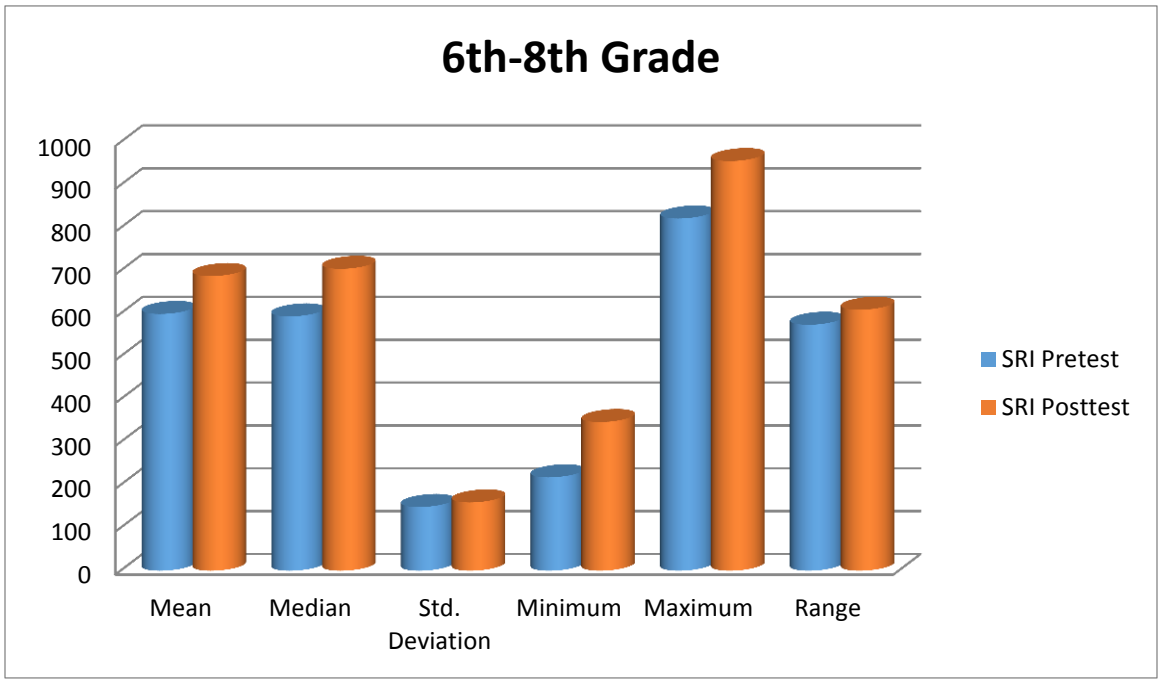


Chart 7




**SOL Result**s. While the SRI results showed significant growth in student reading success from the pre- to the posttest, the reading SOL results did not show the same success. There is not a pre assessment for the SOL test to compare the results of the post, however, a minimum score has been set by the state to define student proficiency in reading. That minimum score is 400. Charts 8-10 show the results of each grade level. Chart 8 shows that none of the 6th grade students met the minimum score requirement to show proficiency in reading. One 7th grade student met the passing score as shown in chart 9. Finally, chart 10 also shows that one student passed the assessment. Of the thirty students analyzed in this study, two of them passed the reading SOL. This is 6.67% of the student sample.

Chart 8

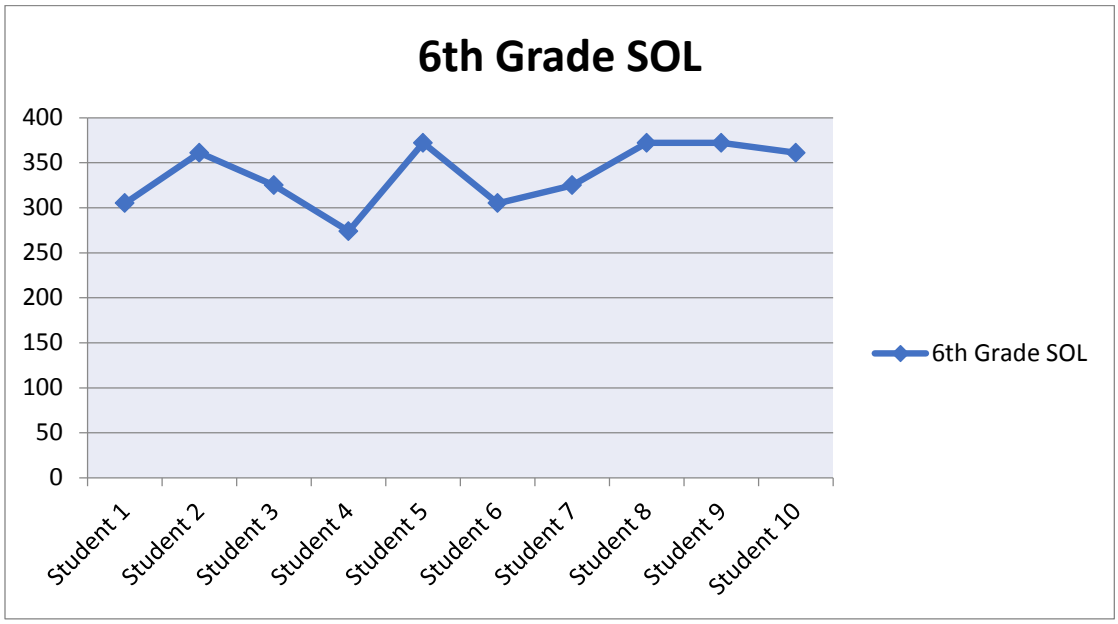



Chart 9

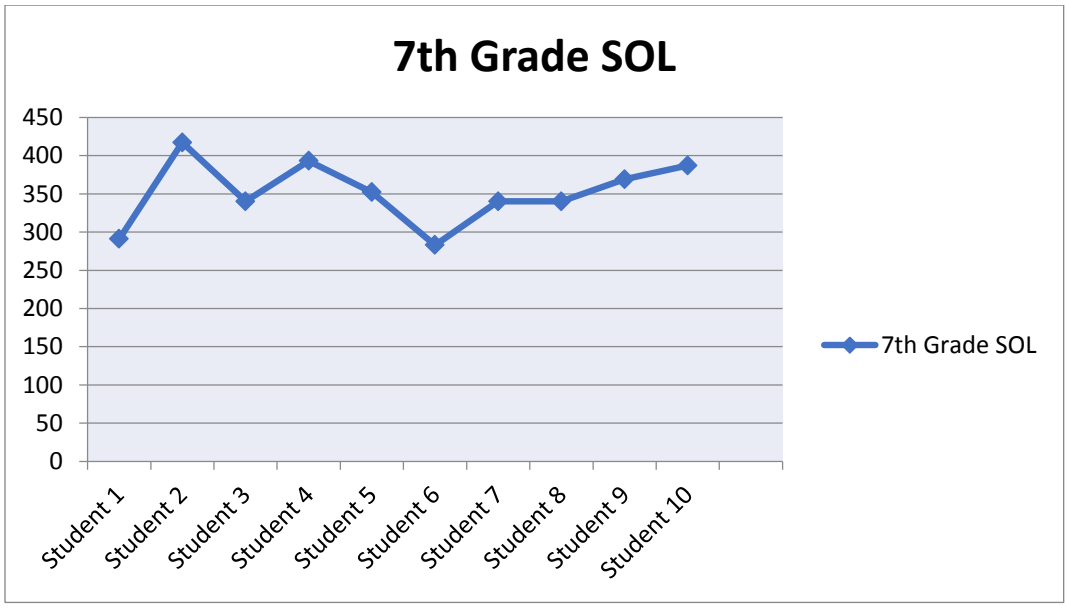
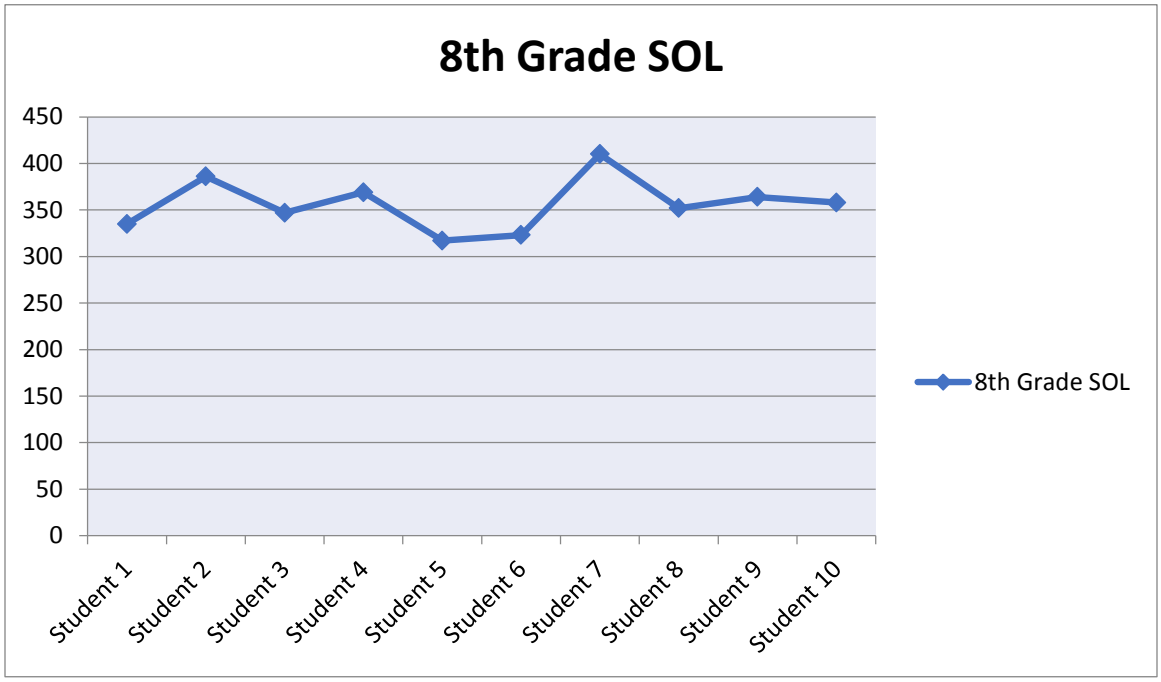


Chart 10




**Recommendations**

One recommendation for the school division is to continue the use of the *READ 180* program with updated materials. The updated program could be taught in the same classrooms with the existing teachers who currently teach the program. Resources such as computers, headphones and small group stations would not have to be changed. Updated books and software would be needed with a newer version. While this suggestion would not be mandatory with an upgrade, I recommend that a *READ 180* coordinator is appointed to ensure that the program is run with fidelity across the division as this is a vital requirement of the program's success. This could be a new position or a task added to the job description of a current position already in place.

The suggestion of appointing a *READ 180* coordinator leads to my second

recommendation of monitoring the implementation of the *READ 180* program at all schools within the school division. This monitoring would assist the division in identifying the need for the program at all schools, as well as, the level of fidelity in which it is being implemented. Determining the need of the program at all of the schools currently using it could help with my final recommendation which is to increase the number of licenses available to students who could benefit from the program. Adequate monitoring of the program would help to identify where more licenses are needed and where licenses are not needed.

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Appendix B: Demographics of Participants

*To ensure confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used.*

| Participants | Current Occupation | Current Grade Level Taught | Previous Experience | Total Years of Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher A | READ 180 Teacher | 6-8 | High school English (9-12 grade) | 12 |
| Teacher B | READ 180 Teacher | 6-8 | 3rd grade teacher & Elementary Reading Specialist | 19 |
| Teacher C | READ 180 Teacher | 6-8 | Elementary and Middle School Special Education teacher (all core subjects) | 21 |
| Teacher D | READ 180 Teacher | 6-8 | 6th and 8th grade teacher | 25 |

Appendix C: Data Concept Map

*To ensure confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used.*

| **Participants** | **Data Source** | **Research Question #1** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program? | |
| | | ***Advantages:*** | ***Disadvantages:*** |
| Teacher A | Interview | Technology; variety of learning stations; tangible progress for students; authentic materials; support from Scholastic | Outdated books; large class size; |
| Teacher B | Interview | Technology; ongoing support from Scholastic; Authentic Materials; focuses on nonfiction text structure; variety of learning stations; ability for the teacher and students to track progress; | Outdated Materials; limited student licenses |
| Teacher C | Interview | Small group instruction; promotes independent reading, students experience success; variety of learning station; authentic materials; ongoing support from scholastic | Outdated materials; limited student licenses |
| Teacher D | Interview | Variety of learning stations; students experience success; technology; authentic materials | Outdated books; limited student licenses |
| **Participants** | **Data Source** | **Research Question #1** | |
| | | What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program? | |

Appendix D: Themes and Subthemes

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|
| Training | • Three days of initial training<br>• Follow up training midyear<br>• Ongoing support from Scholastics<br>• Summer institute--not available to all teachers |
| Student identification | • SRI score<br>• SOL score<br>• Fair<br>• English grade |
| Reading struggles | • Lack of background knowledge<br>• Comprehension<br>• Text structure<br>• Nonfiction text<br>• Lack of focus |
| Materials and Technology | • Outdated books/software<br>• Limited space and licenses<br>• Teachers can gauge student progress<br>• Students enjoy topics<br>• Authentic materials |
| Learning Stations | • Small increments of station time for students<br>• Variety of stations<br>• Promotes independent reading<br>• Run with fidelity |
| Students experience success | • Program is specific to student's needs<br>• Builds confidence<br>• Tangible progress reports for students |

# Appendix E: Research Questions

1. What affect does *READ 180* have on improvement in student reading?
2. What do teachers affiliated with READ 180 identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
3. What impact does READ 180 have on student success on standardized tests in reading as measured by Standards of Learning scores?
4. How did program participants' performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program?

Appendix F: Adult Consent Form

**ADULT CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to take part in a research project to evaluate the READ 180 program. The researcher is inviting all *READ 180* teachers participating in the *READ 180* Program to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Shonda Pittman-Windham, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know her as a former Assistant Principal or the Technology Integration Specialist, but this study is separate from that role.

**Background Information:**
The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the *READ 180* Program.

**Procedures:**
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in an audio-recorded one-on-one interview lasting approximately one hour in duration.
- Review study findings to verify that information accurately reflects your views and experiences. This process is called member checking and will take approximately one hour to complete. The findings will be emailed to you approximately 5 days after the interview and should be reviewed and returned to me via email within 5 days.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your school will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. Your decision to participate in the study or not will be respected by your building principal and I. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. If you decline or discontinue participation in the study, your relationship with me will not negatively be impacted.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue or boredom. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

I am hoping that your feedback helps the effectiveness of the *READ 180* program.

**Compensation:**
You will receive no compensation for participating in the study.

**Privacy:**
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure

by password protected laptops and locked file cabinets. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via telephone or email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University staff member who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **01-14-15-0172130** and it expires on **January 13, 2016.**

Please print or save this consent form for your records. You may also request a copy from the researcher at any time.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below or replying to this email with the words "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Participant's Signature_____Date_____

Researcher Signature_____Date_____

# Appendix G: Teacher Interview Protocol

*I am going to record this and all interviews to ensure accurate documentation of data. [press record]*

The purpose of this interview is to gain the perspective of teachers who teach *READ 180*. As a reminder, your participation is voluntary and appreciated. This interview should take thirty minutes or less.

1) How did you become affiliated with the *READ 180*?

2) What type of training did you receive to prepare you for teaching *READ 180*? Do you feel that this training was adequate?

3) Talk about the method used to identify students for *READ 180*. Do you feel that the identification process is fair?

4) Why do you feel that reading is a struggle for program participants? Describe how you feel the program specifically addressed the struggles of the students that you worked with in *READ 180*.

5) Describe your thoughts about the materials and technology that you used for *READ 180*.

6) What is your favorite part of the *READ 180* process?

7) What is your least favorite part of the *READ 180* process?

8) Do you feel that the *READ 180* program works? Why or why not?

9) What improvements do you feel could make the *READ 180* program better?

Appendix H: Interview Transcript-Teacher B

1) How did you become affiliated with the READ 180?

Actually, I had been teaching for 11 years, actually taught in an elementary school and I had just finished working on my reading endorsements and my assistant principal at the time came to me and said I talked to a principal at a middle school wants to know if we have any elementary school teachers that wouldn't mind working at a middle school. And she said well you just got your reading endorsement, what do you think about that? I said I have never thought about a middle school before. She says well I am going to put you in contact with her and we are going to see what happens. So I ended up coming to the middle school in April of 2007 for an interview with the principal and instruction specialist. During the interview they told me that they were interested in a program called READ 180, and asked if I had heard anything about it? And I told them that I had actually just finished school and they had talked a little bit about it. I shared the few things that I did know about it. And she says well ok we are looking piloting the program next year. I was hired and in the fall of 2007, two other teachers and I piloted the *READ 180* program at the middle school.

2) What type of training did you receive to prepare you for teaching READ 180? Do you feel that this training was adequate?

The Scholastic representative comes to do a three day training from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. That very first day of training was very overwhelming. The follow-up training happened in January, so it actually gave you a chance to get your feet wet, to really get to know the program, then the follow up training made much more sense. As the first to pilot the program, the first two years we were like a revolving door. We had national, local, state people in our classrooms at least forty plus times, and so we were always sharing with people who wanted to see what READ 180 was about and what it looked like. That was stressful but at the same time very rewarding because you knew what you were doing and you did what you were supposed to do.

Researcher: Are there any like yearly training or updated trainings, anything like that?

There aren't any updating trainings, but our representative is always available if we have any questions. We've always been able to e-mail her and in turn when she actually does training she provides our information so new teachers can come in and ask us questions. I have had teachers come back to the school to ask me question and to shadow me so that they'll know. I am also a little bit ambitious because I have been able to attend two READ 180 summer institutes, which has been very beneficial. I wrote a grant for the National Education

Association and received a $2,000 grant to actually attend the National Summer Institute in Orlando, Florida and that was an intensive summer workshop that lasted four days. I was actually able to learn a whole lot more from the summer institute. Then I was actually able to go back in 2012 because I was selected as the National READ 180 Teacher of the Year. And during that time I was able to go back again to the summer institute and learn a lot of information as well and also be rewarded for the work I've done with READ 180.

3) Talk about the method used to identify students for READ 180. Do you feel that the identification process is fair?

It's been a learning curve for us as we work with the program to fine tune it. The first thing we do is look at our current students who are in seventh and eighth grade and their reading SOL test scores. From that we start to put the students in categories - did they pass the SOL, did they not pass the SOL. For our sixth graders we look at their English grade. This information is obtained from their feeder elementary school. We also examine their SRI test and try to catch those students with a score between 400 and 850. This was a learning curve for us because we would accept students below 400 at one time and we found that some students are just too low to benefit from the program. Those students with phonetic weaknesses usually scored that low and we started to place them in Systems 44. So we have been able to distinguish that difference and we also take some students on a case by case basis, there might be a student that's a little bit below that and we can look at all their data and see if they may have fallen between the cracks and we can put them and move them forward as well.

Researcher: Now let me ask you this, when you say we, is there a committee at the school, is the decision made by one person, how does it work to determine which students actually get put into the program?

The Instructional Specialist and all of the READ 180 teachers are a part of the committee. We all decide together what is best for the kids. We do have a student enrollment of approximately 1,000 students, so we know we cannot reach everyone. We also limited licenses, so we try to get our best bang for our buck. We look at which students can we help and move forward with this program in the best amount of time. We will also look at the data again in January, have them take the SRI test again and see if we need to move some out to go back to their regular classes into what we call tier 3 where they can get that instruction and support from their classroom teacher during Core Plus. *READ 180* is considered tier 2, where we include those interventions in our instruction.

4) Why do you feel that reading is a struggle for program participants? Describe how you feel the program specifically addressed the struggles of the students that you worked with in READ 180.

One of the first things I noticed is that most of the students in the class don't think that have a reading struggle. What we find is that they can actually read and so their real struggle is really comprehension. We try to explain to them that is it's not just about their fluency but also comprehension. We find that through the years they have just been pushed along and we need to focus on comprehension strategies, we need to focus on main idea, and drawing conclusions, and problem and solution, and looking at non-fiction text, and breaking down the text structure because those are the skills they are weak in. We also find that we have a lot of students who have been identified as special education and what we realize is that they may get read aloud in other subjects but they don't get read aloud in English. So they continue to struggle because they are receiving that support and it has handicapped them in a sense. Students really struggle with non-fiction text. They like fiction text because it's easier. Non-fiction text is usually more difficult and is on a higher reading level for them, and so when they take the SOL test, that SOL test is on grade level, a lot of times with the fiction work that we give them might be below grade level and that's what they struggle with. And so what I do like about the READ 180 program is that it helps with that struggle. We have nine workshops and of the nine workshops, seven of them are non-fiction. So it really helps them focus on their non-fiction text structure, which is where they struggle. So I do appreciate that part of the program.

5) Describe your thoughts about the materials and technology that you used for READ 180.

I love the materials. One of the resources they use are anchor videos. In the beginning we usually begin the workshops by introducing the kids to the concept. We find that our struggling readers or at promise students don't have background knowledge. The technology really helps them to make that connection. Whereas you might have students at another school, who know about the reading material, or not only do they know about it, they have been there and done that. Many of our kids don't have those experiences. The videos really provide that background knowledge for them. The kids really like the computer, they like the technology, they have instructional software on the computer and I enjoy that because it is broken down into four levels. They are either going to be on level one, two, three, or four. I like the fact that it individualizes instruction for that student. I always remind my students that there may be 15 of them in this class but they are an individual who should go at your own pace and do what works for them. They should only be in competition with themselves. It is very important for them to realize that the program is based on where they are and it knows how to narrow it down to give the student just what they need and move them up at their own pace. As the teacher, I can go in and monitor my student's progress and the amount of time they are spending in the workshop. I like the flexibility that I can gauge my student's growth and move them up as necessary.

The one thing that I dislike about the materials is that they are outdated. For instance, we started the program in 2007 and our books are still the same. We have two books, R Flex and R Book, so we alternate the years that we use it to ensure that we are not using the same text every year. But even though we alternate text, it's still the same material and it's outdated. As an instructor, I make sure that I update the material by giving my students more resources that are updated. For instance there is a story about a soccer player named Freddy Adu, he was 21 when that book was written and so here it is eight years later and we're still reading about Freddy Adu who is no longer even playing. We are reading about athletes who have made great strides and they're retired or they are doing something different and the kids are don't know the person. So I am making my point to research, that's a research project for us, and let's find out what happened to that person, we can do a study and do extra to figure out what's happening, especially non-fiction text, because they do use real life information which is great but it is outdated and I wish that we would keep up with some more recent things.

6) What is your favorite part of the READ 180 process?

I like that the READ 180 process breaks up the 90 minute block. The time is broken up into 20 minute increments. And the other thing I really like is that in the beginning my students can't wait to go on the computer. But with almost every child, by the middle of the year, their favorite station goes from the computer to actually wanting to have independent reading time. They can't wait to read or they actually enjoy being in small group with the teacher. I like to see that shift where it's not about the computer and they want to hear what I have to say. As a matter of fact, today in my class we had a celebration for a student's *READ 180* successes and during that celebration I had student who did not want to celebrate because she was reading her book. She knew she was not going to be in school for two days and she wanted to finish it. I told her that I really should be mad at you right now because you are reading when I told you to do something different, but as your reading teacher I am excited that you want to read. That you would rather be reading makes me very excited. So, that to me is priceless.

7) What is your least favorite part of the READ 180 process?

My least favorite part about the READ 180 process are the outdated books. I have talked to the division about updating our materials and the server space is not available. And so what I find is talking with others from other school divisions is that instead of forcing all schools to use it, I would like to see them actually put it where it's needed. This would help with the expense. Implement the program where it is needed because it is not for everybody. The program is not efficient unless it is the right teacher with the right students doing the right

thing at all times and it's not negotiable.

8) Do you feel that the READ 180 program works? Why or why not?

I feel like it really works. We have reports to prove that it works. Ideally we would like to see student scores jump 80 to 100 points in the school year. I currently have 12 kids, and seven of those kids have already gone up 84 points since the beginning of the school year and we are just at the half way point. Seeing that kind of growth to me is phenomenal, and I see the difference. We are talking about students who are reading equivalent to a third grade level and when they exit are reading on a sixth grade level. Even though they may be in seventh or eighth grade, that's jumping two and three grade levels. That progress might not show on an SOL test, which is an on grade level assessment, but to know that a child has gone up two or three grade levels in their reading is phenomenal. This is what I see on a consistent basis with the *READ 180* program.

9) What improvements do you feel could make the READ 180 program better?

I have mentioned it, just updated material. And really the thing that I like about the program is how we have really tried to stick to the model and but at the same time bringing in extra resources. For instance, right now we are working on workshop four which is on crime scene investigations. As a teacher, it is my job to take that workshop and expand that topic to make it relevant my students. My board is full of books all on crime scene investigations and jobs. We did a blood model last week and set up a crime scene up in our classroom where they have to figure out who did the crime. They trace their bodies and tape the hallway with crime scene tape just to make it real and fun for the kids. That's not in the textbook, so while the materials are outdated, good teachers can supplement that with other activities. Spend that extra time to bring in the concept so that the kids can attach that to their learning. It makes it fun, relevant and also helps them to build background knowledge.

Appendix I: Timeline

| **Date** | **Accomplishment** |
|---|---|
| January 14, 2015 | • Received notification of approval to conduct research |
| January 15, 2015 | • Requested SOL scores SRI pre- and posttest scores for program participants |
| January 15, 2015 | • Sent an invitational email and consent form to teachers for interview<br>• Received consent from Teacher A |
| January 16, 2015 | • Received de-identified SOL and SRI data<br>• Received consent from Teacher B |
| January 19, 2015 | • Met with teachers to discuss the interview process, answer questions and schedule interviews |
| January 22, 2015 | • Conducted interviews with Teachers A and B using the interview protocol at the middle school.<br>• Received consent form and conducted interview with Teacher C at the middle school. |
| January 25, 2015 | • Transcribed interviews with Teachers A, B, and C. |
| January 28, 2015 | • Received consent form and conducted interview with Teacher D at the middle school. |
| January 29, 2015 | • Transcribed interview with Teacher D |
| February 3, 2015 | • Sent thank you notes to interviewees |
| February 6, 2015 | • Started analyzing qualitative data making marginal notes on each transcript |
| February 7, 2015 | • Performed descriptive statistics on SOL scores and SPSS analysis on SRI scores |
| February 8, 2015 | • Continued analyzing qualitative data identifying themes and subthemes |
| February 9, 2015 | • Triangulated data from scores with interview results |
| February 14, 2015 | • Wrote one page summary for Principal |
| February 19, 2015 | • Met with principal and instructional specialist to present findings |