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Teaching Practices That May Improve Student Achievement on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) for English Language Arts

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

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EdS, University of South Carolina, 2005

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Students at an eastern United States high school have experienced low pass rates on the High School Assessment Program for English Language Arts (HSAP ELA) for the past 5 consecutive years. The HSAP ELA test is 1 of 2 exams that students must pass to receive a high school diploma. Students who failed the HSAP ELA were provided remedial content and test preparation courses and enrichment tutorials to pass the state's ELA high-stakes test. The purpose of this qualitative bounded case study was to explore the teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. The conceptual framework for this study was the ELA competency model, a framework that combines instructional-practice principles and assessment. A purposeful sampling of 8 high school ELA teachers (3 regular education teachers, 4 remedial teachers, and 1 teacher who taught both groups) who taught ELA content and test preparation courses volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews and provided sample lesson plans for document review. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with open coding to identify patterns and themes. Teachers used graphic organizers, vocabulary study, questioning, relevant texts, and writing to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. It is recommended that the current ELA curriculum and professional learning opportunities include teaching practices which could increase student content knowledge and performance on the HSAP ELA. These endeavors may contribute to positive social change by providing ELA teachers with specific teaching practices to prepare students to pass the HSAP ELA test, thus increasing the number of students receiving high school diplomas and increasing employment opportunities after high school.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my husband, Eric, thank you for your love and support over the years. In addition, I dedicate this study to my parents, George and Claudia, thank you for your continuous prayers, love, support, and encouragement throughout my life. You both kept me uplifted and focused throughout this entire process.

Acknowledgments

I give all the praise and honor to my Almighty God for allowing me to go through this journey called life. All things are possible with Him, and everything happens according to His plan and in His perfect timing.

I would like to thank my husband, my mom, and my dad for your love and support.

I would like to give a special thank you to my chair, Dr. LaSpina, for your honesty, support, direction, and patience. I am forever grateful. Thank you to my URR chair, Dr. Howe, for your support, direction, and quick feedback. I would also like to thank my co-chair, Dr. Godat.

To my cousin, Natasha, and my friends (JW, QH, and MB) who kept me encouraged through it all despite the path I took, thank you.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

The rate for the last five years of students passing the High School Assessment Program for English Language Arts (HSAP ELA) at Riverside High School indicates a significant problem. ELA HSAP passing scores were as follows: 79.4% in 2013, 74.5% in 2012, 78.9% in 2010, 72.2% in 2010, and 73.8% in 2009 (South Carolina Department of Education [SDE], 2013). Since 2009, at least 20% of all students tested have not met standards on the ELA HSAP (SDE, 2013). In order to graduate from high school in the state of South Carolina, students are required to pass the HSAP test, which consists of two tests: English Language Arts and Mathematics. It is administered initially to students during the spring semester of their second year in high school regardless of whether the student is a current tenth grader or a repeat ninth grader. Students must pass both portions of the HSAP to receive a high school diploma. According to the SDE (2013), the HSAP has four achievement levels:

- Level 4: The student has demonstrated an exceptional command of skills and knowledge; the score range is 241-320 for ELA and 241-320 for Math.
- Level 3: The student has demonstrated proficiency in skills and knowledge; the score range is 223-240 for ELA and 220-240 for Math.
- Level 2: The student has demonstrated competence in skills and knowledge; the score range is 200-222 for ELA and 200-219 for Math.
- Level 1: The student has not demonstrated competence in skills and knowledge; the score range is 100-199 for both ELA and Math. (High School Assessment Program Test Scores section, para. 2).

To receive a diploma, a student must attain a Level 2 score on both tests. At present, a significant number of high school students statewide do not pass the ELA portion of the test. A number of students at the target high school are included in the students who did not pass the HSAP ELA test.

Students receive HSAP preparation through the English I course, which is offered during the ninth grade and through the English II course, which is offered during the tenth grade. Although some preparation for HSAP starts in English I, a majority of the preparation is done in English II due to the End of Course Preparation Exam Program (EOCEP or EOC) given in English I. The EOC is a benchmark exam given at the end of the semester in which a student takes a specific course (i.e., English I, Algebra I, Biology I, Physical Science, and United States History), and the exam counts for 20% of a student's final grade in this course (SDE, 2013).

According to the SDE (2013), the EOC exam consists of all multiple choice items, and students are assessed on five out of six of the ELA standards:

- Standard 1: read and comprehend a variety of literary texts in print and non-print formats.
- Standard 2: read and comprehend a variety of informational texts in print and non-print formats.
- Standard 3: use word analysis and vocabulary strategies to read fluently.
- Standard 4: create written work that has a clear focus, sufficient detail, coherent organization, effective use of voice, and correct use of conventions of written Standard American English.

- Standard 6: access and use information from a variety of sources. (SDE, 2013, South Carolina Academic Standards for English Language Arts section, para. 1).

Unlike the HSAP, the EOC does not assess students on their writing skills, which is based on "Standard 5: write for a variety of purposes and audiences" (SDE, 2013, Academic Standards for English Language Arts section, p. 91). Although writing is a component of English I, its emphasis is decreased due to the fact that it is not tested on the EOC. Therefore, the reason for the increased emphasis in English II on writing is that it is presently assessed on the HSAP ELA test.

The English III course and English IV course are used to prepare students for the SAT and ACT, which are college entrance exams. Although these two courses cover the same six ELA standards that are covered in English I and English II, there is not a state assessment associated with either course. Also, the reading content is used to expose students to types of literature that may be encountered on the SAT and ACT, and literature that may also be encountered in entry level college English courses. In addition to focusing on reading and writing, English III focuses on American Literature, and English IV focuses on British Literature.

In reviewing the English curriculum, it is apparent that the six ELA standards are covered in English I-IV; however, the emphasis and content varies for each course based on the assessment that is associated with the specific course. There are two remedial English courses offered for students who do not meet standards on the HSAP or South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS). The SCPASS is

administered (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies) in grades three through eight. The first remedial course is Critical Reading. Critical Reading is offered in the ninth grade to students who have not met standards in reading as measured by the SCPASS. The focus of Critical Reading is to remediate students in preparation for the EOC. There is not a remedial writing course offered in conjunction with Critical Reading for students who have not met standard in writing as measured by SCPASS. This omission could be because writing is not assessed on the EOC. The second remedial course is Reading and Writing Strategies, which is offered once students have not been successful on the HSAP. Although there is a course to remediate students in reading in preparation for the EOC, there is no course offered to students to remediate them prior to taking the HSAP.

Based on students' eighth grade scores on the SCPASS test, high schools are able to determine areas of weakness prior to the start of ninth grade. The SCPASS is administered in writing, ELA, math, and science or social studies for eighth grade students. Although there is a reading course available to ninth graders who have areas of weakness in reading, there is no course available for ninth graders who have areas of weakness in writing. If the HSAP assesses students on reading and writing, support should also be provided to students who are weak in writing. Additionally, there is no course offered to students for specific test taking strategies needed to be successful on high-stakes tests. Also, there are no course offerings in place for tenth grade students who need additional support in reading and writing. If the data indicates that some students are weak in both reading and writing, additional courses for support should be readily

available to address the needs of these students. Putting support into place during ninth and tenth grade could increase the likelihood of more students passing the HSAP the first time taken.

Problem Statement

At present, student-passing rates for the last five years on the HSAP ELA at Riverside High School indicate a significant problem. The goal of this study was to explore the most effective teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Riverside High School (pseudonym) is located in the middle region of South Carolina. It is an urban school with approximately 625 students. The student population is 98% African American and 2% Hispanic; 95% of the students receive free and/or reduced price lunch (SDE, 2013). Many students come from single-parent households with multiple children led by the mother (SDE, 2013). Many of the homes in the surrounding neighborhoods consist of subsidized housing (SDE, 2013). There are several apartment complexes and a trailer park near the school. While the surrounding neighborhoods struggle with constant drug and gang activity, few school infractions reflect drug and gang activity (SDE, 2013).

The local educational problem that prompted this study was a substantial number of students at Riverside High School are not meeting the competency standards as measured by the HSAP ELA. The HSAP ELA consists of multiple-choice questions and an extended response writing item that assess students according to six standards. According to the SDE (2013), the six ELA standards are:

- Standard 1: read and comprehend a variety of literary texts in print and non-print formats.
- Standard 2: read and comprehend a variety of informational texts in print and non-print formats.
- Standard 3: use word analysis and vocabulary strategies to read fluently.
- Standard 4: create written work that has a clear focus, sufficient detail, coherent organization, effective use of voice, and correct use of conventions of written Standard American English.
- Standard 5: write for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Standard 6: access and use information from a variety of sources. (South Carolina Academic Standards for English Language Arts section, para. 1).

Riverside High School has followed its district's instructional plan for the past few school years, which includes three programs: academic rigor, High Schools That Work (HSTW), and Common Core State Standards (CCSS). According to Blackburn (2008), "rigor is creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels" (p. 16). Increasing rigor involves interweaving curriculum, instruction, and assessment and taking an in-depth look at each component (Blackburn, 2008).

HSTW involves a partnership with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). HSTW has 10 fundamental research-based key practices that help schools

provide high levels of instruction and prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers (SREB, 2013). According to SREB (2013), the 10 key practices of HSTW are:

1. High expectations: Teachers motivate students to meet higher standards by incorporating high expectations into classroom practices and providing frequent feedback.
2. Program of study: Schools require each student to complete an upgraded academic core (i.e., college preparatory, honors, and/or Advanced Academic Placement) and an academic concentration.
3. Academic studies: Teachers encourage students to apply content and skills to real-world projects.
4. Career-technical studies: Schools provide more students with access to career-technical studies in high demand fields while providing increased opportunities for project-based learning.
5. Work-based learning: Schools allow students and parents to choose from academic programs that provide challenging academic studies and work-based learning experiences.
6. Teachers working together: Schools provide time for cross-disciplinary teams to plan challenging lessons for students.
7. Students actively engaged: Teachers use research based instructional strategies and technology to engage students in learning.

8. Guidance: Schools involve students and parents in a guidance and advisement system that allows opportunities to select a program of study with an academic or career-technical concentration.
9. Extra help: Schools provide students with a system of extra help to assist students in completing academic goals.
10. Culture of continuous improvement: Students continuously use data to improve school culture, organization, management, curriculum, and instruction. (10 Key Practices section, para. 2-10).

According to district guidelines, the school is expected to implement two to three key practices each school year until all 10 key practices have been effectively implemented. Riverside High School has been focusing on effectively implementing five of the 10 key practices for the last three school terms. While a program of study and guidance are key practices mandated by the state, the school has also focused on high expectations, extra help, and students being actively engaged. For instance, with high expectations, the school strives to establish a culture of high expectations for all learners. All teachers are required to set high academic standards for each student while providing quality instruction in their efforts to prepare students for academic success. At Riverside High School, all students are expected to pass the HSAP, graduate, and find employment in a trade or attend college. The faculty and staff of Riverside High School provide students with the necessary skills and resources to attain this level of academic success. In addition to setting high expectations, Riverside High School also provides extra help for students who need additional assistance in core content areas. For example, Riverside

High School offers the HSAP remedial course in ELA and math for students who have not been successful on either portion of the exam. Furthermore, Riverside High School provides after school HSAP tutorials twice per week in ELA and math. These tutorials provide enrichment for students who have not passed the ELA and/or math tests. These opportunities for remediation help better prepare students to pass the HSAP test. The 10 key practices provide an instructional framework for schools in their quests to improve student achievement.

The most recent education policy development influencing the instructional plan is the CCSS. The state of South Carolina adopted CCSS for ELA and Math in July 2010, and schools started professional development implementation plans during the 2011-2012 school year. The purpose of CCSS is to provide a consistent learning framework in order to prepare American students with 21st century skills for the global economy (CCSS, 2013). Thus far, one major influence that CCSS has had on the ELA instructional plan has been the amount of informational texts that students are required to read in preparation for the Smarter Balanced exam, which is the CCSS assessment. In addition to exposing students to more informational texts, CCSS requires students to develop argumentative compositions based on informational texts that have been read while using the text to support their points; whereas, currently students are provided a narrative, expository, or descriptive writing prompt and are required to respond. CCSS is providing more thought provoking assignments for students and requiring them to use higher order thinking skills. Coupling CCSS with state standards and preparing students to take the ELA HSAP is even more of challenge, however, because teachers are then preparing

students for two separate ELA assessments that are not aligned with each other. Although CCSS is a state initiative for all schools, the state of South Carolina is currently in talks to dismiss CCSS for the 2014-2015 school year.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge about effective teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test, first, by analyzing general education teachers' perceptions of effective teaching practices, and second, by analyzing remedial teachers' perceptions of effective teaching practices. Finally, lesson plans from both general education teachers and remedial teachers were analyzed to determine specific teaching practices most commonly indicated at the beginning of the course versus teaching practices indicated four to six weeks before testing.

Nature of the Study

In an effort to determine teaching practices that could increase student achievement on the HSAP ELA test, this study used a qualitative method with a case study approach. A qualitative research approach was selected because it allows the researcher to make assumptions and draw conclusions based on participant perspectives and/or observation data. According to Yin (2009), a case study research design is suitable for addressing how and why questions, which served to guide this study. The main purpose of this study was to determine how high school English teachers use various teaching practices to improve student achievement on the HSAP ELA test, which can be addressed through a case study design. Although teaching practices will vary from teacher to teacher, identifying the most effective practices could help in determining the

most effective ways to teach students. The use of effective teaching practices is a contributing factor to the academic success of students.

Guiding Research Question

Riverside High School has students who are not meeting standards on the HSAP ELA test. Although the school has a specific instructional plan that emphasizes academic rigor, HSTW, and CCSS, some students are still not experiencing success as measured by the HSAP ELA test. Riverside High School also offers an HSAP remedial course for students who have not passed the HSAP. Although a number of factors (i.e., academic resources, parent involvement, student motivation, home environment, etc.) may contribute to students failing to meet standards on the HSAP, more research is needed on the influence teaching practices have on preparing students to take high-stakes ELA tests. Therefore, the guiding research question for this study was as follows: What ELA teaching practices are most effective in improving student achievement on the HSAP ELA test?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to inquire about the effectiveness of ELA instruction both to prepare students for the test and to assist them when they need to retake it. At present, student-passing rates for the last five years on the HSAP ELA at Riverside High School indicate a significant problem. HSAP ELA scores were as follows: 79.4% in 2013, 74.5% in 2012, 78.9% in 2010, 72.2% in 2010, and 73.8% in 2009 (SDE, 2013). Since 2009, at least 20% of all students tested have not met standards on the HSAP ELA (SDE, 2013).

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According to the SDE (2013), the EOC exam consists of all multiple choice items, and students are assessed on five out of six of the following ELA standards:

- Standard 1 requires that students read and comprehend a variety of literary texts;
- Standard 2, informational text;
- Standard 3, word analysis and vocabulary strategies;
- Standard 4, create written work that is clear and organized with details and voice; and
- Standard 6, assess and use information from various sources. (South Carolina Academic Standards for English Language Arts section, para. 1).

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The purpose of this study was to determine the most effective teaching practices used in improving student achievement on the HSAP ELA test. This focus was determined through careful review and inquiry of current instructional practices.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study focused on ELA that prepare students to take standardized tests. The key concepts which provided a framework to the study were: effective classroom instruction, ELA teaching practices, authentic instruction, and assessment designs (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). The relationship between these key concepts is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students to achieve optimal academic success. The HSAP ELA remedial course provided enrichment to students in skills that are assessed on the test. With any course, effective classroom instruction is essential to a student's academic attainment. Effective instruction requires the use of various teaching practices that are proven effective in improving student achievement. In remediating and preparing students to take the HSAP ELA test, it is presumed that teachers must select specific ELA teaching practices that provide enrichment in the reading and writing skills that are assessed on the test. A discussion of current research on such ELA teaching practices formed the main body of this review. Finally, extended learning time (ELT) was the curricular principle that provides the rationale for remedial course work, specifically English I and English II classes and even the after school HSAP ELA course. Providing teachers with additional instructional time to address the individual needs of students allows delivery of quality individualized instruction to prepare students to master the content necessary to pass the HSAP ELA test.

The purpose of high-stakes testing is to improve student achievement, which provides a standard of measurement for overall school improvement and quality (Deane,

Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011; Holme, Richards, Jimerson, & Cohen, 2010; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012). According to Holme et al., (2010), there are three underlying goals of high-stakes testing: (a) gets schools to improve instruction for low achieving students; (b) motivates students to increase efforts put towards academics; and (c) provides evidence that students have mastered a specific set of skills; therefore, increasing the labor market value of a high school diploma (p. 499).

Schools are responsible for providing quality instruction to students. With high-stakes testing at the forefront, schools must provide additional support to low achieving students. This support is most effective when remediation is offered prior to the administration of the test, but some remedial courses are only offered once students have failed the test (Holme et al., 2010). According to Holme et al., (2010), teachers who teach high-stakes test classes generally spend the majority of class time preparing for the test. This could be the reason for some schools not offering remediation because students are in classes that practically teach to the test (Holme et. al, 2010; Nichols et al., 2012; Parsons, 2008). With such an emphasis on student achievement and passing the test, students must be motivated to achieve. The pressures of high-stakes testing can cause a sense of uneasiness in both teachers and students; however, teachers can keep students motivated to excel (Plank & Condliffe, 2013; Holme et al., 2010). Finally, high-stakes tests such as the HSAP provide evidence that students have mastered skills.

When it comes to high-stakes testing in ELA, researchers have identified quality instruction as a key component in increasing student achievement (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). Quality instruction in ELA includes the use of various teaching

practices such as engaging activities (i.e., character analysis, graphic organizers, book discussions, brainstorming, nonlinguistic representations), relevant texts, motivation, collaborative groups, differentiated instruction, balanced literacy, guided practice, vocabulary strategies, writing for different purposes, annotated texts, summarizing, and making inferences (Assaf, 2006; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009). Quality ELA instruction involves the use of effective teaching practices in delivering the content to students. This focused delivery of content encourages learning and increases a student's knowledge base, which improves student achievement on high-stakes tests. Research of ELA high-stakes testing has revealed that focusing on the quality of ELA instruction in preparation for state exams will improve student achievement on these exams (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011; Holme et al., 2010; Nichols et al., 2006).

Providing variety and relevancy in ELA increases the effectiveness and quality of instruction. Current studies related to ELA high-stakes testing reveal that some teachers struggle with teaching to the test versus teaching the specified ELA content. Although some teachers see this as a challenge, others believe that if the content is delivered effectively, students will be successful on high-stakes tests (Nichols et al., 2006).

In an effort to reach all types of learners, ELA teachers must deliver effective instruction that offers variety while providing rigor to ensure higher order thinking (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). Teachers who want successful students use teaching practices that will better prepare students for academic success while providing students with relevant, real-world learning experiences (Blackburn, 2008; Duke et al., 2006; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Teachers who make an effort to

reach each learner may experience greater chances of academic success. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, (2001) found that student achievement may improve through identifying teaching practices that highly effective teachers use in the classroom.

Riverside High School has a plan for teaching and learning because teachers are provided with necessary skills and knowledge to provide student-centered instruction to all students. There are curriculum frameworks for English classes and a focus on the use of various effective teaching practices. The goal of this study is to explore teaching practices that prepare students to be successful on the HSAP ELA test.

Operational Definitions

Academic relevancy: Meaningful learning that can be connected to students' lives (Crumpton & Gregory, 2011).

High-stakes testing: A state test that improves student achievement and provides an overall standard of measurement for overall school improvement and quality (Holme et al., 2010; Nichols et al., 2012).

Quality instruction: Explicit instruction, differentiated instruction, real world tasks, collaboration, and challenging tasks (Parsons, 2008).

Teaching practices: Characteristics and ideas that are implemented in the classroom as a part of an improvement process (Sawar, Zerpa, Hacey, Simon, & Barneveld, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

According to Simon (2011), assumptions are aspects of the study that the researcher cannot control. One assumption of this study was that there would be an equal representation of general education teachers and remedial teachers. Considering the size of Riverside High School, I assumed that I would be able to obtain at least eight participants for the study; four general education teachers and four remedial teachers. Although I did not think the remedial teachers would solely teach remedial classes, I assumed that there would be several participants who taught both ninth and/or tenth grade general education English classes in addition to teaching remedial English classes. However, this was only the case for one participant. For instance, some of the participants taught eleventh and/or twelfth grade general education English classes and one remedial English class or taught eleventh and/or twelfth grade general education classes, a remedial English class, and an English elective. Although there were several variations of class schedules for ninth and tenth grade general education English classes and remedial English classes, I was able to obtain an equal representation of general education teachers and remedial teachers. There was one teacher who taught ninth grade general education English classes and remedial English classes, three teachers who taught ninth and/or tenth grade general education English classes, and four teachers who taught remedial English classes.

Another assumption of this study was that all participants would provide truthful answers about the specific teaching practices they used in their classrooms to prepare

students to take or retake high-stakes ELA tests. This was the reason I asked probing questions and follow-up questions that required participants to elaborate on responses associated with specific teaching practices and provide details regarding use of specific teaching practices. Although the questions required participants to elaborate and provide details, that still did not verify truthfulness of participant responses. In addition to probing and follow-up questions, participants also provided lesson plans. Although the lesson plans were not as detailed and specific as the interview responses, some of the details in the lesson plans supported, but did not verify, participants' responses regarding teaching practices used in their classrooms.

Limitations

Simon (2011) referred to limitations as possible weaknesses of the study that the researcher cannot control. One limitation of this study was the sample size. The study involved eight participants, which limited the number of perspectives. However, the sample size was relative to a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). In addition to the small sample size, another limitation of this study was the fact that all participants came from one school. All participants coming from one school could influence participant responses due to specific practices that could be in place at a particular school. Although there is much research on high-stakes testing and its impact on learning and teaching practices that improve student achievement, more research is needed on specific content related teaching practices that improve student performance on high-stakes tests.

Scope and Delimitations

According to Simon (2011), delimitations are aspects of the study that limit the scope of the study while setting boundaries for the study. The scope of this study was one high school in the midlands area of South Carolina. It was delimited to English I, English II, Reading and Writing Strategies, and Academic Literacy teachers because I wanted an opportunity for equal representation of ninth and tenth grade general education English teachers and remedial English teachers. All of the interviews were conducted with teachers from one high school in this one district, and there were nine other school districts within a 30 mile radius of this South Carolina school district. Although I could have requested permission to use participants at another high school in the same district or participants at another high school in a neighboring district, this qualitative study required a small sample size, and I was able to obtain all participants from one high school.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it could reveal teaching practices that contribute to how an ELA instructional program is effective in preparing students for taking standardized tests. Similarly, it could provide insight about how the ELA program is designed to assist students if they do not pass. Teachers play an important role in each student's overall learning experience. Therefore, it is imperative that they are careful in planning their approach to teaching, which may increase student achievement. According to Parsons (2008), quality instruction includes: (a) explicit instruction; (b) differentiated instruction; (c) real world tasks, authentic and relevant; (d) collaborative instruction; and

(e) challenging tasks, which improve student motivation and literacy learning. Teachers must be willing to use effective teaching practices in their efforts to improve student achievement. Therefore, this study could provide teachers with teaching practices that could improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. The use of effective teaching practices in ELA could increase the number of students passing the HSAP ELA test, thus, increasing the number of students graduating from high school. An increase in the number of high school graduates indicates an increase in the number of individuals eligible for employment.

Summary

Some students at Riverside High School are not passing the HSAP ELA test, and opportunities for more students to attain success must be explored to improve student achievement. Teachers have a major role in the learning process, and they must ensure that more students achieve academically. This qualitative study used participant viewpoints to determine specific ELA teaching practices that could be used to increase student performance on the HSAP ELA test.

Section 1 was used to explain the problem of the study, the local problem that prompted the study, and the purpose of the study. In addition, the guiding research question was discussed in relation to the nature of the study. The conceptual framework was outlined and discussed, operational definitions were defined, and assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations were discussed. Finally, the significance of the study was discussed. This study explored the perceptions of general education teachers and remedial teachers on effective teaching practices used to improve student achievement on

the HSAP ELA test. Section 2 discusses an in depth literature review to include the following thematic subsections: High-stakes testing; HSAP ELA remedial course; ELA teaching strategies; and expanded learning time (ELT). Section 3 describes the specific methodology of the study, which used the qualitative research design with a case study approach. Section 4 presents and summarizes the findings from the study. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for action and further study based on the overall findings of the study.

Section 2: Literature Review

This literature review will discuss current research in the following areas: high-stakes testing, the instructional framework and curriculum focus of the HSAP ELA remedial course, effective classroom instruction, effective ELA teaching practices, the impact of extended learning time, and the overall importance of effective teaching practices. The search for relevant literature used the following online databases and search engines: ERIC, Education: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, Education Research Complete, and Google Scholar; books from the researcher's personal library were also used. The following keywords were used in the databases: *high-stakes testing, English Language Arts, reading, writing, low academic performance, student achievement, teaching practices, effective teaching, extended learning time,* and *writing rubrics.* The review will be organized into the following thematic subsections: (a) High-Stakes Testing; (b) ELA HSAP Remedial Course; (c) ELA Teaching Strategies; and (d) Expanded Learning Time.

At present, student passing rates for the last five years on the HSAP ELA at Riverside High School indicate a significant problem. The goal of this study was to explore the most effective teaching practices used by both general education teachers and remedial teachers to improve student performance of the HSAP ELA test. The guiding research question for the study was: What ELA teaching practices are most effective in improving student achievement on the HSAP ELA test?

High-Stakes Testing

There are many pressures associated with high-stakes testing, and sometimes these pressures may help contribute to low student performance on high-stakes tests. Some pressures associated with high-stakes testing are: (a) not meeting the overall needs of learners; (b) teaching to the test; (c) narrowing of curriculum; and (d) unequal instructional time across content areas. In meeting the overall needs of learners, schools can determine where students are academically and use this information to decide what is needed for all students to be successful. Determining students' needs for success helps schools better serve students. In a study by Holme (2008), it was revealed that some schools are not meeting the overall needs of learners because they are not addressing learning deficiencies when students come to them in the beginning of the year, but instead, they are addressing deficiencies during the following school year once students have not been successful on the exit exam. Students could have a better chance at success if this assessment of needs is done at the start of the school year. Holme (2008) also found that principals in California did offer exit exam remediation courses at their schools. However, one setback with the courses was that 36% of the schools did not offer the course during regular school hours. The exit exam remediation course was offered before school or after school. This was inconvenient for most students due to other obligations, such as family or transportation. This study also revealed that 76% of schools did not offer an exit exam remediation course until students failed a portion of the test.

Students may not perform well on high-stakes tests due to the fact that remediation is often not offered until after the test has been administered, again

suggesting that schools are not always meeting the overall needs of learners (Holme, 2008; Misoc, 2010). Remediation courses are designed to provide support in areas of weakness, but the effectiveness of a remedial course assigned after the test may be questioned. Students' needs do not suddenly manifest when they enter high school. There is a plethora of assessment data available at each educational level (elementary, middle, and high) that may assist teachers in making informed decisions about students' learning needs. If schools are expected to prepare students to pass high-stakes tests, schools are obligated to take the time to review individual student data in their efforts to provide quality instruction and the best course of action for overall student achievement. Remediation before the exam may be more beneficial than receiving it after the exam (Holme, 2008).

Papay, Murname, and Willett (2010) found that some schools face challenges in their efforts to improve student achievement on the retest of the high school exit exam. Papay et al. and Misoc (2010) found that students are being placed in remedial courses after failing the exit exam, and students are continuing to fail the test after taking the remedial course; therefore, leaving open the question of the quality of remedial courses (Papay et al., 2010). The purpose of a remedial course is to provide additional support in identified areas of weakness. If students are completing remedial courses and still not experiencing success on the retest, then the additional support actually may not be helping. (Papay et al., 2010). According to Papay et al. (2010), this leaves schools with the task of thoroughly reviewing and observing remedial courses to ensure students are

receiving the highest level of support for academic success. The intent of the remedial course is to help students pass the test.

A study by Au (2007) found that pressures associated with high-stakes testing caused teachers to base their curriculum on what is covered on the test. This supports the notion that some teachers are succumbing to the pressures of accountability and are delivering the majority of instruction based on content that will be assessed on the test instead of focusing on the core content. For example, the EOC assesses students on five out of six English standards. In addition to not assessing all standards, the exam does not assess each indicator associated with each standard. Also, like the EOC, although the HSAP ELA assesses students on all six English standards, it does not assess students on each indicator associated with each standard. Therefore, this may prompt some teachers to only address the content that will be assessed on the state exam instead of teaching the entire curriculum (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). Au (2007) also found that the pressures associated with high-stakes testing have a negative effect on content curriculum. Teachers are spending time teaching content that will be assessed on the test instead of using this time to teach the entire course content.

Au and Gourd (2013) found that some teachers are allowing high-stakes testing to dictate what is taught and how it is taught. Schools are putting more emphasis on students passing the test rather than on student learning. According to Minarechova (2012), not only are teachers teaching to the test, but they are also coaching students on how to answer test questions. Schools refer to this as test-taking strategies, which teach students how to use the process of elimination in determining the best answer choice. A study by

Nichols et al. (2012) revealed that teachers are becoming efficient in teaching to the test. Teachers are devising test taking strategies that will improve student achievement as measured by the test.

Schools are relying on high-stakes tests to determine overall student achievement (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). According to David (2011), performance on high-stakes tests has become a priority for many schools. If a school can experience an increase in test scores, then students are learning. However, the validity of this assumption could be challenged when high-stakes tests only assess a portion of the curriculum. High-stakes tests do not assess students' knowledge on the entire curriculum but only on a limited selection of what they have learned. Many high-stakes tests include anywhere from 30-70 test items, which are used in determining students' overall knowledge levels in the specified course content. Some researchers believe high-stakes tests should be a more thorough representation of what students have learned throughout the entirety of a course rather than just a portion of what they have learned (David, 2011). David (2011) argues that tests should include more items to fully assess the curriculum. This way, tests would be a better representation of what students are required to learn throughout the entirety of the course. Kern (2013) suggests states develop assessments based on what students are actually learning in class when teachers are not teaching to the test; that is, assess students on their actual level of knowledge as it relates to the overall course content. More studies are needed on the actual content of high-stakes tests including the total number of questions and which questions relate to specified academic standards. A thorough analysis of actual tests may help states develop tests that are a

more accurate depiction of the entire course, which may better assess what students actually learn from the content standards (David, 2011; Kern, 2013).

States have been using high-stakes tests results to determine levels of student achievement for years. Au and Gourd (2013) found that high-stakes tests have not closed achievement gaps. In a comparative study by Lee and Reeves (2012), they found that post No Child Left Behind (NCLB), there have been no changes in reading achievement for students in Grades 4 through 8, and reading achievement for tenth grade students remained the same or decreased (Lee and Reeves, 2012, citing No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). NCLB (2002) required schools to have 100% of students passing high-stakes tests by 2014. Based on this requirement, some schools are failing students at an alarming rate because all students are not passing high-stakes tests. Nichols et al. (2006; 2012) also found that there is no evidence to support the notion that high-stakes testing helps to improve student achievement. Although high-stakes tests are used to determine students' level of achievement, according to Nichols et al. (2012), there is no research to support this notion. However, there is research on the pressures associated with high-stakes testing, and the measures schools go through to show improvement in test scores. School leaders look at short-term performance, which means improving tests scores versus investing in the long-term performance of students (Willis, 2011). For instance, Charter School in Indianapolis, Indiana, was faced with a dilemma in 2011 with 106 out of 109 students failing the Algebra I EOC. The following school year, instead of focusing on ways to provide additional support to students in Algebra I, the school decided to only test students in the fall who were most likely to pass the Algebra I EOC. This tactic was

implemented to increase the percentage of students passing the Algebra I EOC. Charter School strategically selected students to take the test, and other schools in the area conferenced with the parents of students who would damage the school's data to encourage those parents to home school their children instead of sending them to school (Willis, 2011). Charter School did see improvements in Algebra I EOC test scores, but it was only short-term because they were still faced with testing the remaining students in the spring. If schools focus on providing quality instruction to all students instead of focusing on the students who have a better chance of passing the test, they could possibly show an increase in the numbers of students who actually pass the test. This could contribute to the overall long-term success of more students versus temporary success of select students. According to Minarechova (2012), there are teachers who focus on borderline students instead of teaching all students. These teachers focus on borderline students because their previous test scores are closer in number to the overall cut score determined for passing the test. Some teachers become completely absorbed with increasing the percentage of their students passing the test, and they exert disproportionate time and energy into teaching the borderline students while neglecting the learning needs of students who are less likely to pass the test (Minarechova, 2012).

Some schools have been found selecting students to test who have a good chance at passing the test versus testing all students in the specified course (Willis, 2011). A corollary to selecting students to test is focusing on teaching students to take the test and pass it. Students who are not likely to pass and students who will pass do not necessarily receive quality instruction when schools place the majority of their instructional focus on

students who have a good chance of passing the test. This strategy for increasing the percentage of student who pass decreases the quality of instruction for all learners (Berliner, 2011). All students should be afforded the opportunity to receive quality instruction in all classes. Such practices may therefore be regarded as immoral and unethical as they disregard overall student learning and performance in order to show an increase in test scores (Berliner, 2011). According to Berliner (2011), "under pressure from high-stakes testing, educators make decisions that reflect compromised ethics, if not a complete loss of their humanity" (p. 291). Increasing test scores becomes an addiction for some schools when they are willing to do anything necessary to accomplish this while risking the overall quality of the education they provide.

Teaching to the test generally creates a narrowing of the curriculum. Some schools condense the curriculum in an effort to improve test scores (Papay et al., 2010). Teachers focus on specific test content rather than teach all curriculum standards (Minarechova, 2012). Instead of teaching the curriculum standards, some teachers are using test preparation materials to equip students for high-stakes tests. Students are not receiving authentic instruction, but rote learning (Misco, 2010). Short-term knowledge acquisition allows students to memorize content that is presented to them. Rote learning keeps students at the basic level of learning, and does not encourage students to think and apply what they have actually learned.

In addition to focusing on the content of the tests, narrowing of the curriculum involves allocating more time to some subjects over others (Minarechova, 2012; Berliner, 2011). For instance, some schools are allocating more instructional time to English and

math courses, which decreases instructional time in social studies, science, and related arts. Some state exit exams only test students in English and math, and some state report cards assign more weight to English and math test results. Schools may therefore justify providing disproportionate time in English and math instruction in order to prepare students for the tests.

The research identifies a pattern of some schools compromising the complete education of students for the sake of increasing their percentage of passing test scores. In such cases, teachers are teaching to the test and tailoring instruction to meet the requirements of the test rather than the overall requirements of the curriculum (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Although there are studies related to the various pressures teachers and students face regarding overall student performance on high-stakes tests, more research is needed on the consequences that arise from teaching to the test. More research is also needed on critical parts of specific curriculum that are neglected due to teaching to the test. Finally, more research is needed on how students are performing on social studies and science tests, particularly in instances where more support and time are allotted to English and math. In all, more research is needed on the widespread effects of teaching to the test.

Schools continue to face the dilemma of low student achievement on high-stakes tests. Some schools have begun to see an increase in student achievement on high-stakes tests; however, some of the increases are only possible due to the following: (a) teaching to the test; (b) focusing disproportionately on students who are likely to pass the test; and (c) only selecting students to test who are most likely to pass the test. All of these

practices regarding high-stakes testing have shown increases in student achievement on tests, but overall student learning has suffered due to the desire for students to pass the test (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). I contend that such practices are unjust because some schools are failing to provide quality instruction to all students for the sake of having an increase in test scores. The pressures associated with high-stakes testing produce results on high-stakes tests, but sometimes at the risk of all students not learning.

ELA HSAP Remedial Course

Riverside High School offers a HSAP remedial course for students who have not passed the ELA or math portions of the test. The HSAP ELA remedial course focuses on reading and writing. In this course, students read a variety of literature from various genres, work on vocabulary and critical reading skills, and develop writing skills. The course is a semester long and is offered daily. The following will provide the instructional framework of the HSAP ELA remedial course.

Balanced Literacy and Standards

The HSAP ELA remedial course uses various components of the district's ELA instructional framework. This framework is based on a balanced literacy approach that includes reading (shared and guided), writing, word study, independent reading, and read-aloud strategies (Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005). The idea of balanced literacy is to incorporate various best practices of reading and writing daily in delivering literacy instruction (Frey et al., 2005). This combined delivery is intended to improve students' reading and writing skills. According to Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, and Dolezal (2002), a balanced literacy classroom helps to improve overall

literacy because it incorporates reading and writing into daily classroom activities. An equal emphasis on reading and writing can "nurture real readers," improve reading comprehension, and improve writing skills (Assaf, 2006; Guthrie et al., 2013; Pressley et al., 2002).

Balanced literacy originated in California in response to low student performance on the state's standardized reading test (Frey et al., 2005). There are a number of studies on the effects of balanced literacy on the ELA curriculum, and the importance of implementing each component of the balanced literacy model in ELA classrooms. However, there are no specific criteria for this actual balance when it comes to time spent on each component. In a study done in Toronto in 2001 after implementation of balanced literacy, assessment results indicated gains in seven out of eight standardized measures assessed in reading. Although Toronto had gains, there are no specific guidelines for how balanced literacy was implemented. Also, in a study done in 2001 with the Austin Independent School District in Texas, assessment results indicated 96% of the student population made gains in reading after implementation of balanced literacy. Again, there is no evidence presented on specifically how the components of balanced literacy were implemented in the classrooms. The only evidence presented was implementing the components of the model while integrating reading and writing. Although some schools have seen gains in reading scores after implementation of balanced literacy, there are inconsistencies in how various components are balanced across classrooms. For instance, one study indicates more time was spent on read alouds and independent student activities than on direct instruction, and this teacher saw gains in students' reading

achievement. However, according to Clark, Kirschner, & Sweller (2012), students are more successful when they receive more direct instruction with practice and feedback. Therefore, making the argument that balanced literacy should have a balance between read alouds, independent reading and guided reading and writing. Although the research indicates that balanced literacy can improve student achievement in reading in writing, it does not indicate how time should be balanced and apportioned between reading and writing activities. Balanced literacy may need to incorporate a balance of time between components to assess its actual effectiveness regarding reading and writing instruction and student performance on the HSAP ELA test.

In addition to the ELA framework that includes balanced literacy, the HSAP ELA blueprint provides the specific curriculum focus for the course. The blueprint, provided by the SDE (2013), designates specific standards with detailed topics to be covered in preparing students for the HSAP ELA test (SDE, 2013). The HSAP ELA blueprint covers the same ELA standards as the EOC to include, "Standard 5, writing for a variety of purposes and audiences" (SDE, 2013, Academic Standards for English Language Arts section, para. 1).

Increasing Rigor in the Classroom

In addition to the district's instructional framework and the SDE's curriculum focus, the district encourages teachers of the HSAP ELA course to use steps for increasing classroom rigor as suggested in Blackburn's *Rigor is Not a Four Letter Word* (2008) and Marzano et al.'s *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (2001). Although the district's most recent

focus has been on Blackburn, teachers are still encouraged to utilize Marzano et al.'s strategies, which were a focus in the district several years ago. Teachers have received professional development in the use of effective teaching strategies based on both Blackburn (2008) and Marzano et al., (2001).

Blackburn (2008) focused on seven steps to increase rigor in the classroom: 1) establishing high expectations for learners; 2) support and scaffolding; 3) demonstration of learning; 4) active student engagement; 5) motivational element value; 6) motivational element success; and 7) classroom culture (p. 20-37). Academic rigor is a common theme in the research on student achievement and best practices. For example, according to Draeger, Hill, Hunter, and Mahler (2013), rigor involves students being actively engaged in learning with higher order thinking (p. 268). In a study by Draeger et al. (2013), they identified four primary dimensions of academic rigor: active learning, meaningful learning, higher-order thinking, and appropriate expectations. These four dimensions must overlap for true rigor to occur (Draeger et al., 2013). These four dimensions require students to be actively engaged in learning. A study by Cooper (2014) indicates that not only should students be engaged, but rigor should be challenging, pushes students, and conveys a passion for the content. Academic rigor establishes high expectations and inspires students to meet or exceed these expectations.

On the other hand, Wraga (2011) believes academic rigor has become cliché, and when the words are reviewed a negative connotation is revealed. Rigor means severe, harsh, or oppressive (Wraga, 2011). These meanings are not the best indicators of what rigor is intended to mean when referring to academic rigor. Wraga (2011) suggests the

term academic rigor be changed to vigorous educational curriculum. Vigorous supports active, healthy growth, which has a positive connotation when compared to rigor.

The research identifies patterns of academic rigor and how it encourages higher order learning. Higher-order learning is indicative of academic rigor. Instruction is provided at levels that challenge students and promote thought at the application and synthesis levels (Matsumura, Slater, & Crosson, 2008). Although the research shows how academic rigor affects instruction, it does not relate academic rigor to high-stakes testing. Academic rigor is presented as part of the regular curriculum, and it is not presented as a part of the remedial curriculum or test preparation curriculum. The curriculum associated with high-stakes testing tends to involve rote learning and focusing on content that will be assessed on the test. More research is needed on how academic rigor is incorporated into course remediation and high-stakes testing. High expectations can have a positive impact on student achievement when applied to all learning to include remediation.

Effective Classroom Instruction

In addition to focusing on increasing rigor in the classroom, the district encourages focus on specific teaching practices necessary to providing quality instruction and improving students' overall learning experience. Teachers must implement a variety of teaching strategies in providing quality instruction and teaching all learners.

Marzano et al. (2001) identified nine effective teaching practices that can be used in any content area to enhance student achievement. According to Marzano et al. (2001), when used, the following nine high-yield instructional practices could have a positive effect on student achievement:

1. Identifying similarities and differences;
2. Summarizing and note taking;
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition;
4. Homework and practice;
5. Nonlinguistic representations;
6. Cooperative learning;
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback;
8. Generating and testing hypothesis; and
9. Questions, cues, and advance organizers. (p. 13).

These practices address overall instruction in the HSAP ELA course by providing teachers with options for variety in teaching students. These practices can be applied throughout ELA instruction in addressing reading and writing skills. Marzano et al.'s (2001) high yield instructional strategies assist in using various teaching practices that may increase reading comprehension levels, which is helpful because reading is assessed on the HSAP ELA test. These instructional practices allow teachers to differentiate learning and provide options for all learning styles (Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009). Each strategy can be applied in addressing the reading and writing standards of the HSAP ELA blueprint. For example, identifying similarities and differences helps ELA students with analyzing literature and informational texts, in addition to word analysis. It is important for students to differentiate between fiction and nonfiction texts because they must know which is used to support ideas when writing or

arguing a specific point. Focusing on the overall quality of instruction in ELA can help better prepare students for the HSAP ELA test.

Methods and Methodologies Research: ELA Teaching Practices

There are teaching practices that are specific to enhancing reading and writing skills and improving the overall quality of instruction. In this section, I will review the current research on these teaching practices: direct instruction, choice – relevant texts, text annotation, questioning, vocabulary study, non-linguistic representations, graphic organizers, think alouds, summarizing, and writing skills, process, and rubrics.

Direct Instruction

In a study done by Edmonds, Vaughn, Wexler, Reutebuch, Cable, Tackett, and Schnakenbery (2009), it was found that students' reading comprehension can improve when they are taught specific reading comprehension practices. The research method for this study involved synthesis and comparison of 13 studies. This study identified explicit direct instruction as the main component in teaching specific reading comprehension practices. Some students are better able to grasp material when the teacher guides them through each step of the learning process. Prado and Plourde (2011) also found that explicit direct instruction of specific reading comprehension strategies has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension level. This research method used for this study was a quasi-experimental approach that administered a pretest and posttest to a single group. In this study, 40 out of 57 students showed growth in their reading comprehension levels after receiving explicit direct instruction in reading comprehension.

In a study done by Clark et al., (2012), the use of explicit guided instruction to include practice and feedback was shown to be most effective in teaching and learning. Like Edmonds et al. (2009), this study also used synthesis and comparison of other studies. This study found that when teachers scaffolded the lesson and chunked it into parts while guiding students through the entire lesson, students learned and retained information better. This study also indicated that students learn better with explicit guided instruction than through discovery learning, which is sometimes referred to as problem-based learning. Although there is much research on the positive effects of problem-based learning on academic achievement, Clark et al. (2012) make it evident that problem-based learning is not as effective with low-performing students as it is with high-performing students. They found that problem-based learning sometimes leads to frustration and misconceptions because students are challenged to think critically on their own; whereas, explicit direct instruction challenges students to think critically, but with the guidance of their teacher. For instance, scaffolding and support in the ELA classroom may assist students with reading and comprehending complex reading passages where teachers guide students through the entire process before allowing them to attempt the assignment on their own. This may also be used with writing in the ELA class where students chunk the writing task based on the writing process. This allows students to see how the various parts of the writing process contribute to the development of the final piece. Scaffolding and support helps students with reading comprehension and writing in the ELA classroom.

Choice – Relevant Texts

In order to increase students' reading comprehension, teachers must begin with a text that students can relate to and make a connection (Assaf, 2006; Connor, Bickens, & Bittman, 2009; Duke et al., 2006; Guthrie et al., 2013; Parsons, 2008). Texts that are relevant to students are interesting to students because they understand the content and are able to relate to it in some way. Relevant texts are recommended because they connect the central theme, situation, or character to students' lives, current interests, and future goals. According to Zinn (2008), relevance is, "meaningful, applied to my life, not empty, not busywork, connected to my interests, serious, practical, purposeful, made a difference, needed it in my future, and significant" (p. 155). Relevance applies the real-world to learning, and students are better able to grasp and retain information when it is of value to them. When content is of value to students they are able to make connections to their lives and better understand the content because it becomes personal to them (Paige, Sizemore, & Neace, 2013; Washor; Mojkowski, & Foster, 2009). The practice offered through reading relevant texts can be applied to the literature and informational texts read on a test. If students can see the value in what they are reading, then they will be more apt to read and comprehend, which could increase academic achievement.

Choice is another essential teaching practice of an ELA class. Research shows that students are better able to express what they have learned when they are provided with choices to display what they have learned. Assignments are created based on the various styles of the learners in the classroom, and each learner has the autonomy to select the task that is best suited for their learning style. In a study done by Sullivan in

1993, it was found that students experienced academic gains when they are provided with options and when learning addresses their learning styles (Brophy, 2008; Tomlinson, 2009). In this study, Sullivan used a meta-analysis design where he evaluated and summarized results from other studies. While research says providing students with various ways to express learning increases academic achievement, there is some research that says variety does not necessarily increase academic achievement. Riener and Willingham (2010) argue students learn what we want them to learn, and learning is not based on how students learn. They even make the argument that students do not differ in their learning styles, but students tend to have preferences for how they want to learn. Although Riener and Willingham (2010) make this argument, they do acknowledge that people learn in different ways, however, options for learning do not have to be presented in order for learning to occur. Although there are varying ideas on providing various opportunities for students to demonstrate what they have learned, some studies have shown that providing students with options has indicated an increase in academic performance. If students are provided various options to understanding and comprehending a text, then more students may experience increases in reading comprehension achievement, which may increase student achievement on the HSAP ELA test.

Text Annotation

Text annotation is a teaching practice that can improve reading comprehension skills (Connor et al., 2009). Annotating a text requires students to closely read the text while underlining the main ideas, starring important points, circling key information (i.e.,

dates, places), and putting question marks near areas of misunderstanding (Connor et al., 2009). This close reading also allows for a detailed summary of the text. Text annotation is an active reading practice that lets students have dialogue with the text as they attempt to gain complete understanding and comprehend what they have read. Text annotation prompts discussions of texts and provides specific discussion points. Through discussion, students are better able to express their points of view and provide support while listening to other students' points of view regarding the same text (Morrow, Gambrell, & Duke, 2011). Being able to provide support from the text promotes accountable talk (Connor et al., 2009). Students must practice accountable talk and be able to support their positions with evidence from the actual text. Discussions allow for a deeper understanding of the text (Assaf, 2006; Connor et al., 2009; McKeown et al., 2009).

Text annotation has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension levels as indicated in classroom observations in the study done by Connor et al., (2009). This study is based on the perspectives of two regular education teachers who collaborated to plan engaging lessons for students. Text annotation assists students with summarizing various points of the text and asking questions for clarification at certain points of the text. The two teachers in this study were able to see increases in students' reading comprehension after teaching students how to annotate the text. There was also an increase in passage rates on the ELA exit exam. Porter-O'Donnell (2004) also found that text annotation increases students' reading comprehension skills. This particular article was based on the sole perspectives of a high school general education teacher. Text annotation helps students have a conversation with the text, which is sometimes referred

to as talking to the text, in analyzing the text and comprehending what was read. This level of comprehension is important when reading various passages on the test because students are able to completely understand and grasp the main idea of specific passages.

In a study done by Pryor and Cox (2009), they found that students are more likely to actively read a specific text when text coding is used. The research method used for this study was synthesis and comparison of other studies. Text coding is another version of text annotation, but with the use of common symbols used in text messaging. Pryor and Cox (2009) found that using text coding made reading easier for students because they were familiar text messaging and being able to use text messaging symbols helped students to better understand the text. Text coding helped the students focus on what they were reading, take notes, and participate in class/group discussions.

Questioning

Another teaching practice that may improve students' reading comprehension is questioning. According to Vaughn and Edmonds (2006), students should write three questions when reading a particular text: (a) easy question: a question that is found in the text; (b) harder question: a question that is in the text, but requires putting information together; and (c) hardest question: a question that combines what was read with prior knowledge (p. 132). In addition to having students generate questions, teachers may provide questions to be answered during actual reading. This step allows for active reading of the text, which keeps students engaged in the reading task and increases comprehension (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; McKeown et al., 2009; Vaughn et al., 2011). Questioning also enhances classroom text discussions by engaging students in

dialogue for the purpose of completely understanding the intent of the text. Active reading and instruction improve the level of comprehension, helping students gain a more in-depth understanding of the text (McKown, 2007). Active reading is integral in helping students understand reading passages.

Vocabulary Study

Vocabulary study is a reading comprehension practice that may improve students' understanding of text (Assaf, 2006; McKeown et al., 2009; Vaughn & Edmonds, 2006). During reading, students are encouraged to make note of unfamiliar words and these words are later reviewed during class discussion. Students point out unfamiliar words during discussion, and teachers guide them in using specific context clues in determining the meanings of unfamiliar words. Students are initially encouraged to use vocabulary strategies such as context clues, identifying prefixes, and the use of a dictionary in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. The use of context clues is one strategy that requires students to use clues from the text in determining the meaning of a word. In using context clues, students read the text surrounding the vocabulary word and look for key ideas in determining the meaning. Another vocabulary strategy is to identify prefixes and root words within a word while attempting to determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words. In using prefixes, students attempt to identify Latin prefixes (i.e., un, tri, mis) of the word and use the prefix and root word in determining the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary word (Kelley, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Faller, 2010). Another strategy in vocabulary study is the use of a dictionary. The dictionary is usually used once students have tried several vocabulary strategies in trying to find the meaning of a word

(McKeown et al., 2009; Vaughn & Edmonds, 2006). Using the dictionary helps students completely understand the connotation and denotation of words while providing the specific part of speech for the word. The dictionary also provides antonyms and synonyms of words, which also helps students better understand the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words. Learning to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words when reading a text helps to improve students' overall vocabulary development.

A study done by Flanigan and Greenwood (2007) found that vocabulary study increases reading comprehension because students are better able to comprehend the text when they learn the meanings of unfamiliar words. In this study, Flanigan and Greenwood compared frameworks on vocabulary instruction to develop an instructional framework. This framework was then utilized in a teacher's class where they observed lessons over several days. Although vocabulary study increases reading comprehension, Flanagan and Greenwood (2007) did note that there was not one specific vocabulary study practice that improved overall reading comprehension for students. Therefore, indicating that teachers can opt to provide students with variety when teaching vocabulary study.

According to Kelley et al. (2010), academic vocabulary helps to improve language skills and reading comprehension skills. Academic vocabulary is the specific focus on a small group of words to learn the context. According to Kelley et al. (2010) the most effective academic vocabulary words are general purpose words. Kelley et al. (2010) says vocabulary instruction is most effective when it is directly taught. Kelley et al. (2010) conducted a study to determine if direct instruction of academic vocabulary

increased reading comprehension skills of students. In this study, they developed an 18 week curriculum for direct instruction of academic vocabulary. The study indicated that classes that used the 18 week curriculum had gains in vocabulary regarding standardized measures. Students also showed gains in reading comprehension for the Gates MacGinitie test. In addition to direct instruction of academic vocabulary, Kelley et al. (2010) also found that selecting engaging texts to help with teaching academic vocabulary increases students' interest levels. They also found that academic vocabulary is retained through discussion of the texts. Through discussions, students are better able to understand academic vocabulary words when opportunities for personal connections are made. Finally, Kelley et al. (2010) found that incorporating writing activities that include the academic vocabulary also helps students to retain the meanings of the words while using them appropriately and correctly.

Non-linguistic Representations

Non-linguistic representations have also been found to increase reading comprehension. In a study done by Elliott (2007), eight percent of students' reading scores increased after using non-linguistic representations to summarize and comprehend what was read. In this study, Elliott (2007) used a correlational approach to determine if non-linguistic representations increased reading comprehension. This study found there was an increase in students' reading scores, the increase was minimal. Therefore, indicating that more research is needed in determining the effects of non-linguistic representations on reading comprehension.

In their study, Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) used an experimental approach, which included an experimental group and a control group. Regarding specific reading practices such as note-taking and the use of graphic organizers, Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) found that students who took notes and completed graphic organizers did better with reading comprehension than students who did not take notes or use graphic organizers. Graphic organizers helps students organize their ideas based on what was read in a specific text. Feedback is another reading practice that helps to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Thornley, Selbie, and McDonald (2011) used a case study design with several data collection sources over a period of time to include extended observations. In reviewing the importance of feedback with reading comprehension, Thornley et al. (2011) saw improvements in their students' levels of comprehension when teachers provided feedback to students. Teachers must be specific in their feedback to students, letting them know exactly what is needed to successfully master a task.

According to Vaughn, Klingner, Swanson, Boardman, Roberts, Mohammed, & Stillman-Spisak (2011) graphic organizers are used to guide thinking and increase understanding. This study by Vaugh et al. (2011) used an experimental design where there was an experimental group and a control group. This study found graphic organizers to be beneficial in reading comprehension. Semantic maps and concept maps are two types of graphic representations used in helping students with reading comprehension. Semantic maps show relationships and incorporates the use of background knowledge in helping students better understand a text, while concept maps

help students organize their ideas from a text (Vaughn et al., 2011). The use of background knowledge with semantic maps requires students to use their prior knowledge in developing a better understanding of the text that was read. Concept maps require students to organize their ideas based on what was read in the text. This organization allows for a more logical understanding of events in a text because students must put events in sequence. Graphic organizers are a very good tool to use when brainstorming, activating background knowledge, and organizing thoughts. Being able to dissect the text to gain complete understanding increases overall comprehension.

Think Alouds

Think alouds are another practice used in teaching reading comprehension. Gilliam, Fargo, and St. Clair Robertson (2009) also found that verbal think alouds do positively impact student comprehension levels. This study used a case study design. Think alouds assist students in summarizing the details of the text. Cummins and Stallmeyer-Gerard (2011) used think alouds in lessons they taught on reading comprehension. Like Gilliam et al. (2009), Cummins and Stallmeyer-Gerard (2011) also used a case study design. In this study, they observed 21 students, of these students, 18 students were able to elaborate on their ideas about what was read in the text while using specific details to complete their summaries. This showed that students were able to attain a more in-depth understanding of the text through the use of think alouds.

Summarizing

Summarizing is another teaching practice that may increase students' reading comprehension. Summarizing requires students to focus on the main points of the text. In

a study by Vaughn & Edmonds (2006), the research method used was synthesis and comparison of other research. Vaughn & Edmonds (2006) identified Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an active reading practice that assists students in summarizing a text. There are four strategies used in CSR. First, there is previewing. Previewing requires review of the text prior to reading. In previewing the text the reader is able to highlight and make note of key terms and ideas, which helps to activate prior knowledge. The second strategy is click and chunk. When clicking and chunking the reader makes notes for clarification at various points of the text. For instance, if an idea is confusing or there are unfamiliar vocabulary words, the reader writes notes at those specific points in the text and reviews the notes later for full understanding. The third strategy is 'get the gist.' Get the gist is a brief summarizing technique, which requires the reader to restate the main idea of a paragraph or section in their own words, but in a few words. Finally, there is the wrap-up strategy. Wrap-up requires the reader to summarize the text. In addition to summarizing the text, the reader must also generate questions from specific points in the text. These questions are used during group discussions and help readers better understand the point of the text. Through following the summarizing steps of CSR, students are better able to summarize the text and comprehend what they have read because the steps require the use of active reading (i.e., text annotation, summarizing). Like Vaughn and Edmonds (2006), Dymock and Nicholson (2010) have also identified strategies that improve reading comprehension. These strategies are referred to as High Five:

1. Activating background knowledge;

2. Questioning;
3. Analyzing text structure;
4. Creating mental images; and
5. Summarizing. (Dymock and Nicholson, 2010, p. 168).

The use of these five strategies may also help students better comprehend the text.

Writing Skills, Process, and Rubrics

Writing skills are also assessed on the HSAP ELA test. In addressing writing, one effective teaching practice in improving writing skills for students is to write frequently. The more students write the better their writing becomes when teachers conference with students and provide specific feedback. The more students write and receive quality feedback, the more able they may be to express their ideas, provide support, and improve on grammar and mechanics with increased opportunities provided to write.

Another effective teaching practice in writing is requiring students to write for a variety of purposes, which is a specific skill assessed on the HSAP ELA test. Writing for various purposes requires students to adapt their writing to the specific audience. Students are provided a writing prompt, which informs them of the topic of the writing and also gives them clues (i.e., explain, discuss, tell about) for the type of writing. Knowing the topic and the type of writing helps students better organize their thoughts.

In a study done by Poole (2008), he found that students wrote better when they were given topics that were authentic, had real audiences, and was purposeful. Poole (2008) used an experimental approach in this study where there was an experimental group and a control group. Poole (2008) found that his students were more engaged in

writing when they were able to explore and free write, while being provided with daily opportunities to write. In another study done by Zenkov and Harmon (2009), they also found that students were more engaged in writing when the topic was relevant. Zenkov and Harmon (2009) used an ethnography design for this study. According to Zenkov and Harmon (2009), visual texts help students make connections. Zenkov and Harmon did the Through Students' Eyes Project where 100 youths were given cameras to take photographs of different aspects of their lives. Discussions evolved from these photographs in addition to open-ended questions and discussion. Also, students used these photographs to generate writing pieces.

Next, an effective teaching practice in writing is use of the writing process. The writing process helps students organize their compositions before producing a final draft. The writing process is also included on the checklist for the HSAP ELA test. The steps of the writing process include: 1) prewriting: brainstorm, research, and gather ideas; 2) drafting: create the first draft; 3) revising: review draft; reorganize ideas while adding and deleting content; 4) editing; proofread for grammatical and mechanical errors; and 5) publishing: create a final draft that is ready for sharing (Connor et al., 2009; Graham, Gillepsie, & McKeown, 2013; Pressley et al., 2012). When teaching the writing process, the teacher must teach the steps in order of importance while adding on the next step. In teaching prewriting, students learn how to read, analyze the writing prompt, and determine the topic and type of writing required. Once this is determined, students then brainstorm their ideas and come up with evidence that will support the topic. Next, students are taught to create a first draft. This draft is developed based on the information

generated from brainstorming in prewriting. All details included during prewriting are used to generate a complete cohesive draft. Next is revising. When revising, students are taught to put ideas in the most logical order while adding additional content or deleting unnecessary content. Revising helps solidify cohesion of the first draft. The fourth step is editing, which involves proofreading for grammar and mechanics. This is the time where you check things such as verb tense, spelling, and punctuation. The final step is to produce a final draft. With the final draft, students are taught to consider all notes made through revising and editing in producing a draft that is ready to be published. Teaching students the writing process and requiring them to use it when developing written work, helps them to completely organize their thoughts. The writing process can be used as a checklist in developing publishable written work.

Finally, the use of a scoring rubric is an effective teaching practice for writing (Connor et al., 2009). Providing students with the HSAP ELA writing rubric allows them to review specific elements that should be included in their writing piece. It also helps students self-assess their writing and determine the overall quality. The use of the HSAP ELA writing rubric helps students assess themselves and prepare for the actual writing prompt on the test (Beaglehole, 2014). Teachers can use the various components of the writing rubric to help students understand what is required in an acceptable writing piece. The rubric can be used during the revision process and students can review their first draft for a specific component (i.e., content and development, organization, voice, grammar/mechanics) and determine specific points in their draft where this requirement has been met. Each component of the rubric should be reviewed separately during the

revision process. This way, a student can make necessary adjustments to their draft before proceeding to editing and producing a final draft.

In a study by Mannino, McCarthy, and Shoaf (2007), the research method used was a survey approach. In this study, 71.4% of students surveyed indicated that receiving feedback with a writing rubric helped to improve their overall writing skills. Students indicated that feedback on the rubric helped guide them in determining the strengths and areas of improvement for their writing. In a study done by Lauer and Hendrix (2009), a quasi-experimental design was used with a pretest and posttest. This study found that students writing improved over the course of six individual writing assignments when the writing rubric was presented before writing and the writing rubric was used for feedback and peer discussions. The writing rubric can be essential in having students master the various components assessed in writing.

The research indicates that the use of specific teaching practices may increase students' reading comprehension and writing skills, which in turn may increase student performance on high-stakes tests. The specific practices provide variety for students, which allow students to select the practices that work best for them in improving reading comprehension and writing skills. There are various studies on the effectiveness of specific reading comprehension teaching practices, but the studies that indicate improvement are those practices that involve choice, relevance, direct instruction, guided practice, and engagement. Learning becomes more meaningful when students are able to see the value in what they are leaning and apply it throughout a lesson while being actively engaged.

The instructional practices reviewed and discussed, if used effectively have the potential to prepare students for the specific content assessed on the HSAP ELA test. Teachers can incorporate various teaching practices such as text annotation, graphic organizers, and summarizing in improving student reading comprehension skills. These practices offer variety in reaching all learning styles, which helps teachers individualize and tailor instruction to meet the needs of each student. In their efforts to improve overall student writing, teachers can also incorporate writing practices such as requiring students to write frequently, giving authentic writing topics, and using the writing rubric to compose written work.

Expanded Learning Time (ELT)

Expanded Learning Time (ELT) is the specific process of adding additional time to the school day and/or the school year. The National Center on Time & Learning tracks ELT of various schools throughout the United States. The National Center on Time & Learning (2014) identified 655 ELT schools in 36 states in the United States and the District of Columbia. Of these 655 schools, each school has added about "25% more time to the school year, which is equals to three extra years of school for these students" (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014, Expanded-Time Schools Across the Nation section, p. 1). Of these 655 schools, 20% have extended their daily time in addition to their annual time. Of these schools, all have shown increases in academic achievement. According to the National Center on Time & Learning (2014), there are two keys to successful implementation of ELT. First, schools need a minimum of 300 hours each year, which is equivalent to one hour to 45 minutes each day. There must be an increase

in time from at least 25% more time up to 60% more time. Second, schools must allot this expanded time to the entire schedule. For instance, ELA and math can be 60 to 90 minutes daily with additional time added to social studies, science, and PE. In addition to adding time to the courses, schools must also add another elective class to the schedule, which will allow core teachers time to collaborate. Time should also be expanded for lunch and/or recess. The purpose of ELT is to add time to all contents not just core contents.

The National Center on Time and Learning (2014) also identifies eight practices that improve student achievement:

1. Make every minute count.
2. Prioritize time according to focused learning goals.
3. Individualize learning time and instruction based on students' needs.
4. Build a school culture of high expectations and mutual accountability.
5. Provide a well-rounded education.
6. Prepare students for college and career.
7. Continuously strengthen instruction.
8. Assess, analyze, and respond to student data. (Promising Practices section, p. 1).

In addition to adding time to the school day and/or year, successful ELT schools include these eight practices in their efforts to improve student achievement.

In 2006, the state of Massachusetts started Massachusetts 2020 (2014), an ELT initiative, with 10 schools across five districts. This particular research method would be

an experimental design because all of the schools did not participate in increase time; thus, resulting in experimental groups and control groups. Today, there are 21 schools across 10 districts serving 11,500 students. Of the 21 schools, all are elementary or middle level. The Massachusetts 2020 (2014) provides students with "an additional 60 minutes of support instruction in ELA and math, and 90 minutes of electives in arts, sports and music, and other enrichment activities" (Expanded Learning Time Schools section, p. 1).

Clarence Edwards Middle School in Charlestown, Massachusetts is an ELT school. Prior to ELT, the school had low student achievement on standardized tests, increased bad behavior, and decreased enrollment. Clarence Edwards added an additional hour each day for students to receive support in ELA or math. Students who were strong in ELA and math received support in science during this time. Since implementing ELT, Clarence Edwards has seen increases in science, ELA, and math, and every traditionally challenged subgroup has also shown improvements (Gabrieli, 2010).

North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey is also an ELT school. North Star has 204 students in grades 9-12. North Star's extended time is 70 minutes per day and 11 more school days per year. With ELT, North Star saw an increase in the number of students scoring at or above proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 92% (+33%) and math 100% (+52%) (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

Excel Academy Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts has 212 students in grades 5-8. Excel's extended time is 120 minutes per day and 7 additional school days per year. With ELT, Excel saw an increase in the number of students scoring at or above

proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 95% (+46%) and math 91% (+54%) (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts has 258 students in grades 6-8. Roxbury's extended time is 145 minutes per day and 8 additional school days per year. With ELT, Roxbury saw an increase in the number of students scoring at or above proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 77% (+26%) and math 69% (+33%) (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

Golder College Prep in Chicago, Illinois has 540 students in grades 9-12. Golder's extended time is 80 minutes each day and 7 additional days each year. With ELT, Golder saw increases in the number of students scoring at or above proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 47% (+14%) and math 49% (+20%) (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

IDEA College Preparatory Donna in Donna, Texas has 810 students in grades 6-12. IDEA's extended time is 45 minutes each day. With ELT, IDEA saw increases in the number of students scoring at or above proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 96% (+19%) and math 90% (+17%) (National Center on Time & Learning).

Kathlyn J. Gilliam Collegiate Academy in Dallas, Texas has 300 students in grades 9-11. Kathlyn's extended time is 60 minutes each day. With ELT, Kathlyn saw increases in the number of students scoring at or above proficient on the state's exam in 2010: ELA 100% (+13%) and math 92% (+28%) (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

The Council of Great City Schools is a coalition of 67 of the nation's largest urban school systems. In 2007, the council conducted a school reform survey with the 67 school systems. The research method used was survey research to identify trends in the data. This survey found that more than half of the ninth graders entered high school below grade level, but only 25% of these students were reported as receiving interventions (Council of Great City Schools, 2009). This is rather alarming. If more than half of ninth graders are below grade level when entering high school, more than half of ninth graders should be receiving interventions. The survey also found that the most common forms of interventions for these students were double periods of instruction in the ELA, after school or summer programs, and specialized reading courses. Finally, the survey identified ninth grade academies, block scheduling, and extended time to the school day or year as factors for improving student achievement.

Extended time to the school day may be very beneficial to overall student achievement if schools are able to balance the time in all areas of weaknesses. Extended time allows teachers additional time to offer individualized instruction to students based on the data. With extended time, students are able to receive needed support in areas of needs, which eventually could improve student achievement.

The studies on ELT indicate that extending the school day and school year may increase student achievement when strategically planned. For instance, in some of the schools that implement ELT, time is added to provide more instructional time in ELA and math in addition to before and after school remediation in ELA and math. The trend for ELT schools is to provide additional time in ELA and math, which in turn my

improve student test performance. More research is needed on ELT programs that effectively allot more time to all subject areas instead of an emphasis on ELA and math courses. ELT programs that focus on all content areas may see greater academic gains for overall student performance. The research reveals that some schools with ELT programs experience gains in student performance on high-stakes tests (Council of Great City Schools, 2009; National Center on Time & Learning, 2014).

ELT has the potential to be a vital component to an after school program because it allows schools opportunities to extend the school day after school hours. For instance, schools can offer additional support in all classes on specified days of the week. This support can be an extension of the course content or remediation in areas of weaknesses. ELT allows schools to provide additional instructional time in their efforts to improve student achievement (National Center on Time & Learning, 2014). This type of support can be very beneficial to HSAP ELA remedial students because schools can use the additional time after school to provide instruction tailored to students' individual needs. Schools can see increases in overall student achievement when they address the individual learning needs of students (Allington & Gabriel, 2012).

Summary

The literature review discussed current research in the following areas: high-stakes testing, the instructional framework and curriculum focus of the HSAP ELA remedial course, effective classroom instruction, effective ELA teaching practices, the impact of extended learning time, and the overall importance of effective teaching practices. It was organized into four thematic sub-sections: 1) High-stakes Testing; 2)

HSAP ELA Remedial Course; 3) ELA Teaching Strategies; and 4) Expanded Learning Time. The review supported the case study design by providing an in-depth review of effective ELA teaching practices. According to Yin (2009), the case study design is best suited for answering how and why questions and for providing in-depth reviews. The main question of this study sought to determine how and why teachers select specific ELA teaching practices for use in preparing students for the HSAP ELA test.

Section 3: Research Method

A case study approach was used for this qualitative study. Qualitative research allows the researcher to make assumptions and draw conclusions based on participants' perspectives and/or observation data (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research allows the emergence of ideas through interviews, observations, and text and/or image analysis (Creswell, 2009). The case study approach features an in-depth inquiry of a particular situation or event. This section will present the research design for the proposed study. The procedures for the selection of participants will also be described and the data collection and analysis methods outlined.

Design

Teachers' perspectives of practices to improve student achievement were the focus of this study. According to Creswell (2009), in qualitative research the interviewer depends on participants' views in determining themes and patterns related to the research question. This study used semi-structured interview analysis to determine themes and patterns. The semi-structured interview guide was created with open-ended questions, which allowed participants to fully expound on their perspectives.

Although qualitative research was the research method used in this study, quantitative research was also considered. Quantitative research is centered around measurable relationships, whereas qualitative research is focused on understanding social interactions (Arghode, 2012; Creswell, 2009). In addition, quantitative research begins with inquiry that results in a hypothesis or a theory generated from participant input, and qualitative research begins with the testing of the hypothesis or theory (Arghode, 2012).

Another difference is that quantitative research involves a large sample, and qualitative research involves a small sample. Also, with quantitative research the researcher remains in the background, while the researcher may have a personal investment in the qualitative study (Creswell, 2009).

I also determined that mixed methods research was not best suited for this study because it incorporates the use of both quantitative research and qualitative research (Creswell, 2008). Since I was seeking input from participants' points of view through semi-structured interview questions, the quantitative portion of mixed methods research was not appropriate because the intent of this study was not to determine what the numbers revealed, but rather to develop themes based on what the qualitative data revealed (Creswell, 2009).

I used a qualitative method with a case study approach. Yin (2009) suggests that a case study is the best approach to use when addressing how and why questions, and the main question of this study was what ELA teaching practices are most effective in improving student achievement on the HSAP ELA test. Other approaches reviewed were ethnography, phenomenology, and appreciative inquiry. Ethnography involves studying a group in their natural setting over a period of time (Creswell, 2009). With this study, a group was not studied over a period time, and all data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Phenomenology considers a small group of subjects' viewpoints regarding a specific phenomenon and classifies the experiences after a prolonged period of time (Creswell, 2009). Finally, I did not require research and data collection based over an extended period of time.

Research Questions

The problem of this study was that Riverside High School had approximately 20% of their students not meeting the standard on the HSAP ELA test, even though the school had a specific instructional plan that emphasized academic rigor, using such supplementary curricula such as HSTW and Marzano's high yield strategies (Blackburn, 2008; Marzano et al., 2001; SREB, 2013). To deal with this problem, the high school program offered an HSAP remedial course for students who have not passed the HSAP. Although a number of factors (i.e., academic resources, parent involvement, student motivation, home environment, etc.) may contribute to students failing to meet standards on high-stakes tests, more research was needed on the influence that teaching practices in the English courses may have on preparing students to take, and if necessary, retake high-stakes ELA tests. The guiding research question for this study was as follows: What ELA teaching practices are most effective in improving student achievement on the HSAP ELA test?

Context

The context of a qualitative study can affect the data collection (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Therefore, it is important to address the context of the study because the identity of the researcher and where and how the interviews were conducted could affect the outcomes of a study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). To address the context of the researcher affecting the study results, I presented myself as a student at Walden University. In addition, I also selected a school in a district with which I had no prior affiliations, which decreased the possibility of me knowing any of the study's

participants. In addition, I selected face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect data. These interviews were conducted individually with each participant. Finally, I addressed the context of the physical environment possibly affecting the study results by conducting the face-to-face semi-structured interviews in each participant's classroom using black construction paper to cover the window opening of the door. This allowed participants to be comfortable in their own settings, and privacy was created by covering the window.

Participants

English Language Arts teachers from Riverside High School were selected for this study. The sample size was eight participants of ELA teachers who taught the following courses: English I, English II, Reading and Writing Strategies, and Academic Literacy. This pool of participants was divided into two data points, one group of teachers who prepared students to take high-stakes tests, and the other group of teachers who remediated students who needed to retake high-stakes tests. The teachers who prepared student to take high-stakes tests will be referred to as general education teachers, and the teachers who remediated students to retake high-stakes tests will be referred to as remedial teachers. These small groups allowed for a more thorough analysis of data in determining patterns, topics, categories, and themes (Creswell, 2009).

Criteria for participants were that the teacher must be: (a) a current high school English teacher for grades 9-12; and (b) a teacher currently teaching or who had previously taught English I, English II, reading and writing strategies, and/or academic literacy. The particular set of criteria was established for several reasons. The high school level was chosen because the local problem involved student achievement at the high

school level. Also, the focus of the study was on teaching practices used to improve student achievement in the high school English classroom and on the HSAP ELA test. Finally, using teachers from test preparation courses and remedial courses provided dialogue about how the goal of increased student performance on high-stakes tests affected overall instructional delivery whether teachers were preparing students to take or retake the HSAP ELA test.

For this study, purposive sampling was used to obtain study participants. Purposive sampling allowed me to use participant criteria in recruiting subjects needed for the study. A qualitative researcher does not randomly select participants, but chooses participants with characteristics of interest (Yin & Davis, 2007, p. 75). These characteristics formed the basis for participant selection.

Ethical Protection of Participants

It was essential that participants' rights and safety were protected throughout the study. During the study, I ensured confidentiality by assigning an alphanumeric code (i.e., 1A, 2B, 3C, 4D, 5E, 6F, 7G, and 8H) to identify each participant. I used a password protected laptop and saved the interviews as MP3 files to a USB drive specifically designated for the study. Transcripts and handwritten interview notes were kept in a locked file box in my home office. All raw data will be kept for a period of five years and then destroyed.

Protecting the rights of the study's participants was critical to the research. In addition to ensuring the anonymity of participants, confidentiality was also ensured with the safekeeping of research materials. It is the role of the researcher to assure that

participants are safe. In addition to anonymity and confidentiality, participants received a detailed explanation of the study to include an explanation of the interview process. This way, participants were thoroughly informed of the nature of the study. This detailed explanation came through review of the informed consent form (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). The informed consent form provided explanations regarding the study for the following: background information, procedures, voluntary nature, risks and benefits, compensation, and confidentiality. Once the informed consent form was reviewed, participants were given at least 48 hours to decide if they wanted to participate in the study. This decision was finalized by signing and returning the informed consent form (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009).

To gain access to study participants, I submitted a formal request to conduct research through Riverside High School's district office of research. I sent an e-mail to the principal at the target site to introduce myself and provide a description of the study, including permission from the district. Next, I placed a follow-up call to the principal requesting the opportunity to meet and discuss how study participants would be selected and how the study would be conducted. A sample pool for the study was compiled based on the names provided by the principal. After permission was secured from the participating entities, I e-mailed potential participants providing them with background information on the study. I asked participants to e-mail me if they were interested in participating in the study. Of those who responded, I arranged a time and location for the interview. I e-mailed the self-selected participants a consent form, which they returned via e-mail. I also asked participants to e-mail copies of two lesson plans, one from the

beginning of the course, and one from four to six weeks before administration of high-stakes testing.

When I met the participants for the interview, I ensured a positive researcher-participant working relationship by reviewing the conditions of the consent form and the interview protocol and answering any questions concerning the form and procedures for conducting the interview.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher of this study, I am responsible for ensuring the ethical protection of participants. This involved taking the necessary steps to ensure their anonymity as well as securing their privacy. I was also responsible for securely retaining all raw data associated with the study. As the researcher of this study, I conducted all interviews with participants and transcribed all interview voice recordings. I analyzed interview transcriptions and lesson plans. Finally, I completed the write-up of the findings of the data analysis.

Regarding this study, one potential bias was my belief that teachers should be entrusted to determine specific teaching practices that work best for their students. Based on the information provided in the district's instructional framework, specific teaching practices were predetermined for classroom teachers. In research, there are various potential sources for bias, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to attempt to eliminate all instances of bias (Simundic, 2013; Yin, 2009). One way to eliminate bias is through selection of participants. Selecting participants that are a representative sample of the population will help eliminate bias because participants will represent the general

population (Simundic, 2013). As the researcher, I inquired about the teaching practices that individual ELA teachers used in delivering instruction and improving student achievement. Each participant provided what has worked for their specific students based on actual classroom experiences. Teachers know their students and what works best in teaching them the specific content. However, as a researcher, I needed to be sensitive and responsive to each participant's point of view (Yin, 2009).

Data Collection

Individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used for this study. One advantage of the semi-structured interview was that participants were allowed to expound on their ideas without being limited to pre-scripted answer choices such as those provided in a Likert survey (Creswell, 2009). The semi-structured interview allowed room for elaboration on ideas and firsthand experiences. According to Kvale (2007), the intent of the semi-structured interview is to obtain real life depictions of the world through the eyes of the interviewee (p. 10). I used these depictions to interpret the actual meanings of described situations. The semi-structured interview typically has a sequence of themes to cover while having interview questions prepared before the actual interview (Kvale, 2007). Since I attempted to learn teacher perspectives on the effectiveness of various teaching practices, the semi-structured interview was appropriate because the questions were sequenced by the various practices and instructional frameworks. The format of the semi-structured interview also allowed for adjustments to be made to the sequence of questions during the actual interview based on how interviewees responded to initial questions (Kuhlthau, 2013; Kvale, 2007). There were three main data points for this case

study. The first data point was interviews with English I and English II teachers who prepare students to take the HSAP ELA test. The second data point was interviews with teachers who taught the two remedial courses for students who do not pass the reading section of the HSAP ELA test. Finally, the third data point was ELA lesson plans from the preparation teachers and the remedial teachers. Teacher lesson plans were used as a data point for the study to provide information regarding actual teaching practices that were being used in the preparatory classes and the remedial classes. This helped address the intent of the research questions, which was to seek to determine teaching practices that were used in ELA classes. The lesson plans also provided further insight into how both types of classes were conducted, in addition to the specific content that was covered. Furthermore, the use of lesson plans as a third data set helped in establishing reliability and validity of the study.

The study took approximately two weeks (Appendix A) and took place during the summer break. Each interview was scheduled after school Monday through Thursday at 3:00pm or 4:15pm. I interviewed the general education teachers on Monday and Tuesday and interviewed the remedial teachers on Wednesday and Thursday. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and took place in each participant's classroom at their school site. When I met the participants for the interview, I ensured a positive researcher-participant working relationship by reviewing the conditions of the consent form. Interviews were conducted at agreed upon times, and interview notes were written and voice recorded. After each interview, I used Word to type and save transcripts of

each voice recording (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interview notes were written in the event of an error with the recording device.

The interview was structured using an interview guide with follow-up and probe questions (see Appendix B). Audacity software was downloaded to the laptop and used to make voice recordings of each interview, and each recording was saved as an MP3 file. I reviewed MP3 files at a later time to ensure accuracy of interview notes, and I used Word to transcribe voice recordings of each interview. Each Word document was saved to a USB drive designated for the study. All handwritten interview notes were labeled with each participant's assigned alphanumeric code, and all MP3 files and Word documents of transcripts were saved as each participant's assigned alphanumeric code. This way, I could identify and retrieve files while maintaining anonymity of participants. Once all data were collected, saved, and filed, data analysis began using Creswell's (2009) steps to data analysis:

1. Organize and prepare data.
2. Read through all data.
3. Begin coding.
4. Use coding to generate description of setting or people and to determine categories and themes.
5. Develop narrative to represent descriptions and themes.
6. Interpret the data. (p. 190-195).

Data Analysis

I began preparing raw data of each interview and typing transcripts within several hours after each interview. Analysis of transcriptions began once each voice recording had been completely transcribed. Analysis of all interview transcripts took approximately six days total, and one transcript was analyzed at a time.

Interview data was analyzed using Creswell's (2009) steps to data analysis to include steps to coding data and identify topics, categories, and concepts. Coding is step three of Creswell's data analysis process. First, I read the transcriptions for an overall idea of the information; however, before I started reading the transcriptions, I prepared the raw data files by typing each transcription (Thomas, 2006). This meant preparing all raw data in the same format, which for the purpose of this study was typing and saving each voice recording as a Word document and printing copies. Printed copies were necessary because I viewed a hardcopy of each transcription while reading and making written notes and adding codes. Once the raw data was prepared and transcriptions were printed, then, I read the transcripts. In reading transcripts, there must be a close reading of the text (Thomas, 2006). A close reading of the text involved carefully reading the text, and becoming familiar with the details and the overall idea of the text. Once the text had been read closely, I selected one transcript at a time and went through it making notes and identifying categories and concepts. Focusing on one transcript at a time allowed me to completely focus and thoroughly analyze the data. From this analysis, I created a table that included major categories, descriptions for major categories, and related concepts for

each category. Thomas (2006) identified five key aspects of categories associated with the coding process:

1. Category label – word or short phrase used to refer to the specific category.
2. Category description – provides a descriptive meaning of each category.
3. Text or data – identify text or data related to the category.
4. Links – identify connections with other categories.
5. Determine the model in which the category is embedded; open network (no hierarchy or sequence); temporal sequence (movement over time); and casual network (one category causes changes in another). (p. 239-240).

I had 34 categories in this initial phase of the coding process. Some of the categories and the descriptions were as follows: Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Instruction; Teaching Before High-Stakes Testing; Typical Day in an ELA Classroom; Actively Engaging Students; Quality ELA Teaching Practices; and Knowledge of Expanded Learning Time. Once I identified categories, I read each transcript again and wrote topics as abbreviations. Abbreviations were generated from the first two to four letters of each category. The abbreviations helped me condense the topics and make various subjects easier to identify.

Next, I used axial coding to further analyze the data. Axial coding involved rereading the transcripts and using the topics and categories to confirm that the concepts and categories were accurate and related. Axial coding ensured alignment of the data and also helped to ensure that the categories and concepts correctly represent the raw data while showing relationships between the concepts and categories. Next, I reviewed the

list of categories to determine if this list could be further condensed eliminating instances of redundancy. According to Thomas (2006), this is the time for tweaking categories. I used this review for searching for subtopics to each category and selecting appropriate quotations that supported the categories. Finally, I generated themes based on topics, categories, concepts, and overall ideas that I found to be common throughout the data.

I coded each lesson plan using the coding process described above. I analyzed the lesson plan data using predetermined codes (Appendix C) I generated based on the district's instructional framework (HSAP ELA framework and ELA framework). In addition to these codes, I used codes that were identified from the interview transcripts. I reviewed two sets of lessons plans from each teacher. The first of the two plans was taken from the beginning of the specified course, and the second selected from four to six weeks before testing.

Potential for Discrepant Cases

In addressing discrepancies, I reviewed interview transcriptions and searched for data that did not support the categories and themes. According to Lewis (2009), researchers tend to search for data that supports the categories and themes rather than search for data that does not support the categories and themes. All data must be reviewed in determining the support of categories and themes (Lewis, 2009). In instances of discrepant data, the themes and categories must be modified to support the data. Themes and categories must align to the data, and instances of discrepant data would be reported in the results section.

Validity and Reliability

Various strategies of reliability and validity were used to ensure reader reliability in the findings (Creswell, 2009). Reliability will be established through checking transcripts and reviewing codes. Checking transcripts involves re-reading transcripts for accuracy of information. The transcripts should be an exact replication of each interview. Reviewing codes involves reviewing codes to ensure alignment with data. This means comparing codes with the actual data and makings notes when necessary (Creswell, 2009). Finally, validity will be established through triangulation and clarifying any biases that may come about during the study. According to Guion, Diehl, & McDonald (2011), "triangulation is an analytic process that requires the use of multiple qualitative methods to study a program" (p. 2). Yin (2013) states, "triangulation requires the use of three different references points to verify a particular event, description, or fact being reported by a study" (p. 149). The use of three data points can also be a way of reinforcing validity of the study (Yin, 2012). This study will use semi-structured interviews of teachers who prepare students to take high-stakes tests and teachers who prepare students to retake high-stakes tests. The study will also use two sets of lesson plans from both sets of teachers. One lesson plan will be from the beginning of the course while the other lesson plan will come from four to six weeks before the test.

The purpose of this study was to determine the most effective teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was used for this study. The guiding research question for this study was: What ELA teaching practices are most effective in improving

student achievement on the HSAP ELA test? Individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to provide insight into participants' views regarding specific teaching practices they use to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test, and how these specific teaching practices are used. This study provided effective teaching practices that could be used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

Findings from a qualitative case study will be presented in this section using descriptions of the participants and multiple data sets. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews of English I and English II teachers, semi-structured interviews of remedial teachers (Academic Literacy and Reading & Writing Strategies), and lesson plans from both groups of teachers from the beginning of the course and from four to six weeks before high-stakes testing. Conclusions were drawn based on perspectives of the study's participants.

Participants

Eight high school English teachers volunteered to participate in this study. Their teaching experience spanned eight to 33 total years. Two groups of teachers were interviewed: general education teachers who prepared students for the high-stakes HSAP ELA test, and remedial teachers who prepared students to retake the HSAP ELA test. Of the eight participants, three were general education teachers, four were remedial teachers, and one teacher represented both groups (general education teachers and remedial teachers).

The general education teachers, participants 3C, 5E, and 7G, varied in teaching experience as well as English courses taught. Participant 3C had a total of 17 years of teaching experience with three years of experience teaching high school English and 14 years of experience teaching middle school English language arts. This participant taught English II and English III for the current school year and also taught in a GED program.

Participant 5E had a total of 10 years of teaching experience with 10 years of experience teaching high school English. This participant taught English I for the current school year. Participant 7G had a total of 33 years of teaching experience with 28 years of experience teaching English at the high school level, one year of teaching middle school English language arts, and four years of teaching English at the collegiate level. This participant taught English II and journalism for the current school year.

The remedial teachers, participants 1A, 4D, 6F, and 8H, also had varied teaching experience and English courses taught. Participant 1A had a total of 12 years of teaching experience with 12 years teaching high school English. This participant taught reading and writing strategies, English III, and English IV for the current school year. Participant 4D had a total of 13 years of teaching experience with two years of experience teaching high school English, three years teaching high school special education, three years teaching middle school language arts, and five years teaching middle school special education. This participant taught reading and writing strategies and academic literacy for the current school year. Participant 6F taught high school English for nine years. This participant taught English IV and reading and writing strategies for the current school year. Participant 8H had a total of eight years of teaching experience with seven years of experience at the high school level and one year of experience at the middle school level. This participant taught AP English and academic literacy for the current school year. Finally, participant 2B represented both data groups (general education teachers and remedial teachers). Participant 2B had a total of 15 years teaching high school English.

This participant taught English I and academic literacy for the current school year. All participants' teaching experience and courses taught are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Group: General ed.			
Participant	Years of experience at high school	Years teaching high school English	Courses taught
3C	3	3	English II, English III
5E	10	10	English I
7G	28	28	English II, Journalism
Group: Remedial			
Participant	Years of experience at high school	Years teaching high school English	Courses taught
1A	12	12	Strategies, English III, English IV
4D	5	2	Strategies, Academic Literacy
6F	9	9	English IV, Strategies
8H	7	7	AP English, Academic Literacy
Group: General ed. and remedial			
Participant	Years of experience at high school	Years teaching high school English	Courses taught
2B	15	15	English I, Academic Literacy

Data Collection

The final data collection had modifications from the originally planned proposal. In the initial stage of data collection, I intended to contact the principal to provide names of participants. IRB feedback indicated that I could not call or e-mail the principal to provide names of potential participants. Instead, I e-mailed the principal and requested

that she send an e-mail of invitation on my behalf regarding the study. From the invitation e-mail, the first eight participants who responded were the participants for the study. The second instance involved the times of the interviews. I originally planned to have interviews at 3:00pm or 4:15pm; however, these times were not convenient for all participants. Although all interviews took place after school, some of the interview times varied from 3:15pm to 4:26pm or as late as 6:30pm. The third instance involved the timeframe of the interviews. I originally planned to conduct interviews during the summer break; however, interviews were conducted from the third week in April through the second week of May. The fourth instance involved interview days. I originally planned to interview general education teachers on Monday and Tuesday and interview remedial teachers on Wednesday and Thursday. This plan was not feasible since the participants could not be confined to those proposed days. All interviews were scheduled on days that were most convenient for study participants. The fifth instance involved the amount of days originally allotted for interviews. I initially planned to conduct interviews over the course of four days, Monday through Thursday. However, seven interviews took place Monday through Friday of one week and the last interview was completed two weeks later. A two-week delay was necessary for the last interview because of state testing. I was instructed by Riverside's district's office of research that interviews could not be conducted during the state testing window. Finally, although this was not a modification, it was revealed that the remedial classes were offered as electives during the school day instead of being offered after school; thus, remedial teachers could not be considered as after school teachers.

Data collection of lesson plans and interviews were completed as planned. All participants provided two copies of lesson plans: one was a lesson plan from the beginning of the course, and the other was a lesson plan from four to six weeks before the administration of the test. In the ELA department, teachers use collaborative planning. English teachers are given the same lesson plans each week and follow the procedures outlined for each day and concept taught. The lesson plans I received had the names of all teachers who taught the specific course; therefore, the participants did not provide individual lesson plans for me. Seven of the eight participants emailed copies of their lesson plans to me after the interview since they failed to provide them at the time of their interviews.

At the beginning of each interview, I gave $15.00 cash to participants for their participation in the study, along with a copy of the interview guide for use during the interview. I had e-mailed a copy of the interview to each participant prior to their individual interviews, and they were provided a hard copy to refer to during the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 55 minutes. I took handwritten notes during each interview and also made a voice recording of the interview using Audacity Software. The interview recordings were saved as mp3 files and used to transcribe each interview in Word. Each mp3 file was saved as the participant's assigned alphanumeric code, and each interview was transcribed in Word within three to four hours after the interview. All handwritten notes, consent forms, and transcriptions were kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office, and all mp3 files and Word documents were saved as password protected files on a USB drive designated solely for this study.

Data Analysis Results Procedures

Data analysis began after all audio recordings were transcribed, saved, and printed. Printed copies of the transcripts allowed me to make notes as I read through and analyzed each transcript. I started with a close reading of each text to become familiar with the details (Thomas, 2006). Next, open coding was used to identify categories and concepts found throughout the data. The categories were determined through the first stage of the open coding process. After the categories were determined, each transcript was reread to determine topics. Next, abbreviations were generated from the first three to six letters of each category. There were a total of 34 categories. Below is a sample of the categories, category descriptions, and abbreviations:

- PHST – Purpose of High-Stakes Testing – The purpose of high-stakes testing discussed the main reasons why teachers felt high-stakes testing exists.
- EHST – Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Instruction – The effects of high-stakes testing on instruction discussed possible ramifications for instruction associated with high-stakes testing.
- TDHST – Teaching During High-Stakes Testing – Teaching during high-stakes testing discussed what it is like teaching during this era of high-stakes testing.

From the abbreviations, I generated a list of topics, which made each category easier to identify and allowed the number of categories to be condensed. Next, I reviewed the list of categories to determine if the list could be further condensed eliminating instances of redundancy (Thomas, 2006). For example, high-stakes testing was the topic for the

categories Purpose of High-Stakes Testing and High-Stakes Testing in ELA, and impact on learning was the topic for the category Teaching Before High-Stakes Testing. Two major themes emerged from the categories and subtopics: 1) High-Stakes Testing and Its Impact on Learning; and 2) Quality Instruction.

An example of an open coding category derived from the data was the purpose of high-stakes testing. I coded the actual purposes of high-stakes testing as indicated by the participants. Examples of participant responses associated with this code were, "assess state standards; measure student progress; measure gains; improve student achievement; and determine school report card grades." A table was created to organize the coded data (Appendix E). The table included three categories: 1) category label – word or short phrase used to refer to the specific category; 2) category description – provides a descriptive meaning of each category; and 3) text or data – identify text or data related to the category (Thomas, 2006, p. 239-240).

After the open coding process, I further analyzed the data using axial coding. Axial coding involved rereading the transcripts and using the topics and categories to confirm their accuracy. Axial coding ensured alignment and helped to ensure the categories and concepts correctly represented the raw data while showing relationships between the concepts and topics. For example, the open code "effective ELA teaching practices" resulted in the following axial codes: collaborative groups work; relevant reading allows for connections; and graphic organizers make connections. Patterns were also established from the categories and text data. Some examples of patterns and relationships were: the pressures of high-stakes testing determined the content taught in

the ELA classroom; and a typical day in an ELA classroom involved reading and writing instruction. Finally, minor themes were generated based on the categories, topics, and overall ideas that were common throughout the data. Some of the minor themes derived were: pressures associated with high-stakes testing; teaching to the test; reading in the ELA classroom; relevant texts in the ELA classroom; and writing in the ELA classroom.

Once categories were established from interview analysis, I created a codebook to further assist with analysis and coding of teacher lesson plans (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). Lesson plans were reviewed from the beginning of each course and from four to six weeks before high-stakes testing. The codebook was developed from analysis and coding of interview transcripts and predetermined codes based on the district's instructional frameworks. The codebook included categories, abbreviations, and full definitions (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Many of the codes from the codebook were directly related to the categories from the initial coding and analysis of the interviews. For example, in reviewing lesson plans for specific teaching practices, one category was Effective ELA Teaching Practices (EETP). Codes associated with this category were relevant text (RT), graphic organizers (GO), frequency of writing (FW), collaborative groups (CG). One example of a code from the codebook was collaborative groups (CG), which indicated opportunities throughout a lesson where students were allowed to work together with peers in completing a task.

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine effective teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. The findings were

derived from semi-structured interview data solicited from general education and remedial teachers and their sample lesson plans. Individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with three general education teachers, four remedial teachers, and one teacher who represented both groups. Two major themes emerged from the data analysis process: (a) high-stakes testing and its impact on learning, and (b) quality instruction. For each theme three minor themes were identified that supported the theme.

Table 2

Major Themes and Minor Themes

Major Theme 1: High-stakes testing and its impact on learning
Minor Themes
Purpose of high-stakes testing
Pressures associated with high-stakes testing
Impact of high-stakes testing on instruction
Major Theme 2: Quality instruction
Minor Themes
ELA student learning activities
Typical day in the ELA classroom
Quality ELA teaching practices

In this section, I will discuss each theme and provide supporting evidence for each theme.

Theme 1: High-Stakes Testing and Its Impact on Learning

Theme 1, high-stakes testing and its impact on learning, emerged from analysis of teachers' views of the HSAP ELA test. This theme is discussed in the context of three minor themes: (a) purpose of high-stakes testing; (b) pressures associated with high-stakes testing; and (c) impact of high-stakes testing on instruction. Participant viewpoints on these minor themes will be compared and contrasted for general education teachers, remedial teachers, and from both teacher groups. Finally, a concluding discussion

considered how these viewpoints addressed the problem of the study, the conceptual framework, and the guiding research question concerning effective ELA teaching practices.

Purpose of high-stakes testing. The data revealed that each of the eight participants, both general education teachers and remedial teachers, believed the purpose of high-stakes testing was to measure student performance, growth, and progress. In this regard, general education teachers thought that it was a way "to identify whether or not students are making gains," or an "indicator for schools to see actual progress of student performance." Participant 5E thought that the purpose of the high-stakes HSAP ELA test was a way to determine if students were receiving a quality education, which would be evident in the number of students experiencing success on it.

Remedial teachers held similar views as the general education teachers about the purpose of the HSAP ELA as a high-stakes test. Participants thought it was "a way to kind of gauge whether students are learning, retaining, and meeting standards." Participant 8H stated, "High-stakes testing is a way to assess how students are actually performing on a specific set of standards." Like their general education counterparts, remedial participants viewed the purpose of high-stakes testing as a way to evaluate individual student achievement and performance.

If the purpose of high-stakes testing was to measure student performance on academic standards, then the goal of general education teachers and remedial teachers was student success on the HSAP ELA test. This outcome aligns with the problem of the study, which was that a number of students at the school were not successful on the

HSAP ELA test and required remedial instruction. Therefore, an additional unstated purpose of high-stakes testing can be surmised from their views. That is, general education teachers and remedial teachers had to determine how to best prepare students to take high-stakes tests and to re-take it if they were not successful, which is addressed by the other major theme of the study: quality or effective ELA instruction. Both groups of teachers indicated the use of various teaching practices to best prepare students for high-stakes testing. Teaching practices most commonly used to prepare students for high-stakes testing were: daily reading and writing, relevant texts, graphic organizers, vocabulary study, and questioning.

Pressures associated with high-stakes testing. Seven out of eight participants indicated experiencing some type of pressure due to high-stakes testing. Participant 7G, a general education teacher, was the only participant who did not indicate experiencing pressures due to high-stakes testing. Participant 2B, a general education teacher, said, "Sometimes I cannot teach the subjects I would prefer teaching because of test results." Another general education teacher, participant 5E, indicated feeling overwhelmed when students are not successful on the test.

Like their general education counterparts, all of the remedial teachers indicated experiencing various pressures due to high-stakes testing. Participant 4D said, "The main pressure that I had to endure is being evaluated by my administrators and then questioned on each of my students' performance." Participant 8H said, "The main pressure is the need for students to perform well based on the school's report card. No one seems to care about actual learning."

In reviewing the data, seven out of eight participants indicated experiencing a great deal of pressure to pass the test. These pressures were experienced throughout the school year prior to the assessment period, ended immediately after the assessment period, and resumed once scores returned. Participant 6F, a remedial teacher said, "After the test, it's like what happened to these students if they don't do well. And even if students do well, then there's the pressure to duplicate." Both general education teachers and remedial teachers indicated the cycle of pressure starting with reviewing test scores, determining and utilizing best practices for student success, taking the test, and reviewing test scores again.

Based on participants' viewpoints, pressures associated with high-stakes testing affect overall classroom instruction because teachers found themselves selecting quality teaching practices that best prepare students for high-stakes testing and increase their likelihood of experiencing success on the test. Selecting quality ELA teaching practices is a key concept of the study's conceptual framework. It is in alignment with the key terms of the conceptual framework, which was primarily concerned with the question of overall quality and effectiveness of ELA instruction. The relationship between these key terms is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. The findings revealed that the pressures of associated with high-stakes testing influenced teachers to be specific in selecting ELA teaching practices that could potentially increase the chances of improved student performance on the HSAP ELA test. This view of being pressured to pass the test and determine quality teaching practices is addressed by Major Theme 2: quality or effective ELA instruction.

Impact of high-stakes testing on instruction. General education teachers had different views about the impact of high-stakes testing on instruction. Two of the four participants, participants 2B and 5E, indicated that it directly impacted their teaching, and to prepare their students they would explicitly teach to the test. Participant 2B also indicated speaking the ELA HSAP test daily in the classroom. Participants 3C and 7G did not teach to the test. Instead, they taught the overall course content based on what they felt students needed to be successful in the real world. Participant 7G said, "Instruction for life supersedes any test. If a student is properly taught, he/she will be prepared for post high school goals and test mastery to achieve these goals."

By contrast, all of the remedial teachers reported teaching to the test. Participant 4D also indicated students would memorize content that was being taught instead of actual learning taking place. Participant 6F stated, "I would like to think that I am teaching the content, but if I am honest, a lot of time is spent teaching to the test."

Views about the impact of high-stakes testing on instruction varied for general education teachers, but were consistent among remedial teachers. Overall, six out of eight participants indicated teaching to the test to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. All six participants indicated focusing their instruction on the content that would be assessed on the high-stakes test. Participant 1A said, "Making sure kids have 100% or try to attain at least 100% in meeting standards." The impact that high-stakes testing had on learning was a result of the pressures teachers endure to ensure that students pass high-stakes tests.

Based on the findings, teachers experienced various pressures for increased student performance on high-stakes tests, which resulted in most teachers teaching to the test to increase the likelihood of students experiencing success on the high-stakes tests. Although the majority of teachers indicated teaching to the test, they were selective in determining quality teaching practices to use in their instructional delivery. Participant 8H, a remedial teacher said, "Although I find myself teaching to the test, I do incorporate activities that provide real-world learning experiences for students. Students are able to see the connections in what they are learning." Again, it is critical that teachers select quality teaching practices in their efforts to increase student performance on high-stakes tests. Selecting quality ELA teaching practices is a key concept of the study's conceptual framework. It is in alignment with the key terms of the conceptual framework, which was mainly concerned with the question of overall quality and effectiveness of ELA instruction. The relationship between these key concepts is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. Teachers are selective in the ELA strategies they use in addition to being selective in the content that is presented. The findings revealed that the various pressures associated with high-stakes testing caused teachers to teach to the test, which influenced selection of specific content and ELA teaching practices that could potentially increase the chances of improved student performance on the HSAP ELA test. The viewpoint of teaching to the test while determining quality teaching practices is addressed by Theme 2: quality or effective ELA instruction.

Theme 2: Quality Instruction

Theme 2, quality instruction, emerged from analysis of teachers' views of effective or quality ELA teaching practices. This theme is discussed in the context of three minor themes: a) ELA Student Learning Activities; b) A Typical Day in the ELA Classroom; and c) Quality ELA Teaching Practices. Participant viewpoints on these minor themes will be compared and contrasted for general education teachers, remedial teachers, and from both teacher groups. Finally, a concluding discussion considers how these viewpoints address the problem of the study, the conceptual framework, and the guiding research question concerning effective ELA teaching practices.

ELA student learning activities. General education teachers reported using various approaches to get students actively engaged in learning. Two general education teachers used ELA content that was relevant to students and their experiences. Participant 3C stated, "Get them interested and make it relevant to them. I find things that are going to be challenging, but I can help them make a connection to and see the relevance." In contrast, the other two general education teachers indicated the use of engaging activities to get students actively engaged in learning. Participant 5E said, "I select activities that are engaging and challenging for students."

Like two of the general education teachers, three of the four remedial teachers also emphasized making learning relevant for students and assisting students in making connections to their own experiences. Participant 8H said, "I make everything relevant to students. Students must be able to see the relevance and make connection if they are going to be actively engaged in learning." In addition to relevant learning and making

connections, the other participants indicated setting high expectations and using visual aids to get students actively engaged in learning. In contrast, participant 1A indicated the use of technology to get students actively engaged in learning.

Although all of the teachers indicated various practices used to actively engage students in learning, five out of eight participants indicated making learning relevant for students and providing opportunities for them to make connections with learning in getting students actively engaged in learning. Determining quality ELA teaching practices that keep students engaged in learning is a key concept of the study's conceptual framework. It is in alignment with the key terms of the conceptual framework, which was primarily concerned with the question of overall quality and effectiveness of ELA instruction. The relationship between these key concepts is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. The findings revealed that making learning relevant for students was an effective teaching practice that also kept students engaged in learning. The findings also support the idea that student engagement is a quality ELA teaching practice that could be used in the general education classroom and the remedial classroom to potentially increase the chances of students experiencing success on the HSAP ELA test.

A typical day in the ELA classroom. Two instructional practices, the Do Now activity (Blackburn, 2008) and reading (i.e., read aloud, independent reading), were typically used in the classrooms of participants. The Do Now activity is a short written activity students are given to complete as soon as they enter the classroom (Blackburn, 2008). The Do Now activity can be used for the following: get students focused at the

start of class; assess prior knowledge; introduce a lesson; and provide additional practice (Blackburn, 2008). Three out of four general education teachers indicated the use of the Do Now activity in their classrooms. Participant 7G was the only participant who did not indicate use of the Do Now activity. Three out of four general education teachers also indicated the use of various reading activities in their classrooms. Again, participant 7G was the only participant who did not indicate us of a reading activity.

Like their general education counterparts, the remedial teachers also indicated the use of the Do Now activity and reading a part of a typical day in the ELA classroom. Three out of four remedial teachers indicated the use of the Do Now activity. Participant 6F was the only participant who did not indicate use of the Do Now activity. Participant 6F indicated bell to bell instruction as a component of a typical day in the ELA classroom. Bell to bell instruction is the idea that instruction begins at the start of class and ends when the bell sound; every minute of instructional time is devoted to actual teaching and learning. Three out of four remedial teachers indicated the use of various reading activities as a part of a typical day in the ELA classroom. Participant 1A was the only participant who did not indicate the use of a reading activity as a part of a typical day in the ELA classroom. Participant 1A indicated the use of discussion and collaborative groups.

Overall, all of the participants indicated the use of various activities as typical practices of an ELA classroom. Participants indicated the use of discussion, collaborative groups, closing activities, direct instruction, and guided practice. However, the majority of participants indicated the use of the Do Now Activity and various reading activities as

typical practices used in an ELA classroom. Determining quality ELA teaching practices is a key concept of the study's conceptual framework. It is in alignment with the key terms of the conceptual framework, which was primarily concerned with the question of overall quality and effectiveness of ELA instruction. The relationship between these key concepts is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. The findings revealed that the use of specific teaching practices such as the Do Now Activity and specific reading activities was also indicative of effective classroom instruction, which could potentially increase student performance on the HSAP ELA test.

Quality ELA teaching practices. Three of the four general education teachers reported using relevant texts, questioning, graphic organizers, vocabulary study, and writing as quality ELA teaching practices. In addition to these instructional practices one participant also used text annotation and summarizing. However, participant 7G, used none of these ELA practices, and instead used setting high expectations, comparing and contrasting, and data analysis.

By contrast, all of the remedial teachers used vocabulary study and writing. Three of the participants used relevant texts, questioning, and graphic organizers. In addition to these instructional practices, participant 1A used text annotation, and participant 6F used collaborative groups (see Table 3). Table 3 shows effective teaching practices indicated by general education teachers and remedial teachers.

Table 3

Quality ELA Teaching Practices

General education teachers											
RT	TA	Q	CG	VS	NLR	C	GO	SN	WP	WE	N/A
2B		2B		2B	2B		2B		2B		
3C		3C	3C			3C	3C		3C	3C	
5E	5E	5E	5E	5E	5E	5E	5E	5E	5E		
									7G	7G	7G
Remedial teachers											
RT	TA	Q	CG	VS	NLR	C	GO	SN	WP	WE	N/A
1A	1A	1A		1A			1A		1A		
4D				4D					4D	4D	
		6F	6F	6F			6F		6F	6F	
8H		8H		8H			8H		8H	8H	

RT – relevant text; TA – text annotation; Q – questioning; CG – collaborative groups; VS – vocabulary study; NLR – non-linguistic representation; C – choice; GO – graphic organizer; S – summarizing and notetaking; WP – writing process; WE – write every day.

Of the various quality teaching practices used by both general education and remedial teachers, relevant texts, graphic organizers, questioning, vocabulary study, and modeling the writing process were used most commonly. To summarize Table 3, seven out of eight participants used graphic organizers and vocabulary study. Questioning was used by six out of eight participants.

All of the eight participants used the writing process. General education teachers reported teaching all steps of the writing process. For example, participant 3C stated, “I teach all of them. I don’t think you can pull out one or two. Every single step is important.” Similarly, participant 8H, a remedial teacher, said, “I teach all of the steps of the writing process.”

Views about the frequency of writing in the ELA classroom varied among general education teachers with only two teachers reporting daily writing. By contrast, three of the four remedial teachers used writing daily. In reviewing the data, five participants from both groups indicated that students wrote on a daily basis. Frequency of writing varied among the other three participants.

Lesson Plans

The amount of time devoted to test preparation was evident in many of the lesson plans. Many Do Now activities (Blackburn, 2008) were related to some type of test preparation. For example, a Do Now activity from the Reading Strategies lesson plans was a HSAP practice reading item. Another example of a Do Now activity was from the English II lesson plans. This particular Do Now activity was a Super Seven sample. Super Sevens are practice items on grammar and mechanics, which are intended to address the writing portion of the HSAP test. Also, daily content and activities were aligned with the state standards that were assessed on the test. For example, in the English II lesson plans, the state standard of "Read and comprehend a variety of literary texts" was listed as the focus and objective of the specific lesson (SDE, 2013). All activities addressed this standard, and the lesson included activities such as a read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading. Preparation for the test was also evident in the remedial classes (Reading & Writing Strategies and Academic Literacy) lesson plans. For example, the state standard of "writing for a variety of audiences" was listed as the focus and objective of one remedial lesson (SDE, 2013). The lesson activities included writing an essay based on a specific topic and going through prewriting activities before

composing the essay. Finally, lesson plans from four to six weeks before the test indicated test preparation review with practice tests in reading and/or writing. For example, a lesson plan from a general education teacher indicated a practice reading test and practice essay each week leading up to the test. By contrast, another general education teacher's lesson plans alternated between reading practice tests one week and practice essays another week. As the assessment window approached the lesson plans indicated a focus on practice tests and essays. This same practice was also evident in the remedial classes where students did reading practice and essay writing each week. The first three days were for reading practice tests and review, and the last two days were for essay writing. All lesson plans included a practice test, a scoring rubric, and review quizzes of the test for the whole class. The lesson plans reinforced the view commonly held by both groups of teacher participants that the focus of instruction was often teaching to the test. Common planning was evident across the lesson plans, especially with the Academic Literacy, Reading Strategies, English I, and English II courses. The activities were the same across all lesson plans. Graphic organizers were indicated in all lesson plans from the beginning of the course, but their use decreased across lesson plans as the assessment window approached. For example, graphic organizers were used for shared and guided reading activities; they were also used for prewriting activities. Graphic organizers were only noted in four of the eight lesson plans from four to six weeks before testing. Those lesson plans were from general education teachers and remedial teachers. Regarding writing and lesson plans, each lesson plan that indicated essay writing all addressed the writing process. Essay writing and the writing process

were noted in five out of eight lesson plans. These lesson plans were from the general education teachers, remedial teachers, and the teacher who represented both groups. Each lesson plan indicated all steps of the writing process in teaching various forms of writing. Writing lessons and the writing process were more evident in lesson plans four to six weeks before testing. The focus on the writing process did not change at any point as indicated by the lesson plans. Overall, the majority of participants indicated essay writing in their lesson plans.

Overall, general education teachers and remedial teachers indicated relevant texts, questioning, graphic organizers, vocabulary study, and writing as effective ELA teaching practices. Determining quality ELA teaching practices is a key concept of the study's conceptual framework. It is in alignment with the key terms of the conceptual framework, which was primarily concerned with the question of overall quality and effectiveness of ELA instruction. The relationship between these key concepts is how their instructional use supports the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. The findings revealed that the use of specific teaching practices was also indicative of effective classroom instruction, which could potentially increase student performance on the HSAP ELA test.

Discrepant Data

Interview data regarding knowledge of Expanded Learning Time (ELT) varied among general education teachers and remedial teachers. Teacher participants from both groups had different views and understandings of the significance of ELT as an effective teaching practice. Three out of eight participants, one general education teacher

(participant 3C) and two remedial teachers (participants 1A and 8H), viewed ELT as being similar to after school tutoring and early bird tutoring. Participant 2B, a general education teacher, reported ELT as a basic response to intervention (RtI). Three out of eight participants, two general education teachers (participants 5E and 7G) and one remedial teacher (participant 4D) reported having little or no knowledge of ELT. Participant 6F, a remedial teacher, was the only participant who was knowledgeable of ELT. Overall, none of the general education teachers were knowledgeable of ELT.

Evidence of Quality

Qualitative research allows for multiple interpretations of the data, which may affect consistency of the study's findings. For this qualitative case study, ensuring reliability and validity established the quality of the study. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative reliability established consistency across data sources, and validity establishes accuracy of the findings. To ensure reliability, I checked the accuracy of transcripts against the codes. I used field notes (Appendix D) and voice recordings of interviews to check the accuracy of transcripts. This entailed listening to interviews, re-reading interview transcripts, and reviewing identified codes, topics, categories, and themes to ensure alignment with the data (Creswell, 2009). In addition, triangulation was used to thoroughly ensure validity and credibility of the study. Methodological triangulation uses multiple qualitative methods to review the data sources and findings (Guion et al., 2011). It involves confirming or cross-checking the accuracy of data obtained from one source with data collected from other, different sources (LeCompte & Schenshul, 1999, p. 131). For this study, methodological triangulation involved a systematic comparison of three

data sources: semi-structured interviews of general education teachers, semi-structured interviews of remedial teachers, and lesson plans from all teachers from the beginning of the course and four to six weeks before testing. The data from each source included codes and themes. First, I coded all interview transcripts identifying categories, topics, and themes. I also created a codebook and lesson plan code sheet to assist with data analysis and coding of teachers' lesson plans (Appendix E) (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCullochy, 2011). Lesson plans were also coded identifying categories, topics, and themes. Next, I compared categories, topics, and themes across the three data points identifying commonalities throughout the data. For instance, the theme of implementing a Do Now Activity at the start of class was indicated across all three data sources. Also, the theme of teaching all steps of the writing process was also indicated across all three data sources. Overall, validity was established based on identified commonalities across all three data sources (Guion et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Overall, the two groups of participants had different opinions about which ELA teaching practices were effective in improving student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Participants were asked to identify quality teaching practices used in their ELA classrooms. Quality teaching practices would be those practices participants deemed most effective in their efforts to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Teaching practices less frequently indicated were: text annotation, collaborative groups, non-linguistic representations, choice, and summarizing and notetaking. Although these teaching practices were less frequently indicated, collaborative groups, note-taking, and

choice were indicated in the lesson plans from both general education teachers and remedial teachers. On the other hand, there were several teaching practices commonly indicated among both general education teachers and remedial teachers: reading (i.e., guided reading, shared reading), graphic organizers, vocabulary study, questioning, relevant texts, and writing. Of these practices, some form of reading and writing were used daily. The daily use of reading and writing instruction, whether in a general education or remedial classroom setting were generally regarded as a way to improve student performance in the ELA classroom, thus improving student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Overall, based on the findings, these specific teaching practices were indicated as most effective in preparing students to take the HSAP ELA tests. The next section will present interpretations of the findings to include conclusions, implications, and recommendations for action and further study based on the overall findings of the study.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This section begins with an overview of the purpose of the study and how it was done. Next, I present the interpretation of findings followed by implications for social change. Then, recommendations for action and further study regarding the perceptions of the effects of high-stakes testing are discussed. This section is completed with a reflection on my experience and a concluding summary.

For the last five years, student passing rates on the HSAP ELA test at Riverside High School indicated a significant problem. The purpose of this study was to determine the most effective teaching practices used to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. In order to graduate, students must pass the high-stakes HSAP ELA test. Remediation is necessary until they do. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was used for this study. This study comprised the experiences of eight teachers (three general education teachers, four remedial teachers, and one teacher who represented both groups) to examine the problem. The focus of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of ELA instructional practices both to prepare students for the test and to assist them when they need to retake it. This qualitative study used three data sources: (a) individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews of general education teachers; (b) individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews of remedial teachers; and (c) lesson plans from both groups of teachers from the beginning of the course and four to six weeks before testing. Triangulation involved an intensive systematic comparison of the three data sources. The individual, face-to-face

semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide that included primary questions, follow-up questions, and probe questions to glean as much insight from each participant as possible. These open-ended questions also allowed participants to respond freely and in detail.

The conceptual framework for this study focused on effective ELA teaching practices that prepare students to take standardized tests. The key concepts which provided a framework to the study were: HSAP ELA remedial course, effective classroom instruction, ELA teaching practices, and authentic instruction. Teachers in the study revealed that the use of specific instructional practices supported the learning process to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. In addition to teachers' perceptions, the literature also supported the use of specific instructional practices to prepare students for success on the HSAP ELA test. The conceptual framework, participants' perceptions, and literature support the themes identified in this study.

Two major themes emerged through analysis of data: (a) high-stakes testing and its impact on learning; and 2) quality instruction. Through the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, it was determined that although the two groups had different perceptions about which ELA teaching practices were most effective in improving student performance on the HSAP ELA test, there were several teaching practices commonly used by both groups; reading (i.e., independent reading, guided reading, shared reading), graphic organizers, vocabulary study, questioning, relevant texts, and writing. In addition to the writing process being used to teach writing, the use of graphic organizers was also viewed as most effective for writing instruction. Therefore, the

commonly held view of the participants was that the use of specific teaching practices described in the findings, in addition to some form of daily reading and writing, could improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Both groups of participants incorporated a Do Now activity (Blackburn, 2008) into their daily lesson plans as evidenced in participant interviews and their lesson plans. Also, a test preparation Do Now activity was most commonly indicated in lesson plans from both groups of participants. The lesson plan data also revealed that test preparation increased the closer it got to the actual test. Finally, the lesson plan data for both groups indicated the writing process being used to teach essay writing. The next section will present interpretations of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for action and further study based on the overall findings of the study.

Interpretation of Findings

Two major themes emerged during the data analysis process to answer the guiding research question of the study: (a) high-stakes testing and its impact on learning; and 2) quality instruction. A discussion of each of these themes follows.

High-Stakes Testing and Its Impact on Learning

Teachers' perceptions about the purpose of high-stakes testing were consistent for both general education teachers and remedial teachers. Interview responses from both groups revealed that the purpose of high-stakes testing was to assess student academic growth and performance. The means to achieve this purpose involved the instructional deployment of effective ELA teaching practices used to prepare students. Both objectives aligned with and supported the conceptual framework of the study in that teachers must

determine the most effective teaching practices to use in preparing students for success on the HSAP ELA test. In preparing students for high-stakes testing, teachers must intentionally plan and devise instructional practices which they consider to be effective in meeting these objectives.

Experiencing pressures due to high-stakes testing was a common perception among both general education teachers and remedial teachers. Teachers who recognized the pressures associated with high-stakes testing were more cognizant of the problem of determining what effective ELA teaching practices are. The pressure associated with high-stakes testing is a problem commonly found in current research. In a study conducted by Edwards and Pula (2011), participants indicated being pressured to improve student performance on the end of the year test and that caused teachers and students to focus on passing the test. Similar pressures were experienced by both groups of teacher participants in this study. Some of the pressures indicated were: not being able to teach certain subjects; feeling overwhelmed when students did not pass; and pressure for students to perform well.

The larger significance of these pressures was two-fold. First, the sole focus was on student performance and passing the test. Second, the pressure impacted instruction, which emphasized test taking to the exclusion of other ELA curriculum content and the overall student experience. Part of the pressure associated with high-stakes testing was its impact on instruction. This focus is confirmed by several studies. According to Nichols and Valenzuela (2013), the high-stakes testing provision of NCLB has influenced the content that teachers teach, and many teachers teach to the test. Au (2011) also indicated

that high-stakes testing leads to teaching to the test. Furthermore, DeCuir (2014) observed that instruction has become a "drill and kill" (p. 31).

This study revealed that teachers recognized the purpose of high-stakes testing as a way to assess student academic growth and performance. It also revealed that teachers recognized the pressures associated with high-stakes testing, and the impact these pressures could have on instruction in encouraging teachers to teach to the test. This is significant because teachers are ultimately responsible for instruction and student learning. Therefore, they must be able to determine the most effective teaching practices that will enhance students' learning experiences and increase student growth and performance on the HSAP ELA test, even in this high-stakes testing environment.

Quality Instruction

Perceptions about actively engaging students in learning varied among general education teachers. Overall, both groups commonly used relevant content and making connections between the content and a student's experiences to engage students in learning. The common use of these teaching practices supports the conceptual framework of the study in that the framework was concerned with the problem of what quality teaching practices were effective to improve student performance on the HSAP ELA test. The question of quality and how teachers determine what is effective is an important instructional issue in current research. According to Early, Rogge, and Deci (2014), there are three vital components of high-quality instruction: engagement, alignment, and rigor. Engagement is critical to the learning process. Students must be actively engaged in learning for learning to take place. Although Early et al. (2014) indicated various

teaching practices (i.e., listening, watching, speaking) for active engagement, overall engagement in learning is needed for student success.

The majority of participants indicated the use of a reading activity as a way to engage student in the ELA classroom. Based on teacher participant views, daily reading activities helped to prepare students for the HSAP ELA test. This is generally confirmed by current research (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). According to Duke and Pearson (2008), students become better readers when they spend more time reading. The majority of the participants agreed. They indicated that the more time students spent on reading and practicing comprehension strategies, the better prepared they were to take the HSAP ELA test. Another view held by both groups of participants was that teachers should spend time modeling for students, providing guided practice, and providing opportunities for students to practice individually (Duke & Pearson, 2008; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). Teachers felt that increased opportunities for reading and reading instruction could improve students' reading comprehension levels and better prepare them to take the test.

In addition to quality reading practices, both general education teachers and remedial teachers most commonly indicated the following effective teaching practices: relevant text, graphic organizers, vocabulary study, and questioning. Overall, the use of these instructional practices was considered by the teacher participants as effective. This aligned with the key terms of the conceptual framework for this study which was principally concerned with the question of quality and effectiveness. The use of relevant text extended to a student's culture. According to Camangian (2013), practicing culturally responsive teaching allows teachers to select texts that are culturally relevant to

students. Cultural connections help students to actively engage with the content of the text (Camangian, 2013). Camangian also indicated that teachers should select texts that are relevant to students' prior experiences. Teacher participants felt that culturally relevant texts could improve students' reading comprehension levels and overall performance in the ELA classroom. Teaching high school ELA involves more than exposing students to the classics. Students should also be exposed to texts that are relevant to their experiences so learning is active and meaningful.

Most of the general education teachers and remedial teachers indicated that the use of graphic organizers was an effective ELA teaching practice. Their effectiveness has been recognized by current research. According to Cummins, Kimbell-Lopez, and Manning (2015), graphic organizers are a powerful tool in helping students comprehend and organize information. Cummins et al. identified three foundational skills associated with the use of a graphic organizer: see patterns, identify relationships, and define categories (p. 15-16). Graphic organizers help students summarize and organize their ideas based on a specific text and organize their thoughts for prewriting.

Another effective ELA teaching practice indicated by general education teachers and remedial teachers was vocabulary study, which was indicated by most of the teacher participants. These findings are significant because they reinforce the necessity of vocabulary study for test preparation as well as standard instructional practice in the ELA classroom (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). The importance of vocabulary is also reinforced by current research. According to Fisher and Frey (2014), vocabulary study is

effective in increasing students' comprehension skills. Like daily reading, teachers felt that vocabulary study prepared students for the HSAP ELA test.

Both general education teachers and remedial teachers commonly indicated questioning as an effective teaching practice in the ELA classroom. Teaching the use of questioning helped students prepare for the HSAP ELA test. This has been confirmed by current research. For example, McCollin, O'Shea, and McQuiston (2009) identified question answering and question generating as effective comprehension practices. Both types of questioning allow for active reading of the text, which keeps students engaged in reading and increases comprehension levels.

Finally, of all the instructional practices, how to model the steps of the writing process was next to reading, considered by the eight teacher participants as equally important to prepare students for the HSAP ELA test. The findings indicated that all steps of the writing process are equally important in teaching students to develop their writing. A study by Zumbrunn and Krause (2012) reinforced the views of the teacher participants. They found that student achievement in writing increases when writing is clear and planned, there is daily writing instruction and practice, and writing instruction is scaffolded. Modeling the writing process was an important part of preparation for the HSAP ELA test.

This study revealed the following effective ELA teaching practices: (a) daily reading and writing, (b) relevant text, (c) questioning, (d) vocabulary study, (e) graphic organizers, and (f) the writing process. The current research literature also supported the use of these various teaching practices in teachers' efforts to improve student learning

and potentially increase their performance on the HSAP ELA test (Deane, Sabatini, & O'Reilly, 2011). These findings are significant because the teaching practices identified as effective by the participants could be used as a basis to improve the ELA instructional program at Riverside High School. If other ELA general education and remedial teachers at the high school could deliberately model these teaching practices, they could improve the program and better prepare student performance on ELA high-stakes tests.

Implications for Social Change

Important implications associated with this study were that the findings provided insight into specific teaching practices that could improve student performance on high-stakes tests. This study may help the Riverside High School District with instructional planning and revisions of the current instructional framework. Overall, the Riverside High School District has at least 20% of students not meeting standard on the HSAP ELA test each year (SDE, 2013). Students not meeting standard on both the math and ELA portions of the HSAP test do not receive a high school diploma, affecting school graduation rates and overall school performance. It is evident that the Riverside High School District must address the problem concerning the number of students not meeting standard on the HSAP ELA test. In all, the use of effective teaching practices in ELA could increase the number of students passing the HSAP test, as a result, increasing the number of students graduating from high school.

The results of this study could enhance Riverside High School District's current instructional framework by providing ELA teachers with specific teaching practices for use in preparing and delivering quality instruction to students whether preparing students

to take or retake the HSAP ELA test. Data from this study revealed that the delivery of quality instruction, to include the use of effective teaching practices, have the potential to improve overall student performance in the ELA classroom resulting in increased student performance on the HSAP ELA test. Increased student performance on the HSAP ELA test could potentially result in an increased number of students passing the HSAP, resulting in an increased number of students receiving a high school diploma. An increase in the number of students receiving high school diplomas increases the number of students qualified for employment and post-secondary education; as a result, increasing the opportunities for students to experience success after high school.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study indicated that specific ELA teaching practices could potentially improve student performance in the ELA classroom resulting in increased performance on the HSAP ELA test. This information could be used to enhance Riverside High School District's current instructional framework. Riverside High School District teachers could be allowed the opportunity to revise the current instructional framework to include the use of teaching practices they identified as effective in delivering quality instruction to students. In addition, Riverside High School District should provide ELA teachers with professional learning opportunities in the use of these identified teaching practices. Revisions to the current instructional framework and professional learning opportunities could positively impact overall student growth and performance on the HSAP ELA test.

I would share the findings of this study with Riverside High School's District Office of Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation. Ensuring that the office which is responsible for the dissemination of data throughout the district is knowledgeable of the data revealed through this study is priority. Next, I would request permission to share the findings with high school principals and ELA teachers. The knowledge obtained from this study was important and dissemination of the findings to the teachers and administrators would ensure the information reaches the target audience, which could influence changes to take place.

Recommendations for Further Study

Results of this study provided insight into specific ELA teaching practices reported by general education teachers and remedial teachers. Although identification of specific teaching practices varied among both groups, both groups most commonly indicated actively engaging students, daily reading and writing, relevant text, graphic organizers, vocabulary study, and questioning as effective teaching practices. Areas for future study may include results of student performance on high-stakes tests after receiving instruction in the use specific teaching practices. The use of specific teaching practices as they relate to the actual test could give more insight regarding which teaching practices are most effective. A suggested research method for a future study would be a quantitative study suing an experimental approach. The experimental approach would have a control group and an experimental group, which would determine if the use of specific teaching practices improved student performance on high-stakes ELA tests.

Reflections of Experience

My experience through the research process ratified my belief regarding instructional planning. The data from this study supported my belief that classroom teachers are more than capable of collaborating and planning meaningful and effective instruction for students. Many instructional decisions are made from the top, and teachers are expected to comply, whereas instructional planning decisions should include classroom teachers. Teachers are the first line of defense; therefore, they should be empowered to make sound instructional decisions that could potentially increase students' academic performance. This study made it clear to me that if teachers are held accountable for improving student academic performance, they should be entrusted with developing solid instructional plans that will prepare students for optimal academic success.

This qualitative study with a case study approach was completed at a South Carolina High School. Due to my prior knowledge on the topic, being a former high school ELA teacher, and my personal beliefs and biases about teacher responsibility for effective instructional planning, I had my own ideas about quality and effective ELA instruction. Much of the information obtained from the interviews and the literature supported my beliefs about instructional planning and effective teaching practices. The data collected from this study is invaluable as revisions to the instructional framework could potentially improve student performance in ELA and on the HSAP ELA test.

Summary

There is a decrease in the number of students passing high-stakes ELA tests, resulting in a decrease in the number of students receiving a high school diploma. To address this problem, school districts must be more cognizant of their content area instructional frameworks and the quality of instruction students are receiving. Districts must provide teachers with opportunities for professional learning to include opportunities to share and learn from each other's' experiences. Districts must focus on high-stakes testing in addition to focusing on quality instruction to improve overall student performance.

The purpose of this study was to determine the most effective ELA teaching practices for improving student performance. The qualitative data commonly indicated several practices (i.e., daily reading and writing, graphic organizers, relevant texts); however, these practices varied among participants. Therefore, indicating no solid support for specific teaching practices based on participant insight. Again, districts must be proactive in their efforts to improve student performance by providing professional learning to teachers as they prepare quality instruction for students. If districts do not review and enhance student learning as needed, in addition to providing teachers with professional learning opportunities and resources, overall student performance will continue to be deficient and students will continue to not graduate from high school. Hence, districts must take the lead in providing opportunities for increased student performance.

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Appendix A: Study Timeline

Week 1

Day	Date	Time	Participant	Activity/Notes
Monday	12/15/14	3:00pm	ELA Teacher	Interview 1w
		4:15pm	ELA Teacher	Interview 2
		N/A		Type transcripts of interviews 1 & 2; begin analysis
Tuesday	12/16/14	3:00pm	ELA Teacher	Interview 3
		4:15pm	ELA Teacher	Interview 4
		N/A		Type transcripts of interviews 3 & 4; complete analysis of interviews 1 & 2; begin analysis of interviews 3 & 4
Wednesday	12/17/14	3:00pm	Remedial ELA Teacher	Interview 5
		4:15pm	Remedial ELA Teacher	Interview 6
		N/A		Type transcripts of interviews 5 & 6; complete analysis of interviews 3 & 4; begin analysis of interviews 5 & 6
Thursday	12/18/14	3:00pm	Remedial ELA Teacher	Interview 7
		4:15pm	Remedial ELA Teacher	Interview 8
		N/A		Type transcripts of interviews 7 & 8; complete analysis of interviews 5 & 6; begin analysis of interviews 7 & 8
Friday – Sunday		N/A		Complete analysis of interviews 7 & 8
				Review data analysis of all interviews and develop codebook

Week 2

Day	Activity/Notes
Monday	Begin analysis of ELA lesson plans
Tuesday	Continue analysis of ELA lesson plans
Wednesday –	Complete analysis of ELA lesson plans; begin write-ups of

Sunday	interview and lesson plan analysis
Sunday	Complete data write-ups

Appendix B: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant (Codes will be assigned to individual participants to ensure anonymity.)

1A 2B 3C 4D 5E 6F 7G 8H

Start Time: _____ AM/PM End Time: _____ AM/PM

Introduction

The following questions will be used to examine and explore teaching practices used for preparing students to be successful on the ELA HSAP test. In addition, attached is the Reference Points for Questions. The purpose of the Reference Points for Questions is to provide background content for specific interview questions while helping to facilitate interview responses. Each participant will be provided with a copy of the Reference Points for Questions to refer to during the interview for related questions. This copy will be provided at the beginning of the interview process, and participants will be instructed to refer to the Reference Points for Questions when addressing specific questions. For instance, before asking a question related to the reference points, I will say to the participant, "Now, for the next question, please refer to your copy of the Reference Points for Questions, and look at the section entitled, 'HSAP Blueprint and ELA Standards.' Please take a few moments to review these points and let me know when you are ready to proceed." This process will be followed for each question related to the Reference Points for Questions.

Primary Question: How many years of teaching experience do you have at the high school level?
Follow-up Question: How many years have you been teaching English at the high school level? Which course(s) do you currently teach?

Primary Question: What is the purpose of high-stakes testing?
Follow-up Question: How has high-stakes testing affected instruction in your classroom?
Probe Questions: Tell me more about this. How would you describe your planning and instruction: teaching to the test or teaching the content? Tell me more about this.

Primary Question: What are your feelings regarding high-stakes testing in ELA?
Follow-up Question: What types of pressures have you endured due to high-stakes testing?
Probe Question: How did this make you feel?

Primary Question: What are some differences between teaching during a time of high-stakes testing versus teaching during a time when high-stakes testing wasn't as important?
Follow-up Question: What was teaching like before high-stakes testing?
Probe Question: Tell me more about this.

Primary Question: Due to high-stakes testing, how do you prevent sacrificing certain aspects of the content to conform to the pressures of high-stakes testing?
Follow-up Question: What specifically have you sacrificed?
Probe Question: How can you avoid this?

Primary Question: What is the ideal structure of an ELA classroom?
Follow-up Question: What is a typical day like in your classroom?
Probe Question: Tell me more about this.

Primary Question: How do you select instructional strategies to support the six standards (attached) that are assessed on the ELA HSAP test?
Follow-up Question: How do current ELA standards effectively address the content assessed on the ELA HSAP test?
Probe Questions: What makes you feel this way? Tell me more on your thinking about this.

Primary Question: How do you actively engage students in the learning process?
Follow-up Question: What are some obstacles that you face when trying to actively engage students in learning?
Probe Questions: How do you overcome obstacles to student engagement? Tell me more on your thinking about this.

Primary Question: How do you incorporate the 10 key practices (attached) of High Schools That Work (HSTW) into ELA test preparation?
Follow-up Questions: Why are these key practices important to ELA test preparation? Which of the key practices do you find most effective in ELA test preparation?
Probe Question: Tell me more on your thinking about this.

Primary Question: How do you incorporate Marzano's high-yield instructional strategies (attached) into ELA test preparation?
Follow-up Questions: Why are these strategies important to ELA test preparation? Which of these strategies do you find most effective in ELA test preparation?
Probe Question: Tell me more on your thinking about this.

Primary Question: How do you incorporate Blackburn's steps to increasing rigor (attached) into ELA test preparation?
Follow-up Question: Which steps are most effective in ELA test preparation?
Probe Question: Explain this please.

Primary Question: What are some quality ELA teaching practices (attached) that you use in your classroom?
Follow-up Question: Which have been most effective for your students?
Probe Question: Explain why they are effective.

Primary Question: What steps of the writing process do you teach?
Follow-up Question: How do you teach writing? What steps do you teach students to include in creating written works?
Probe Question: Please explain this.

Primary Question: What types of writing do you incorporate in your classroom?
Follow-up Questions: What is the purpose of incorporating different types of writing? How often do your students write?
Probe Question: Please tell me more about this.

Primary Question: What do you know about Expanded Learning Time (ELT) in schools?
Follow-up Question: What are the benefits of ELT in schools?
Probe Question: Tell me more on your thinking about this.

Primary Question: What is the ideal structure of ELT?
Follow-up Question: How does your school use ELT?
Probe Question: Tell me more about this.

Reference Points for Questions

These reference points will be used by participants to provide background content and help to facilitate interview responses related to specific questions regarding the following: ELA HSAP framework, ELA standards, HSTW Key Practices, Marzano's High Yield Instructional Strategies, Blackburn's Increasing Academic Rigor, and ELA teaching practices.

HSAP Blue Print and ELA Standards – Question
Standard 1: read and comprehend a variety of literary texts in print and non-print formats

Standard 2: read and comprehend a variety of informational texts in print and non-print formats
Standard 3: use word analysis and vocabulary strategies to read fluently
Standard 4: create written work that has a clear focus, sufficient detail, coherent organization, effective use of voice, and correct use of conventions of written Standard American English
Standard 5: write for a variety of purposes and audiences
Standard 6: access and use information from a variety of sources

High Schools That Work (HSTW) 10 Key Practices – Question
High expectations: Teachers motivate students to meet higher standards by incorporating high expectations into classroom practices and providing frequent feedback.
Program of study: Schools require each student to complete an upgraded academic core (i.e., college preparatory, honors, and/or Advanced Academic Placement) and an academic concentration.
Academic studies: Teachers encourage students to apply content and skills to real-world projects.
Career-technical studies: Schools provide more students with access to career-technical studies in high demand fields while providing increased opportunities for project-based learning.
Work-based learning: Schools allow students and parents to choose from academic programs that provide challenging academic studies and work-based learning experiences.
Teachers working together: Schools provide time for cross-disciplinary teams to plan challenging lessons for students.
Students actively engaged: Teachers use research based instructional strategies and technology to engage students in learning.
Guidance: Schools involve students and parents in a guidance and advisement system that allows opportunities to select a program of study with an academic or career-technical concentration.
Extra help: Schools provide students with a system of extra help to assist students in completing academic goals.
Culture of continuous improvement: Students continuously use data to improve school culture, organization, management, curriculum, and instruction.

Marzano et al.'s High Yield Instructional Strategies – Question
identifying similarities and differences
summarizing and note taking
reinforcing effort and providing recognition
homework and practice
nonlinguistic representations
cooperative learning
setting objectives and providing feedback
generating and testing hypothesis

questions, cues, and advance organizers

Blackburn's Steps to Increasing Rigor – Question
establishing high expectations for learners
support and scaffolding
demonstration of learning
active student engagement
motivational element: value
motivational element; success
classroom culture

ELA Teaching Practices – Question
relevant texts
text annotation
questioning
collaborative groups
vocabulary study
non-linguistic representations
choice
graphic organizers
summarizing

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Codes

Lesson Plan Codes

- Checking for Understanding – CFU
- Choice – CHOI
- Closure; exit slip – CLOS/ES
- Collaboration - CG
- Collaborative groups – CG
- Direct instruction – DI
- Do now/bell ringer – DN, BR
- Essay writing - EW
- Graphic organizers – GO
- Graphic organizers – GO
- Guided practice – GP
- Guided reading - GR
- Independent practice – IP
- Independent reading/Silent reading – IR/SR
- Journal writing - JW
- Mini lesson – ML
- Modeling - M
- Non-linguistic representation – NLR
- Notetaking – NT
- Questioning – Q
- Read alouds - RA
- Relevant text – RT
- Relevant texts – RT
- Shared reading - SR
- Study Island Preassessment - SI
- Summarizing – SUM
- Text annotation - TA
- Text annotation – TA
- Vocabulary study – VS
- Writing conferences – peers, teacher – WC
- Writing conferences – peers, teacher – WC

Appendix D: Sample Field Notes 1

Raw Data Analysis

High-Stakes Testing and Its Impact on Learning	
Group: Regular and Remedial	
Participant	Purpose of High-Stakes Testing
2B	See where schools are teaching students Gives data as to where we are
	Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Instruction
2B	Time constraints Teaching to the test Hard to respond to intervention EOC or HSAP is spoken daily in class
	High-Stakes Testing in ELA
2B	Gives instant feedback Better your school does, the more attractive it is to parents and students
	Pressures of High-Stakes Testing
2B	Cannot teach subjects I prefer because of test results Feel rushed
	Teaching Before High-Stakes Testing
2B	Could learn at your own pace Take in what you wanted to take in Less interruptions
	Teaching During High-Stakes Testing
2B	Rushed Learn so much to pass the test
	Preventing Sacrificing Content
2B	Stick it in lesson plans Projects Homework
	Things Sacrificed
2B	Teaching grammar Students using dictionary in class to define words
	Avoiding Sacrifice
2B	N/A
	Instructional Strategies to Support the Standards
2B	Use state department resources online Practice tests Materials from ELA PDs
	Standards and the Test
2B	Too vague

ELA Classroom	
Group: Regular and Remedial	
Participant	Typical Day in ELA
2B	Nice and quiet Read aloud Test question of the day Word study Note taking Test prep skills

Student Engagement	
Group: Regular and Remedial	
Participant	Actively Engaging Students
2B	Project based learning Colors Art
	Obstacles to Student Engagement
2B	Loquacious students
	Overcoming Obstacles
2B	Use a timer Tracking log

Appendix E: Sample Field Notes 2 – Codebook

Interviews

Category	Category Description	• Text or Data
1. Purpose of High-Stakes Testing PHST	The purpose of high-stakes testing discusses the main reasons why teachers feel high-stakes testing exists.	• Assess state standards. • Measure how much students have learned. • Measures student progress. • Gives data. • Measure student gains. • Improve student achievement. • Measure student progress. • Ensure students have received a quality education. • Measure student progress. • To determine school report card grades. • Measure student progress.
2. Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Instruction EHST	The effects of high-stakes testing on instruction discusses the ramifications associated with instruction due to the high-stakes testing.	• Teaching to the test. • No creativity. • Reteaching for mastery. • Time constraints. • Teaching to the test. • Passing the test. • No longer focus on students' needs for success; focus on the test. • Pressure on teachers. • Pressures on students. • Anxiety. • No impact; I teach students what they need to be

		successful in life. • Teach test taking strategies. • Teaching to the test. • Students memorizing content. • Positive effect. • Teaching to the test. In a box. • Data to analyze student progress.
3. High-Stakes Testing in ELA HSTE	High-stakes testing in ELA discusses the overall impact on instruction due to high-stakes testing.	• No creativity. • No fun. • Helps assess how students are learning. • Unfair when affects teacher pay. • Instant feedback. • Parents don't understand the results and how they can help their child at home. • The better your school does, the more attractive it becomes • Hurt some students; can't teach all content. • Teachers ignore common sense things. • Pressure on teachers and students to pass the test. • No differentiation; all students are assessed the same way. • Aware of content my students should master. • High stakes testing is relevant. • So many decisions are made based on a few hours of testing. • One isolated event that carries so much weight.
4. Pressures of High-Stakes Testing	Pressures of high-stakes testing discusses the burdens teachers endure due to high-stakes testing.	• Name attached to student progress. • Discouraged when 100% mastery is not met.

		• Pressured. • Selective in what you teach. • Focused on passing the test. • Selective teaching. • Rushed. • Motivated – to get results. • Ignoring students' needs to pass the test. • Pressured. • Overwhelmed. • Feelings of unsuccessful if students don't master a standard. • Pressured. • Being evaluated based on student performance. • My fault if students don't perform well.
5. Teaching During High-Stakes Testing TDHST	Teaching during high-stakes testing discusses what it is like teaching during this era of high-stakes testing.	• Accountability • Reputation questioned. • Methodology questioned. • Constant scrutiny. • Rushed. • Must pass the test. • Must pass the test. • No fun. • Focused on pacing guide. • Too much time devoted to test preparation. • Excluding topics that will not be tested. • Negative impact on the classroom • No fun. • High-stakes testing has been present throughout my

		entire career. • High-stakes testing has been present throughout my entire career.
6. Teaching Before High-Stakes Testing TBHST	Teaching before high-stakes testing discusses what teaching was like before the focus to pass the test.	• Relaxed. • Focused on how you teach instead of what. • No pressures to follow a pacing guide for the test. • More room for creativity. • No reteaching for mastery. • Learn at your own pace. • Less interruptions. • Home and school on the same page. • Enjoyed learning. • Less stress. • Focus on students' needs. • All students could be successful. • More real-world experience. • Not so much memorization. • More effective. • Open canvas. • Students were taught how to learn. • No pressure on teachers and students. • Teachers weren't stressed. • Creativity.
7. Preventing Sacrificing the Content PSC	Preventing sacrificing the content discusses ways in which teachers can avoid not teaching certain aspects of the content due to the test.	• Pace yourself. • Follow a timeline. • Collaborative planning. • Set expectations for students. • Plan projects throughout the year.

		• Give students homework that covers certain material. • Risk taker – teach curriculum, but teach outside the box. • Don't sacrifice aspects of the content.
8. Things That Have Been Sacrificed TS	Things that have been sacrificed discusses various sacrifices teachers have made in the classroom due to high-stakes testing.	• My reputation. • Teaching grammar. • Using dictionaries during class time for word study. • Teaching grammar. • Word study with the use of stems and root words. • Receiving satisfactory observations for teaching outside the box. • Projects.
9. Avoiding the Sacrifice AS	Avoiding the sacrifice discusses how teachers can attempt to prevent making sacrifices in the classroom because of the test.	• Don't focus on your reputation, focus on the children learning.
10. Ideal Structure of an ELA Classroom ISELA	Ideal structure of an ELA classroom discusses what the model ELA classroom would be like with or without high-stakes testing.	• Relevance. - RT • Real world connections. - RW • Students discussing topics. DT • Students analyzing and evaluating literature. • Direct instruction, independent reading, shared reading and writing, and word study. DI, IR, SR, W, WS • Very little lecture. • Mini lessons. ML • Direct instruction. DI • Collaborative groups. CG • Facilitator. • Various stations setup – writing, role playing, and

		reading. • Balanced literacy classroom on a daily basis. • Reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
11. Typical Day in an ELA Classroom TDELA	Typical day in an ELA classroom discusses what the day is like for students when they enter certain ELA classrooms. It gives the varying strategies ELA teachers use to teach the content to their students.	• Bell ringer. BR • Test prep questions. • Class discussion. CD • Direct instruction. DI • Shared reading. SR • Guided reading. GR • Questioning. Q • Collaboration. CG • Closing activity. CA • Nice and quiet. • Read aloud. RA • Test prep questions. • Word study. WS • Notetaking. NT • Vocabulary. VOC • Direct instruction. DI • Independent reading. IR • Bell ringer. BR • Read aloud. RA • Direct instruction. DI • Independent work. IW • Collaboration. CG • Do Now. DN • Reading R • Writing. W

		• Discussion. D • Closing. CLOS • Independent reading. IR • Reading conferences. RC • Journal writing. JW • Direct instruction. DI • Guided practice. GP
12. Instructional Strategies that Support the Test ISST	Instructional strategies that support the test discusses various activities teachers incorporate in their instruction to cover the standards assessed on the high-stakes test.	• Practice tests. • Discuss testing taking strategies. • Reteaching for mastery. • Readers response journals. • Reviewing the data. • Practice tests. • Comprehension tool kit. • Novel study. • Literature circles. • Specific days for reading and writing. • Provide a variety of learning experiences. • Give students options – choice.
13. Standards and the Test ST	Standards and the test discusses how effectively the current standards address the content that is assessed on the test.	• In conjunction with common core standards, require students to think more analytically. • Too vague; needs to be more specific. • Not totally; maybe 85-90% coverage. • The standards address the content that will be tested.
14. Actively Engaging Students AES	Actively engaging students discusses various practices teachers use in making learning appealing to students and getting students	• Technology. • Discussion. • Games. • Blended learning.

	involved in learning.	• Writing for a purpose. • Project based learning. • Project based learning. • Relevance. • Relevance. • High expectations. • Relevance. • Challenging activities. • Relevance.
15. Obstacles of Student Engagement OSE	Obstacles of student engagement discusses hurdles teachers may face in their attempts to actively engage students in learning.	• Students not coming to class prepared. • Loquacious students. • Not following directions. • Individual value of education. • Parents. • Lack of motivation. • Finding activities that engage all students. • Students who aren't interested in learning.
16. Overcoming Obstacles OO	Overcoming obstacles discusses ways in which teachers eliminate obstacles they may face when trying to get students engaged in learning.	• Establish procedures. • Attach value to assignments; grade. • Use a timer. • Tracking logs. • Engaging introductory activities. • Engaging activities. • Build relationships with students.
17. 10 Key Practices of High Schools That Work 10KP	10 key practices of High Schools That Work discusses the key practices teachers incorporate in student learning.	• Graphic organizers – character analysis; similarities and differences. • Cooperative learning – projects. • Teachers working together.

		• Career and technology study. • High expectations. • Guidance. • High expectations. • Teachers working together. • Actively engaged students. • High expectations. • Extra help. • Teachers working together. • Teachers working together. • High expectations.
18. Importance of the 10 Key Practices I10KP	Importance of the 10 key practices discusses which key practices are most important to student learning and why they are important.	• Questioning – allows students to analyze why. • Collaboration – allows students to share ideas with each other; experience different perspectives. Encourages dialogue. • Need all of these things. • Career and technical studies. • Work based learning. • High expectations. • Teachers working together. • Teachers working together.
19. Effectiveness of 10 Key Practices E10KP	Effectiveness of 10 key practices discusses which practices are most effective when it comes to student learning.	• Teachers working together.
20. Marzano's High-Yield Instructional Strategies MHY	Marzano's high-yield instructional strategies discusses the strategies teachers incorporate in student learning.	• Cues and questioning – class discussions; class debates; dialogue; explain why; using evidence from the text. • Homework and practice – allows me to assess

		students. • Cooperative learning – share ideas. • Summarizing and notetaking – pull key details; understand meaning of text. • Summarizing and notetaking – readers writers wordy study notebooks. • Cooperative learning. • Summarizing and notetaking. • Identifying similarities and differences. • Homework and practice. • Summarizing and notetaking.
21. Effectiveness of Marzano's High-Yield Instructional Strategies EMHY	Importance of Marzano's high-yield instructional strategies discusses the strategies that are most effective for student learning.	• All of them. • They build upon each other. • It's more than one way to accomplish a task. • Questioning – gauging understanding. • Summarizing and notetaking. • Graphic organizers. • Summarizing and notetaking.
22. Blackburn's Steps to Increasing Rigor BIR	Blackburn's steps to increasing rigor discusses which steps teachers use to promote rigor in student learning.	• Positive recognition – rewarding students. • Reinforcing effort. • Providing recognition – sense of motivation. • Active student engagement – class discussion; projects. • High expectations – established on day one. • Classroom culture. • Motivational elements – value and success. • High expectations. • High expectations.

23. Effectiveness of Blackburn's Steps to Increasing Rigor EBIR	Effectiveness of Blackburn's steps to increasing rigor discusses the steps that are most effective in promoting student learning.	• High expectations. • Motivational elements – value and success. • Support and scaffolding. • Motivational elements – value and success. • High expectations.
24. Quality ELA Teaching Practices QELATP	Quality ELA teaching practices discusses various practices teachers use in their ELA classroom to promote student learning.	• Graphic organizers. GO • Relevant texts. RT • Questioning. Q • Text annotation. TA • Vocabulary study. VS • Graphic organizers. GO • Non-linguistic representations. NLR • Relevant texts. RT • Vocabulary study. VS • Questioning. Q • Questioning. Q • Collaborative groups. CG • Graphic organizers. GO • Choice. CHOI • Vocabulary study. VS • Graphic organizers. GO • Collaborative groups. CG • Questioning. Q • Relevant texts. RT • Relevant texts. RT • Vocabulary study. VS • Relevant texts. RT • Text annotation. TA

		• Questioning. Q • Collaborative groups. CG • Vocabulary study. VS • Non-linguistic representations. NLR • Choice. CHOI • Graphic organizers. GO • Summarizing. SUM
25. Effective ELA Teaching Practices EELATP	Effective ELA teaching practices discusses the teaching practices teachers find to be most beneficial when used in the ELA classroom.	• Graphic organizers. GO • Vocabulary study. VS • Relevant text. RT • Text annotation. TA • Graphic organizers. GO • Collaborative groups. CG • Relevant texts. RT • Relevant texts. RT • Text annotation. TA • Graphic organizers. GO • Questioning. Q • Vocabulary study. VS • Collaborative groups. CG
26. Steps of the Writing Process WP	Steps of the writing process discusses the steps of the writing process teachers use when teaching students how to write.	• All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing.

		• All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. • All of them – prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing.
27. Teaching Writing TW	Teaching writing discusses specific practices teachers incorporate when teaching writing to students.	• Graphic organizers. • Peer editing of rough drafts. • Mini lessons focused on various techniques that are evident through writing conferences (combining sentences, avoiding repetition). • Writers notebooks. • Graphic organizers. • Discussions. • Outlining. • Brainstorming. • Rough draft – importance. • Rough drafts. • Final drafts. • Go through the writing process step by step. • Write as a group, then write individually. • Modeling for students first. • Go through the writing process step by step. • Modeling for students. • Conferencing.
28. Types of Writing TOW	Types of writing discusses the types of writing teachers incorporate when	• Research writing.

	teaching writing to students.	• Reflective. • Narrative. • Poetry. • Autobiographical. • Descriptive. • Narrative. • Persuasive. • Journal writing. • Descriptive writing. • Various types of essay writing. • Argumentative. • Expository. • Persuasive. • Argumentative. • Business. • Persuasive. • Argumentative. • Analytical. • Expository.
29. Importance of Different Types of Writing IDTW	Importance of different types of writing discusses teachers' reasoning for incorporating various types of writing into the classroom.	• More than one mode of writing. • Express self based on audience. • See the differences. • Express self based on audience. • Express self based on audience.
30. Frequency of Writing FW	Frequency of writing discusses how often students write in class.	• Three to four times every two weeks. • Two to three times a week. • Every day. • Every day.

		• Once per week. • Once per week. • Every day. • Every day.
31. Knowledge of Expanded Learning Time KELT	Knowledge of expanded learning time discusses teachers' prior knowledge of expanded learning time in school.	• After school tutoring. • Early morning tutoring. • Response to intervention for IEPs. • Dedicated after school program dedicated to specific subjects such as English and math with a specific curriculum. • Early morning tutoring. • I am not familiar with Expanded Learning Time. • I am not familiar with Expanded Learning Time. • Longer school days. • I know very little about Expanded Learning Time.
32. Benefits of Expanded Learning Time BELT	Benefits of expanded learning time discusses the positives of increasing time in the school day.	• Reinforcer. • More time to learn a concept. • Extra help for students. • Individualized instruction. • Smaller class size. • More learning time for students.
33. Ideal Structure of Expanded Learning Time ISELT	Ideal structure of expanded learning time discusses the what the model expanded learning time program would look like in a school.	• Study hall during the day. • During the school day in my class. • Relevant. • Convenient. • Structured and specific focus.
34. Expanded Learning Time in	Expanded learning time in your school discusses how expanded	• After school tutoring. • After school tutoring.

Your School ELTYS	learning time is incorporated in various schools.	• Early morning tutoring. • After school tutoring.

High-stakes Testing and Its Impact on Learning
Quality Instruction

Lesson Plans

Beginning of the Year	**Before Testing**
• Modeling - M • Do now/bell ringer – DN, BR • Journal writing - JW • Essay writing - EW • Read alouds - RA • Independent reading - IR • Shared reading - SR • Guided reading - GR • Text annotation - TA • Collaboration - CG • Writing conferences – peers, teacher - WC • Study Island Preassessment - SI • Checking for Understanding - CFU • Closure; exit slip – CLOS/ES	• Do now/bell ringer – DN/BR • Mini lessons – grammar • Mini lessons – parts of speech • Mini lessons • Collaboration – practice test • Practice tests • Practice essays • Practice tests • Practice essays • Practice test review • Practice test review – Kahoot • USA Test Prep Review • Study Island Review