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Factors Influencing Student Achievement in Reading

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2017

Abstract

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EdS, Walden University, 2013

MSLS, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 2004

BA, South Carolina State University, 2003

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by elementary school teachers at the target Title I school, for low student achievement in reading. The conceptual framework that guided this study was the ecological theory that postulates that students' academic achievement is influenced by several subsystems that affect human growth and development: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. Four research questions guided this study. The questions investigated teachers' perceptions of how effective classroom practices, differentiated instruction, professional development, and parental involvement influence student achievement in reading. Participants included 9 elementary school ELA teachers. Data collection included audiotaped interviews, classroom observations, and the examination of teacher lesson plans. Data were manually coded and organized into 7 themes. The themes were: back to basics, reading practice, classroom environment, meeting students' needs, professional development, communication, and home environment. The data indicated that the teacher participants believed that there is a need for increased parental involvement in reading. Parental involvement and the home environment were listed as two of the most important factors in student achievement in reading. Based on the research findings, a 3-day teacher facilitated family literacy program was developed. The goal of the program is to equip parents with resources and strategies to facilitate the reading achievement of their children at home. Increased parental involvement has the potential to positively affect student achievement in reading, which can bring about positive social change for families and teachers.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my grandparents; Alfonzo and Nancy Keller,
Milton Darby, Dorothy Darby, and Shirley Keller. You encouraged me to pursue my
dreams and for that I am eternally grateful.

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To God be the glory! I am finally finished. I would like to thank my husband, Marcus for your encouragement and honest conversations. There were times that I did not think I would make it, you kept me going when I wanted to quit. To my children, Reagan and Ashton, you inspire me more than you will ever know. Thank you for allowing me to "work on my paper". To my parents, Herman, Sharon, Cassandra, and Clinton thank you for the support. I am finally finished, now you can go tell your friends! To my siblings, Ashley, Simone, Shana, Quentin, and Raven, because of you I have always worked harder to be an example worth following. To my Uncles Johnny and Chester, thank you for always being there. Family is everything.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Reading is an essential life skill. There is a correlation between reading proficiency and academic success (Dogan, Ogut & Kim, 2015; Schwabe, McElvany & Trendtel, 2015). Students who read proficiently often perform well academically in all subjects (Cooper, Moore, Powers, Cleveland & Greenberg, 2014). There has been a focus on students reading on grade level by the end of third grade (Wanzek, et al., 2013; Workman, 2014). The importance of students being able to read proficiently has been the subject of state legislation. Between 2002 and 2013, 13 states passed legislation that sought to increase the number of students reading on or above grade level by the time they completed third grade (The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). The laws provide for intervention in Mississippi, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Indiana, Utah, and Florida (The National Conference of State Legislatures).

Teacher instruction in reading plays an important role in student achievement (Perkins & Cooter, 2013). The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. Previous researchers pointed toward teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber, Liddle & Theobald, 2013), professional development (Meissel, Parr & Timperley, 2016), differentiated instruction (Newton & Winches, 2013), and parental involvement (Klemencic, Mirazchiyski & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2014) as factors affecting reading achievement. In this study, I focused on teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing student achievement in reading. Teachers are in the classroom with their students for an average of 180 days per year, they see their

students' day-to-day struggles and successes (Education Commission of the States,

2013). Teachers provided a comprehensive view of reading achievement in their

classroom. The following section includes the definition of the problem, rationale,

definitions, significance, guiding research questions, a review of the literature, and

implications.

Definition of the Problem

This study focused on a school located in a southeastern state in the United States.

The target study site is a Title I school with 95.6% of the students living below the

national poverty line (State Annual School Report Card, 2014). Enrollment at the

elementary school at the target site was approximately 600 students (State Annual Report

Card). In 2014, the school received an average rating on the state school report card

(State Annual School Report Card). According to the State Department of Education, an

average rating means the school is on the way to meeting the state's performance goals

for all schools by the year 2020 (State Annual Report Card). The school met 13 out of 13

of its objectives and met Adequate Yearly Progress in 2013 and 2014. The school under

study is performing better than similar Title I schools in the area. The school received a

"C" on the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) rating system. The

"C" rating means that the school's performance meets the state's expectations. Based on

the rating, the school performed better than four of the seven schools located in the

school district in which the school is located (State Annual School Report Card). Despite

the successes the school has celebrated, students' reading proficiency is still an issue.

Table 1 illustrates the percentages of students reading below grade level at the school

under study.

Table 1

Percentage of Elementary Students by Grade Level Below Proficiency on the STAR Reading Test

Grade	Percentage
First	30%
Second	18%
Third	53%
Fourth	50%
Fifth	56%

Note. Data compiled from STAR Reading Summary Report Fall 2013.

In addition to STAR Reading data, Table 2 illustrates the percentages of students who

scored "Not Met" on the state standardized test.

Table 2

Percentages of Students Scoring Not Met on the State Standardized Test

Grade	Percentage
Third	37.1%
Fourth	32.2%
Fifth	26.1%

Note. Data compiled from the State Department of Education (2014).

The problem that prompted this study was low student achievement in reading as evidenced by the percentages of students who are reading below grade level based on the STAR Reading assessment and the percentages of students who scored "Not Met" on the state standardized test. Reading scores in 2013 and 2014 continued to be low and were not commensurate with the state required proficiency levels. This lack of performance on the part of students in the area of literacy affected the campus in that teachers' evaluations were tied to students' reading performance and additional human and financial resources were devoted to the teaching of reading and affected students as they were not progressing in the curriculum as expected. Despite professional development efforts aimed at supporting teachers in instructing students in literacy, and campus designed programs to encourage parent home reading programs to support their children, scores continued to decline. The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The local problem was selected because there was a need to increase the reading proficiency of students reading below grade level at a specific local elementary school. The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. I investigated teachers' perceptions of the gap in practice in reading instruction. In 2014, 31% of students at the school under study scored "Not Met" on the state standardized test for English Language Arts(ELA)(School Report Card, 2014). According to the State Department of Education, a score of "Not Met"

means that a student did not master the standards for his or her grade level (State Department of Education, 2014). The school administrators identified increasing the percentage of students in grades three, four, and five who scored met and above on ELA section of the state standardized test (School Improvement Plan, 2014).

During the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years the school administrators implemented a number of strategies and activities to make progress toward the goal of increasing student performance on the state standardized test (School Improvement Plan, 2014). Content area teachers received professional development in the form of Common Core Black Belt certification training to improve teacher instructional strategies in reading. The teachers and staff were also required to allow their students to read before, during, and after school. The Accelerated Reader program was used to track students' improvements in reading comprehension and fluency. STAR Reading assessments were used as progress monitoring tools to assess students' reading levels. Teachers' Goal Based Evaluation (GBE) goals focused on increasing students' reading proficiency. In addition, teachers used the Voyager Reading Program, a literacy intervention curriculum, with students who were identified as struggling readers. Despite all of the measures the local administration took, the problem still persisted with the reading proficiency of first, third, fourth, and fifth grade students.

In 2013, 40% of the southeastern state's fourth graders and 27% of eighth graders scored "below basic" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2013). The state passed the Read to Succeed Act in 2014 in response to the low reading achievement of the states' students

based on state and national assessments (Read to Succeed, 2014). The Act sought to
increase the reading proficiency of students in the state through research based methods.
The goal of Read to Succeed was to improve early childhood literacy development, pre-
service and in-service teacher training, and home-school relationships (Read to Succeed,
2014). Key components of Read to Succeed mandated:

1. Employment of full time reading coaches in all elementary schools.

2. Submission of district annual reading proficiency plan to the state
   department of education.

3. Modification of pre-service teacher training requirements.

4. Implementation of professional development and continuing education for
   in-service teachers.

5. Development of home-school partnerships involving parent support of
   reading at home, and

6. Implementation of early literacy intervention.

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, the Read to Succeed guidelines required the
retention of third grade students who did not demonstrate reading proficiency as
measured by the state standardized test. State leaders determined that increasing teacher
effectiveness in reading instruction is essential to increasing the reading proficiency of
students (Read to Succeed, 2014). Evidence from the state and local levels indicated a
problem with the reading achievement of students. The purpose of this proposed study
was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in
reading.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Two out of every three students in the United States are reading below grade level (Allington, 2011). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015), 32% of fourth grade students nationwide scored below basic on the reading assessment. Students who struggle in reading are less likely to graduate high school and are also less likely to attend college (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013; Workman, 2014). Some researchers have used students' third grade reading level has been used as a predictor of future academic success (Workman, 2014). Teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities (Kent, Giles, & Hibberts, 2013) and lack of professional development or quality professional development (van Kuijk, Deunk, Booser & Ritzema, 2016) are two factors that contributed to the gap in practice in reading instruction. Knowledgeable and effective reading teachers can increase the reading proficiency of students (Abernathy-Dyer, Ortlieb, & Cheek, 2013; van Kuijk, et al.). No Child Left Behind (2002) required that classroom teachers be "highly qualified." The highly qualified status means teachers have a bachelor's degree, are certified, and can demonstrate competency in the subject areas they teach. While teachers are required to be highly qualified, the level of training in reading instruction that pre-service teachers receive differs from program to program (Hurford et al., 2016). The International Reading Association (IRA) identified eight characteristics of quality reading teacher preparation programs. The qualities are: (a) content, (b) apprenticeship, (c) vision, (d) resources and mission, (e) personalized teaching, (f) autonomy, (g) community, and (h) assessment (International Reading Association, 2003). The coursework for teacher preparation programs should have a

balance between practice and theory (Brenna & Chen, 2013). The IRA contends that teachers who graduate from quality programs are more effective in teaching reading than their counterparts.

Professional development in reading instructional strategies is essential for teachers to be effective in increasing student performance in reading (van Kuijk, et al., 2016). According to the National Reading Panel (2013), reading instruction should include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Professional development should focus on the fundamentals of reading instruction and not a particular curriculum. Effective professional development equips teachers with the skills necessary to provide explicit reading instruction (Thomas, 2015). According to Brown and Militello (2016), professional development for teachers is one variable that school administrators can control. Well-informed teachers can make a great impact on student learning.

Definition of Terms

Balanced literacy: Balanced literacy is a teaching framework that incorporates different types of literacy instruction to facilitate reading and writing skills in students (Bingham & Hall-Henyon, 2013).

Differentiated instruction: Differentiated instruction is a student centered method of teaching that adapts instruction based on students' needs and learning styles (Robb, 2013).

Leveled texts: Leveled texts are books that are categorized by grade level based on the length of the book, layout, organization, illustrations, and complexity of words (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Professional Development: Professional development (PD) is training provided to teachers for the purpose of improving teacher knowledge and instructional practices (Quint, 2011).

Proficient readers: Proficient readers are those who are able to read and understand texts commensurate with their grade level, draw conclusions, and make evaluations based on the text. (The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2009).

Significance of the Study

Significance to the Local Context

The problem was significant to the local context because a large percentage of students in first, third, fourth, and fifth grades at the school under study were reading below grade level based on STAR Reading assessments and the state standardized test. Increased teacher effectiveness in reading instruction could lead to an improvement in student performance in reading. Students who struggle in elementary school in reading are more likely to struggle throughout their academic careers (Hagans & Good, 2013). Students who were retained in early elementary grades had lower reading achievement in eighth grade than their peers who were not retained (Im, Hughes, Kwok, Puckett, & Cerda, 2013). Children in the local context could benefit from explicit reading instruction. Increasing the effectiveness of teacher instruction in reading is significant

because researchers have shown that increased teacher knowledge in reading can result in gains in student achievement (Abernathy-Dyer, Ortlieb, & Cheek, 2013; Boonen, Van Damme & Onghena, 2014). The southeastern state mandated that school districts submit an annual reading proficiency plan (Read to Succeed, 2014). Knowing what teachers perceive as the key issues in reading achievement may help the district in creating the plan.

Significance to the Larger Educational Context

The problem is significant to the larger educational context because students in the United States are not performing as well as students in other developed countries (Merry, 2013). The Program for International Assessment (PISA) assesses 15 year olds in mathematics, reading, and science every 3 years. In 2013, students in the United States scored lower than students in 33 education systems in reading literacy (PISA, 2013). Reading proficiency provides the basis of future educational attainment. There are negative social and financial implications for people without sufficient reading skills.

Socially, those who are unable to read well often experience shame about their inability to read (Stygles, 2016). Poor reading skills can be passed down from generation to generation. Parents who struggle in reading are more likely to have children who struggle in reading (Lindo, 2014). Students who underperform in reading are more likely to drop out of high school (Vaughn et al., 2015). A number of social ills are linked to illiteracy. For example, poverty, crime, and incarceration are linked to illiteracy (Cuevas, Irving & Russell, 2014). In addition to social issues there are financial problems that may arise for people with poor reading skills.

Reading proficiency impacts a person's ability to earn a living (Ramsdal, Gjaerum & Wynn, 2013; Wexler, Pyle & Fall, 2015). There is a demand for highly skilled workers who are college educated (Autor, 2014). Individuals who struggle in reading are more likely to work low-skilled, low-paying jobs or be unemployed (UNESCO, n.d.). Literacy skills are necessary to complete a job application, apply for a loan, and balance a checkbook. In addition to financial problems, reading proficiency has an impact on the global economy.

The global economy is dependent on well skilled workers (Kornhaber, Griffith & Tyler, 2014). If the United States is going to compete within the global economy it is important to address the problem of students' underachievement in reading. Children in the larger educational context could benefit from increased teacher effectiveness in reading instruction.

Guiding/Research Question

Quality of teacher instruction has an impact on student learning (Perkins & Cooter, 2013). According to Fisher, Frey, and Nelson (2012), teacher effectiveness is one factor in student achievement that can be controlled inside the classroom. Other factors such as parental involvement are outside of a teachers' control. The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. This project study focused on four research questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading practices that improve student reading achievement?

RQ2. How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to

support student achievement and reading improvement?

RQ3. How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional

development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target

district?

RQ4. What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best

support student achievement in reading?

Review of the Literature

I conducted the literature review by searching databases available through the

Walden University Library and the Internet. I used the following databases: Education

Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, EdITLib, and Science Direct. I

used ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis Full Text searching to locate related materials. I

used the Internet to locate books, articles, and websites. I also used Google Scholar to

locate scholarly resources available on the Internet. I used the following keywords were

used within the databases to locate data for the study: *teacher perceptions, teacher*

effectiveness, differentiated instruction, balanced literacy, reading instruction, reading

achievement, professional development, and *parental involvement*. In addition to the

strategies mentioned above, I examined the reference lists of articles to find additional

articles relevant to my topic. Once I reached the point at which I was finding the same

articles again and again, I assumed I had reached saturation of existing literature and

ceased my search. I focused my search primarily on articles published within the last 5

years.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this qualitative case study was the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994). The ecological theory, also known as the human ecology theory, suggests that students' academic achievement is influenced by several subsystems (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams & Keating, 2009). According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, there are five subsystems, which affect human growth and development; the Bronfenbrenner systems are microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (1994). The microsystem includes family, school, church, and the neighborhood in which a child lives. The mesosystem is made up from the interaction of two microsystems; an example might be the interaction of both family and school. The exosystem is the indirect environment, such as a parent's place of employment, while the macrosystem is culture, and the chronosystem is time. Bronfenbrenner's system of organizing the many influences on children formed the theoretical foundation of this study.

Some researchers have applied Bronfenbrenner's theory to the study of student achievement in reading (Chiu & Chow, 2015; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Froiland, Powell and Diamond (2014) found that family and neighborhood played a vital role in the early literacy of students in the United States. I selected Bronfenbrenner's theory because it takes into consideration multiple systems and how they relate to the academic achievement of children. The framework relates to the case study approach because, like the case study, the ecological theory seeks to understand phenomenon in real-life situations (Yin, 2008). I investigated teacher perceptions of how teacher

effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement influence student achievement in reading.

Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness is one of four factors found in the literature that affects student achievement in reading. Teacher effectiveness is one of the most important school related factors in student achievement (Gary, Grigsby & Vesey, 2015). Effective teachers maximize learning for all of their students. No consensus has been reached on what it means to be an effective teacher. Researchers disagree on how to measure teacher effectiveness (Assali & Kushkiev, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Newton & Winches, 2013). Creemers and Kyriakides (2013) contended that teacher effectiveness combines instruction and student achievement. The Measures of Effective Teaching (n.d.) suggested that teacher effectiveness be measured based on student achievement, teacher observations, and student surveys. The following section will provide a review of the literature on the competencies of an effective teacher.

Teacher effectiveness could be measured by behavior observed in the classroom (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2013). Instructional delivery is how teachers teach the standards. Instructional delivery first requires content knowledge. In addition to having content knowledge, teachers should differentiate instruction to reach all of their students (Creemers & Kyriakides). Another aspect of instructional delivery is classroom management. Classroom management encompasses a set of procedures that help teachers maintain high expectations and maximize time on task (Wong & Wong, 2015). According to Wong and Wong (2015) classroom management is an important factor in

student achievement. The next performance dimension is assessment. Effective teachers use ongoing assessment to monitor student learning. Student feedback is an important aspect of assessment. According to Newton and Winches (2013) the most effective teachers of reading provide students with clear learning objectives, allow students to learn from their mistakes, plan and are flexible, ask the right questions, and set high expectations. Assessments help teachers understand what students know and areas for re-teaching. Assessments can be formal or informal (Newton & Winches). The classroom is the primary learning environment for teachers. Teachers' personal qualities such as respect, kindness, and fairness shape the learning environment. Classrooms should have a positive climate (Wong & Wong). Creating a positive classroom environment involves classroom management. Students learn better in environments where they feel safe and respected.

Allington (2002) studied exemplary elementary school teachers for over a decade. He developed the six Ts of effective literacy instruction based on interviews and observations of effective reading teachers in the classroom. The six Ts are strategies the teachers used to support the academic achievement of their students. The strategies are time, texts, teaching, talk, tasks, and testing. Effective reading teachers devote a significant amount of instructional time to reading. Reading helps to develop reading skills (Allington, 2002). To be successful readers, students need reading materials that meet their interest and ability levels (Allington, 2002). Effective teachers provide access to a variety of reading texts based on students' interest and ability levels (Allington, 2002). The teachers observed by the researcher provided explicit instruction on reading

strategies. These teachers also used different modes of presenting information. Effective teachers encourage teacher-student dialogue and student-student dialogue in the classroom (Allington, 2002). During conversations with students these teachers asked higher order and open-ended questions. Effective teachers engage their students in longer more meaningful tasks (Allington, 2002). In effective classrooms, students were given "managed choice" in which the student decided how he or she will complete assignments. When effective teachers evaluated students more weight was placed on student effort and improvement than achievement (Allington, 2002). The six Ts when used in combination have been demonstrated as an effective means of teaching reading.

Teacher effectiveness is one of four factors identified in the literature as having an impact on student achievement in reading. Teacher effectiveness is one of the greatest predictors of academic success of students (Abernathy-Dyer, Ortlieb, & Cheek, 2013; Munoz, Scoskie & French, 2013). A knowledgeable and competent teacher makes a great difference in the education of children.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is the second strategy identified in the literature as a factor affecting student achievement in reading. Teaching is a profession that requires life-long learning (de Vries, Jansen, Helms-Lorenz & van de Grift, 2015). Professional development is training provided to teachers for the purpose of improving teacher knowledge and instructional practices (Evers, Kreijns & Van der Heijden, 2016). Effective PD can increase teacher effectiveness, which in turn can improve student achievement in reading (Perkins & Cooter, 2013).

Each state has professional development requirements for teachers (Education Commission of the States, n.d.). The amount of time spent in school district sponsored professional development varies. According to the Center for Public Education (2013), most PD is ineffective. Effective PD helps teachers become better practitioners. PD should be ongoing (Brenna & Chen, 2013, Center for Public Education). One-time workshops and PD sessions are less effective because enough time is not dedicated to the content. According to Gulamhussein (2013), PD less than 14 hours long has no impact on student achievement (Center for Public Education; Gulamhussein). Learning new skills in PD is in vain if the skills are not implemented. PD should not be a passive learning experience for teachers; teachers should be actively involved in the learning process (Center for Public Education). Teachers need at least 20 times to practice a new skill before they master it (Gulamhussein). Modeling best practices is a way for teachers to see strategies in action (Center for Public Education). Professional development should be specific to teachers' needs, content areas, and grade levels taught (Center for Public Education). Professional learning communities and literacy coaching are two specific types of professional development that focus on improving teachers' reading instruction.

Professional Learning Community Role

A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of people who work together to improve student learning through ongoing collaboration, research, and reflection (D'Ardenne, et al. 2013). PLCs are a viable means of PD because the individuals involved take ownership for their own learning. Traditional PD workshops are usually general in nature and are ineffective in improving teachers' instructional skills

(McConnell, Parker, Eberhardt, Koehler & Lundeburg, 2012). Unlike traditional PD, PLCs focus on issues specific to teachers' needs. In PLCs, teachers work collaboratively to improve an agreed upon objective (Thessin, 2015). The goal of PLCs is to improve teacher practice, which as a result could increase student achievement (Thessin, 2015).

Peer collaboration is an essential element of PLCs (Popp & Goldman, 2016). In PLCs, teachers work together on a continuous basis. PLCs can be grade level, content area specific, or multidisciplinary (D'Ardenne et al. 2013). In a study conducted by D'Ardenne et al., (2015) reading PLCs helped teachers become more effective which resulted in gains the lowest students' reading achievement. According to Thessin, there are 6 steps in the PLC process:

1. Inquiry

2. Analyze data

3. Look at student work

4. Examine instruction

5. Access student progress

6. Reflect

Teachers go through a cycle of learning, implementing, and reflecting. PLCs require proper support from the school and school district to be effective (Thessin, 2015).

The Internet and social networks can be used to establish PLCs that reach beyond the local school or school district. Virtual PLCs are a cost-effective means of bringing teachers together from various geographic areas. Twitter, Edmodo, and blogs are

examples of platforms used for online PLCs. Teachers can share instructional strategies, technology advice and resource lists in online PLCs (Satterfield, 2014).

Literacy Coaching

A literacy coach is a specially trained teacher who provides professional development for teachers in literacy teaching strategies (Miller & Stewart, 2013). The goal of the literacy coach is to help teachers to become more effective teachers of reading (Miller & Stewart). Literacy coaches can help teachers to implement best practices in the classroom by modeling lessons. Literacy coaches can also help teachers with their work in PLCs. Literacy coaching is an effective means of PD because it is ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative, reflective, and inquiry based (Miller & Stewart). Literacy coaching is more effective in improving teachers' instructional skills than traditional PD methods (Miller & Stewart).

Effective PD helps teachers to increase their content knowledge and learn new skills. Effective PD is ongoing, provides support for implementation, actively engages teachers, includes modeling, and is specific to teachers' needs. PD is essential for life-long learning. PD in reading instructional strategies is essential for teachers to be effective in increasing student performance in reading (van Kuijk, Deunk, Bosker & Ritzema, 2016). Professional learning communities and literacy coaching are PD strategies that can improve teachers' instructional skills in reading.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is the next factor that the literature points toward as a factor influencing reading achievement. Differentiated instruction (DI) is a student

centered method of teaching that adapts instruction based on students' needs and learning styles (Robb, 2013). No two students are exactly the same. DI takes into consideration students' differences. DI requires teachers to make modifications in the way they present content (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014). Content can be differentiated by using leveled texts, technology, and student grouping. The teaching process can be differentiated by using centers, hands on materials, and giving students additional time to complete tasks. Products can be differentiated by using rubrics and giving students choices in how they complete assignments. The learning environment can be differentiated by having procedures, allowing students to work independently and in collaborative groups. DI is an essential strategy for teaching reading (Firmender, Reis & Sweeny, 2013).

Balanced Literacy

Teachers play an important role in the development of proficient readers. Effective teachers use DI to meet the varied needs of their students (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Balanced literacy is a teaching framework that incorporates different types of literacy instruction to facilitate reading and writing skills in students (Bingham & Hall-Henyon, 2013). The balanced literacy approach is based on scaffolding instruction. The four components of balanced literacy used by teachers are the read-aloud, shared reading, guided practice, and independent practice. The following sections will provide a review of the literature relevant to the strategies.

Read-Aloud

A read-aloud is an instructional strategy in which teachers read-aloud to their students. Read-alouds are commonly used in elementary level classrooms, however are effective for middle level and high school students (Reed, Swanson, Petscher & Vaughn, 2013). Fox (2013) contended that read-alouds benefit children no matter the grade level, socioeconomic level, ability level or language. Read-alouds can be used to introduce new information, as a hook in a lesson, to conclude a lesson or as a review for tests.

There are three types of read-alouds: read-aloud only, read-aloud with discussion afterwards, and interactive read-alouds (Barrett-Mynes, Morgan & Tegano, 2010). The read-aloud only is the basic form of a read-aloud in which the teacher reads aloud to the students without discussion or interaction. Then there are read-alouds followed by discussion where the teacher and students discuss what was read at the end of the reading. During interactive read-alouds, there are discussions between the teacher and students before, during, and after the reading. Of the three types of read-alouds, the interactive read-aloud has been found to be the most effective in teaching literacy (Delacruz, 2013). Interactive read-alouds can help increase students' listening comprehension (Seil, 2010), reading comprehension, interest in reading, and writing and overall academic achievement (Lennox, 2013).

Read-alouds can be used to introduce, explain, and teach complex vocabulary. Vocabulary is a key component of reading achievement (Fox, 2013; Lennox, 2013; Toth, 2013). Vocabulary is best taught in context (Toth). The read-aloud is a strategy that effectively teaches vocabulary in the context of a lesson through the use of books and

other texts. Increased vocabulary acquisition is one of the benefits of read-alouds (Fox).

Hearing words multiple times supports vocabulary acquisition (Lennox). The more

students hear words used, the more words they know, are able to use and understand.

Picture books are often used for read-alouds. Picture books have text and

illustrations or pictures and can be fiction or non-fiction. Reading picture books aloud

helps to increase students' visual literacy (Senokossoff, 2013). Visual literacy is the

extent to which students understand what is represented in pictures. Reading picture

books aloud also helps to foster a love of reading in students.

Frequent read-alouds can increase student achievement in reading through

language development, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and visual literacy

(Fox, 2013). The read-aloud is one of the four balanced literacy strategies. The following

section will provide information about how teachers use shared reading in literacy

instruction.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is a strategy similar to the interactive read-aloud. During shared

reading the teacher and students read books together (Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimoni

& Kaderavek, 2013). Shared reading lessons may be implemented in three ways; teacher

reads while students follow along reading silently, teacher reads while students choral

read, and teacher reads while students echo read. During shared reading lessons, all

students should be able to see the text being read. Big books, interactive whiteboards, and

document cameras are often used for shared reading lessons. Using the shared reading

approach, teachers and students read the same book together multiple times over several days.

Shared reading experiences differ from classroom to classroom (Kindle, 2013). Shared reading is useful for emergent, beginner, intermediate and advanced readers. Baker (2013) found that shared reading helped emergent readers to develop print knowledge. Print knowledge is knowledge of the purpose of print, how print is organized, letter and number recognition, and letter meaning. Shared reading lessons address different skills. For example, lessons for emergent readers focus on print knowledge; lessons for beginning readers focus on fluency; lessons for intermediate readers focus on comprehension and vocabulary. The benefits of shared reading are increased reading comprehension, vocabulary and language skills (Ong, 2014). The next strategy used in the balanced literacy approach is guided reading. The following section will provide information about guided reading.

Guided Reading

Guided reading was developed by Fountas and Pinnell (Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth & Vaughn, 2014). Guided reading is a literacy instructional strategy where students work in small groups based on their ability levels. First the teacher introduces the book and then assigns students to groups. Books used for guided reading lessons are usually leveled texts. During a guided reading lesson students read books aloud or silently in small groups while the teacher rotates throughout the room taking notes, asking questions, and providing support. After reading, the students discuss the book.

Morgan et al. (2013), "reinforcing, extending, and expanding students'

experiences as readers are our primary goals for guided reading" (p. 10). The teacher

scaffolds instruction during guided reading lessons. According to Guided reading

instruction is individualized. Students' benefit from reading texts, which are on their level

(Delacruz, 2014; Morgan et al.). Oostdam, Blok, and Boendermaker (2015), found that

guided reading is effective in improving students' fluency and attitudes towards reading.

Independent Reading

Independent reading is the final component of the balanced literacy approach.

Independent reading is a strategy used in classrooms to support reading proficiency (Tse,

et al., 2016). Independent reading can be done in class or outside of class. During

independent reading, students read silently. Students are able to select their own reading

materials and read at their own pace. The teachers' role during independent reading is to

ensure that reading materials are age and reading level appropriate and provide support. It

is important that students not read books that are too easy or too hard for them. All of the

other three components of balanced literacy help to foster independent reading.

Independent reading requires intrinsic motivation (Tse et al., 2016). Students who

are engaged in independent reading read more which can result in increased reading

achievement (Williams, Hall, Hedrick, Lamkin & Abendroth, 2013). Cuevas, Irving and

Russell (2014), found students who read independently in class for an hour each week

showed increased reading achievement and performed better than students who did not

spend a significant amount of time reading independently. The National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) came to a similar conclusion. According to the NAEP

2011 Reading Assessment, fourth graders who read frequently scored higher than those who did not.

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

The final factor identified in the literature that affects reading achievement is parental involvement. Achievement in reading cannot be accomplished only at school (Klemencic, Mirazchiyski & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2014). Parents, schools, and communities need to work together to foster and encourage children's literacy development (Jeewek & Gerwin, 2012). Education begins at home, as parents can make a significant impact on their children's lives. Parental involvement is related to fewer behavior problems in school, better attendance, lower dropout rates, and less grade retention (Ross, 2016). Parental involvement is also associated with increased learning and academic achievement (Wilder, 2014).

There are varied definitions of parental involvement, and there is no published formula for the amount or type of parental involvement necessary to increase student educational outcomes (Goodall, 2013). Castro et al. (2016) defined parental involvement as "… the active participation of parents in all aspects of their children's social, emotional and academic development" (p.34). According to Lam and Ducreaux (2013), parental involvement includes home-based, school-based, and social activities. Home-based activities as those that include parents providing homework help, reading with their children, and teaching their children school related skills. School-based activities include attending parent-teacher conferences, attending school events, visiting the school, and communicating with their child's teacher. Based on this model to facilitate students'

success, parents should be involved both at home and at school. The definition of parental involvement varies from parent to parent. One parent may deem attending school functions as an acceptable level of parental involvement while another may feel home-based activities should be done in addition to school-based activities.

Parental involvement promotes student achievement in reading (Klemencic, Mirazchiyski & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2014). Parents assist in developing literacy skills in their children (Buckingham, et al. 2013). Parental involvement makes the greatest difference in reading during the early years (Hemmerechts, Agirdag & Kavadias, 2017). According to the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994), children learn and are influenced by their environment (Bronfenbrenner). The family and home environment have the largest influence on children (Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2013).

Activities that promote reading achievement in children are not limited to school-related activities. Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman, (2013) found that students benefit from varied social and cultural communication. The following activities were associated with higher scores in reading: conversations with parents about general issues; discussions with parents about "books, film or TV; as well as political or social issues" (Hampden-Thompson, Guzman & Lippman, 2013 p. 255). Eating meals together also improves reading development. Families who share meals often have time to talk during the meal, these conversations help with vocabulary and literacy skills development Harris and Graves (2010) determined that cultural activities such as visiting museums, libraries, and zoos were associated with higher reading achievement. Mothers do

activities such as teaching and practicing, drawing, doing crafts, playing educational games, singing, and rhyming to encourage their children's teaching at home (Suizzo et al, 2014).

Another indicator of success in reading was the parents' attitudes toward reading (Ozturk, Hill & Yates, 2016; Yeo, Ong & Ng, 2014). Students who are poor readers often have parents who are poor readers (Silinskas et al, 2012). Parents, who stressed the importance of reading to their children by modeling reading, have children who are more likely to read (Clark, 2010). Araujo and Costa (2015) found parents reading to their children, reading with their children and allowing the children choice in reading materials improved student engagement in reading. Parent-child communication about school is also linked to reading achievement (Patrick et. al 2011). While some researchers contend there is a direct relationship between parental involvement and students' reading achievement, others suggest the relationship is indirect. According to Senechal and LeFevre (2002), "… early parent involvement was not directly linked to subsequent reading performance; instead, there were indirect relations between parent involvement and reading outcomes" (p. 655). Whether direct or indirect, parental involvement can increase the reading performance of students.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. There are many implications for this proposed study. Based on the data gathered from teachers, it is hoped that additional insights are

obtained regarding the gap in practice in reading instruction. Based on the findings, I have developed a project.

The findings from this case study have the potential to benefit the district and other site administrators, as they have the opportunity to review qualitative data pertaining to the perceptions of teachers regarding low student achievement in reading. A family literacy program was developed as the project for this study.

Summary

This study addressed the gap in practice in reading instruction at the school under study. Teacher perceptions of the factors influencing student achievement in reading were being investigated. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory suggests students' growth and development is influenced by five sub-systems. The sub-systems include family, school, community, culture, time, and the interaction of two systems. Teacher effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement are factors that affect reading achievement in reading.

In the section that follows, I will discuss the research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of this study. In Section 3 of this project study, I will discuss the project that will be developed after gaining some insight on the possible answers to the research questions discussed in Section 1. I will also discuss the description and goals, rationale, review of literature, implementation, and project evaluation of the potential project based on the data collected and analyzed within Section 2. Finally, I will discuss the implications for social change. In Section 4 of this project study, I will discuss the

project's strengths and limitations in addressing teachers' perceptions of how teacher

effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental

involvement influence student achievement in reading. Finally, I will self-reflect on what

I learned during the completion of the project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. I addressed teachers' perceptions of the gap in practice in reading instruction. To explore how teachers perceived the factors that influence student achievement in reading, this project study focused on four research questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading practices that improve student reading achievement?

RQ2. How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to support student achievement and reading improvement?

RQ3. How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target district?

RQ4. What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best support student achievement in reading?

Creswell (2012) identified five qualitative research strategies: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological research, and narrative research The qualitative research strategies all use inductive reasoning, focus on meaning and understanding, seek rich descriptions, and the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Merriam, 2009). In the paragraphs that follow, I will discuss qualitative research strategies and provide a justification of selecting the case study as the research

design for this study. In addition, I will discuss the methodology used to answer the research questions. I will detail the sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis methods.

Research Design and Approach

Yin (2008) provided a twofold definition of a case study. Yin stated, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). The case study is one of the most widely used research approaches (Yin, 2014). The case study method is used in psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, social work, business, education, and community planning (Yin, 2014).

Case studies help researchers learn more about the experiences of a small group of individuals (Locido, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Case studies can be used to answer how and why questions about phenomenon of which the researcher has no control (Yin, 2014). Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, because case studies are particularistic, they are a good choice for investigating everyday problems. Students' lack of reading proficiency is an everyday problem that educators face. The findings from a case study are presented using rich and thick descriptions (Creswell, 2012). I reported information about the participants and their experiences in great detail. Case studies are heuristic in that they enable the researcher to learn something new or expand on what is already known (Merriam, 2009).

I selected the case study because I wanted to gain a better understanding of what teachers perceived as the gap in practice in reading instruction. Learning more about the teachers' views allowed me to add to the literature of what is already known about teaching reading. Based on these factors, the case study approach was the best method to address my research question.

Ethnographic researchers examine the behavior, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2012). Researchers use the ethnographic design when they study a culture-sharing group to get a better understanding of a larger issue. Ethnographers spend a lot of time observing the group they are studying. Ethnography was not the most suitable strategy for my study because I was not interested in studying a culture-sharing group.

Grounded theory is a research design in which the researcher generates a theory based on the data collected. According to Creswell (2012), the grounded theory approach should be used when no existing theory addresses the problem or population you plan to study. Grounded theory is also used to study processes. I was not interested in generating a new theory or studying a process; therefore, the grounded theory research design was not an appropriate fit for my study.

Phenomenological researchers interpret participants' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Locido, et al. 2010). According to Merriam (2009), phenomenological research often focuses on emotions such as love, anger, and betrayal. The phenomenological research approach is used when a researcher is interested in capturing the essence of individual experiences. Phenomenologists conduct observations

and several interviews to understand participants' experiences. Phenomenological research was not a good choice for my proposed study because I did not study the feelings and emotions of teachers.

Narrative researchers describe the lives of participants. The most common form of narrative research is the biography. A biography is the story of a person's life written by someone else. The narrative design is used when a researcher wants to write about a person's life experiences (Creswell, 2012). Most narrative research reports are written in chronological order. The narrative research design was not a viable method because I wanted to investigate what teachers perceived as factors related to reading achievement.

Based on my review of the other qualitative research methods, I determined that the case study method was most appropriate because the overarching goal of the study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the best reading practices in support of students' reading proficiency. The other designs such as grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenological research, and narrative research would have been less effective for addressing the research questions and exploring the local gap in practice.

Using a qualitative case study design, I focused on one elementary site within a school district located in a southeastern state. This site serves approximately 541 students and employs 24 teachers.

Population and Sampling

The setting for this qualitative case study was a public school district located in a southeastern state. The district includes eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two middle/high schools, and one high school. The site for this study was one elementary

school. The target Title I school had an enrollment of approximately 541 students and employed 24 teachers. There were approximately 58 pre-kindergarten students, 78 kindergarten students, 94 first grade students, 80 second grade students, 74 third grade students, 81 fourth grade students, and 76 fifth grade students at the school under study (Personal communication, November 16, 2015).

Qualitative research studies often use purposeful sampling. Creswell (2012) stated, "Purposeful sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher intentionally selects participants who will best help them understand the central phenomenon" (p. 206). My sample was drawn from the school under study. According to Patton (as cited in Creswell, 2012), participants and sites should be "information rich" (p. 206). The sampling strategy used for this project study was homogeneous sampling. "In homogenous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, p. 208). All of the teachers at the school under study shared a common trait; they taught at the same school.

Criteria for selection of participants. The population for this study was teachers who teach ELA at the target elementary study site. The sample size for qualitative research studies varies from study to study. According to Creswell (2012), the number of participants or research sites can range from one to 40. The target sample for this study was nine to 10 ELA teachers. There were 19 ELA teachers at the school under study. I selected nine to10 teachers as the target sample size for the teacher participants because I wanted to provide in-depth information about the teachers' perceptions of factors affecting student achievement in reading. A larger sample size would have

diminished my ability to provide in-depth information about each teacher. A smaller sample size would not have allowed me to provide information about the experiences of teachers from different grade levels. All 19 ELA teachers were invited to participate in the study. A total of nine ELA teachers signed informed consent forms agreeing to participate in the study. I selected the sample size of nine participants by the number of teachers who agreed to participate in the study.

Access to participants. Access to this site was obtained through the district and site principal of the targeted school. Prior to beginning the data collection, I obtained a letter of cooperation from the research site and district as well as Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (approval # 03-25-16-0174432). I solicited participation for the study by providing the ELA teachers with a letter explaining the study (see Appendix B). I included in the letter the nature of the study and stressed that the individuals were under no obligation to participate.

Researchers must use informed consent, protect participants from harm, maintain privacy and confidentiality, and use precautions for vulnerable groups (Yin, 2008). Prior to contacting any participants, I applied to the Walden University IRB and the appropriate department for the district in which the school under study is located. I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) "Protecting Human Research Participants" training (Certification Number 1694788) to ensure human subjects are protected. Once I received approval, I contacted potential participants via telephone or email, based on the contact information provided. I explained the purpose of the study to participants prior to gathering any information (Creswell, 2012). During initial contact, I

introduced myself and discussed the purpose and design of the study. I also discussed the potential benefits and risks associated with their participation. Then I requested the individuals to participate in the study. The individuals who agreed to participate were required to sign informed consent forms to participate in the study. Participants were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Researcher-participant relationship. In qualitative studies, it is important to build a researcher-participant relationship. I developed a strong researcher-participant relationship to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their views during data collection and any subsequent contact. As the researcher, I obtained approval to conduct research from the school district, Walden University IRB, and informed consent from potential participants. Participants' rights and responsibilities were stated in the invitation letter and the informed consent form.

Once permission to conduct research and collect data was received from the school district, site principal, and Walden University IRB, I emailed an invitation to participate letter (Appendix B) and informed consent form to the ELA teachers at the school under study. The invitation to participate and informed consent form explained the rights and responsibilities of the participants. The documents included the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, risks and benefits, confidentiality statement, and my contact information.

I contacted each participant who responded to my invitation to schedule a date and time to conduct a face-to-face interview. I did not have nine to 10 teachers respond to

the initial email request for research participants. I resent the email to the teachers who

did not respond to the first email. The second email contained the invitation to participate

letter and informed consent form. I then contacted the new participants who responded to

schedule a date and time to conduct a face-to-face interview.

I protected the participants' identities by replacing their names with pseudonyms.

The pseudonyms were taken from the list of most common United States surnames. The

names were assigned randomly. My handwritten notes, tape recordings, and flash drive

were kept in a locked file cabinet at my home, and electronic files were kept in a

password-protected laptop and desktop computer. My computer remained locked when it

is powered on and I was away from my desk. I followed all ethical rules for research

ensuring that no harm was done to the participants. Data will be kept for 5 years. After 5

years, paper data will be destroyed using a cross-cut shredder; digital data will be deleted

from storage devices.

Data Collection

Data can be collected for case studies from documents, archival records, direct

observation, participation observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). The data

collection methods that I used were interviews, observations, and documents for analysis.

According to Yin, to be effective in completing case studies, one must ask good

questions, listen attentively, be flexible, understand what one is studying, and avoid

biases. In qualitative interviews, "the researcher asks participants open-ended questions"

(Creswell, 2012, p. 217). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), "qualitative interviews

can be the dominant data collection method or used in conjunction with observations and

document analysis" (p.103). Interviews include a focus on the topic being studied and provide details about interviewees' feelings (Yin, 2014). I selected the interview as a data collection method because interviews enabled me to talk to each teacher to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the factors influencing student achievement in reading.

     Interviews. There are three types of interviews; prolonged case study interviews, shorter case study interviews, and survey interviews (Yin, 2014). Prolonged case study interviews are two or more hours long. Shorter case study interviews are typically one hour in length. In case studies the researcher should conduct interviews based on the interviewees' schedules (Yin, 2014). I contacted each participant via email or telephone to schedule a one-on-one interviews based on the participant's schedule. The interviews were conducted at the school under study after normal school hours. The school building was selected because it is in a central location that was convenient for participants. The interviews were conducted in the teacher's classroom. The interview questions were open-ended. Participants were asked to express their perceptions of how teacher effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement influence student achievement in reading.

     I created the open-ended interview questions for data collection. I had a panel of experts review the interview questions for input before they were used in the final study. The panel of experts was made up of two school administrators and a reading coach. I revised my questions based on their feedback. The interview questions focused on how

teacher effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement influence student achievement in reading. (See Appendix B).

The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. I used a case study interview protocol during each interview. The case study protocol is essential for case studies because they increase the reliability of the case study and provides an outline for the study (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol had the interview questions, probes, spaces to write notes, and reminders to keep me on task. In my notes, I documented each participant's responses and their body language, non-verbal cues, and verbal cues. Each participant's real name was replaced with a pseudonym.

At the start of each interview, I thanked the participants for their participation and went over the purpose of the interview and their rights. During the interview, I asked questions from my interview protocols. I used probes and follow-up questions to get participants to elaborate on their answers. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participants for their participation. I maintained a list of alternate participants in the event that participants drop out of the study.

Observations. Observation was another data collection method used in this study. According to Creswell (2012), "Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site" (p. 213). There are two observational roles. A participant observer is one who participates in the events in which they are observing and the nonparticipant observer does not participate in the events (Creswell). Research observations are useful for when participants cannot or will not discuss the topic under study (Merriam, 2009). I selected observations as a data

collection tool to gain a better understanding of the participants' classroom practices and to triangulate findings.

I created an observation protocol. The observation protocol was a recording sheet, which included space to write the lesson objective, description of the classroom, differentiated instruction strategies used, lesson activities, classroom management, and notes. I conducted 30-minute nonparticipant classroom observations. The observations were scheduled with each participant after the interviews were conducted. The observations took place in each participant's classroom at the school under study. I entered the classroom and took a seat in a chair located in the back of the classroom. I completed the observation protocol and took notes. I remained in some classrooms longer than 30 minutes to observe the completion of the lesson or activity. When the observation was over, I exited the classroom.

Documents. Yin (2014) stated that information gathered from documents might be used in all case studies. Documents are public and private records that provide researchers with additional information about what is being studied (Creswell, 2012). Public documents are those that anyone can access. An example of public documents is state standardized test results. Private documents are personal documents not accessible by the public. An example of a private document is a personal diary. Documents add value to case studies, however they can be inaccurate or include biases (Yin). The best use for documents is to confirm or support information gathered from other sources (Yin).

I asked each participant to provide me with one week of their ELA lesson plans at the time of their interview. All identifying data was removed from the lesson plan and replaced with the pseudonym the participant was provided with for their interview. The lesson plans provided insight into the reading and literacy lessons the teachers teach. I examined the lesson plans. The lesson plans were analyzed and coded. I reviewed the documents to determine how teachers documented differentiated instruction within their lesson plans. The data from the documents were triangulated with data from the interviews and observations.

Role of the researcher. I am not currently employed by the school district in which the school under study is located. I was previously employed by the school district. I worked at the school under study as a school librarian for eight years. In my former role as a school librarian at the school under study, I did not have a supervisory role. Some of the study participants were my former peers. As the researcher, I developed the open-ended interview questions for the interviews and the observation protocol. I collected and analyzed the data.

Qualitative researchers can bring biases into data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). As a school librarian, I have some biases. I minimized my biases by maintaining a research journal. The research journal allowed me to maintain my biases and personal feelings within the journal. During data collection, I did not allow my body language or facial expressions to display my feelings. I kept an even tone when speaking and eye contact with the participants when possible. I stuck to the interview protocol to

ensure that I did not add to or remove any information from the interview questions and probes.

Data Analysis Results

The data for qualitative studies is text (Miles & Hubermann, 1994). There are six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: "preparing and organizing data, coding data, developing themes based on codes, representing findings through narratives and visuals, interpreting findings based on literature, and establishing validity of findings" (Creswell, 2012 p. 237). Yin (2014) contended that the first step in analyzing data should be to develop a strategy. The data analysis strategy for this proposed study will be detailed in the paragraphs that follow.

Before data can be coded it must be organized. The first step in the organization process is transcribing the data. I listened to the audio recordings and transcribed each interview into a Google Doc verbatim. After transcribing the data, I read each interview transcript while listening to the recording to ensure accuracy of the transcript. I made any corrections necessary. I typed handwritten observation notes into a Google Doc. I compared the observation transcript to my notes to ensure accuracy. Data from the teachers' lesson plans did not need to be transcribed. I used a brown kraft clasp envelope to organize the data for each participant. The envelope included the interview protocol, transcripts, observation protocol, field notes, and lesson plans. The pseudonym assigned to each participant was written on the outside of each envelope.

According to Miles and Hubermann (1994), coding can be as simple as handwritten notes. First, I used a highlighter to color code the data and write the code in

the margin. Then using a Google Doc with three columns, I organized the codes. The columns were labeled raw data, preliminary codes, and final code. I had an initial list of 25 codes. After recoding, I was able to reduce the number of codes to 10. Next, I combined the codes into broad themes. The themes were derived from multiple perspectives. I combined the themes because I had three different modes of inquiry. I analyzed interview data, observation data, and documents. During observation and documents analysis, I analyzed the strategies the teachers reported they would use in their lesson plans. I interpreted the findings by comparing my data to literature regarding research based best practices. I continued to analyze data until I reached saturation. According to Miles and Hubermann, qualitative data analysis reaches saturation when any new data collected only confirms what has already been collected.

Accuracy and Credibility. It is important to ensure that my findings are valid. Creswell (2012) listed triangulation, member checking, and the external audit as three means of validating the accuracy of data. Triangulation is the process of establishing the validity of a study by examining data from different perspectives (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011; Miles & Hubermann). I used data triangulation and code-recode, and reflexivity to enhance trustworthiness. Teacher interviews, observations and documents were used for triangulation. I also triangulated data by using margin notes. I did not use member checking or the external audit because I felt the other methods were more appropriate to establish the validity of my project study. In order to use code-recode, I read and reviewed my findings multiple times. Reflexivity required that I attempted to set aside all personal biases about the topic in order to analyze the data fairly.

Discrepant Cases. Negative or discrepant cases are data that does not conform with the other data (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Discrepant cases are identified during data analysis. When a discrepant case emerged, I reanalyzed the data to identify new themes.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

Qualitative researchers seek to investigate issues based on participants' personal experiences. It was assumed that participants were going to be honest about their personal experiences during the interviews. It was also assumed that the participants of the study would understand the questions they were asked during the interview. Another assumption was the researcher would maintain confidentiality and report the findings without bias. A possible limitation for my study is the research methodology I selected. Qualitative study findings cannot be generalized to the larger population. However, generalizability is not normally a goal of qualitative research. Some findings may be transferable to other settings, but that will be determined by the readers of the study. Another limitation is the focus on one elementary school.

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. I addressed teachers' perceptions of the gap in practice in reading instruction. The study was delimited to 10 teachers.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. To explore how teachers perceived the factors

that influence student achievement in reading, this project study focused on four research questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading practices that improve student reading achievement?

RQ2. How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to support student achievement and reading improvement?

RQ3. How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target district?

RQ4. What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best support student achievement in reading?

Table 3 illustrates the themes derived from the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 3

Themes

Research Question	Theme
RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading practices that improve student reading achievement?	1. Back to basics 2. Reading practice 3. Classroom environment
RQ2. How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to	1. Meeting students' needs

support student achievement and reading improvement?	
RQ3. How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target district?	1. Professional development
RQ4. What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best support student achievement in reading?	1. Communication 2. Home environment

The findings of this study are organized by theme in the section that follows.

Findings

The first research question that guided this study was: What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading practices that improve student reading achievement? Three themes emerged from the first research question, which included back to basics, reading practice, and classroom environment.

Theme 1: Back to Basics

All 9 of the participants indicated that reading success is closely tied to basic literacy skills. Basic literacy skills listed by the participants included phonics, phonemic awareness, rhyming words, word families, high frequency words, vocabulary, and fluency.

Participant Williams stated the following:

> First, I would go back to the basics and make sure that students and teachers are aware that you cannot go on with the notion that all students know how to read. So, if you go back to the basics with phonics and phonemic awareness and make sure that children are aware of rhyming words and aware of sounds that letters make and how they are put together, and suffixes and prefixes then is when you will be able to build a more proficient reader in your classroom.

Participant Davis stated the following:

> I think one of the major factors in developing a proficient reader is, I think phonics and phonemic awareness. You know, without those things you just can't tell a child, say read that word. You know there are some prerequisites that come before a child is set out to read.

Participant Smith stated the following:

> I know that the children may not have the experiences that they need in order to be successful at that moment. So it is my job to be sure that I give them those experiences. Whether it is just letter recognition, learning sounds, learning blends, matching letters with sounds, environmental

print. I try to give them as much exposure as I can with literature. A big

component of that is vocabulary, teaching vocabulary reading stories.

The participants felt that improving basic literacy skills would improve student

achievement in reading.

Theme 2: Reading Practice

All 9 participants believed that reading daily is an important factor in student

reading achievement. Research supports the contention. According to Allington (2014),

reading volume is directly related to reading fluency and reading achievement.

Participant Brown, said, "The only way to learn to read is to read on a daily basis."

Participant Green said, "They got to read. They got to read read, read, read. And not only

that, we have to read to our children as well." The participants encouraged their students

to read on a daily basis through the use of silent sustained reading and reading logs.

Participant Williams said, "We do silent sustained reading each day. Silent sustained

reading allows each individual student to read at their own pace with their own selected

book." Each participant reported a dedicated block of time within their daily schedule for

reading. Sixty-six percent of participants indicated that they use reading logs in their

classroom for students to record their daily reading. When I asked the question; what do

you consider to be the major factors in developing proficient readers, Participant White

replied:

Reading, practice reading. Learn to read by reading. And what I have

found to be quite effective this year is choral reading. That way the non-

reader is not singled out, or that child that does not know the words. They

are not singled out because they are all reading together.

Read alouds are another common classroom reading practice that all of the

participants used. Read alouds were used in different capacities and across the

curriculum. According to Participant White:

I use read alouds to build vocabulary, to introduce a new subject, to build

background for science and social studies, to build interest and sometime

just to introduce a current topic.

Participant Jones said:

We may use read alouds to start the day or to introduce a lesson. It also

supports other content areas such as science and social studies and even

math. And also, I use it to familiarize students with text structures and

genres.

Participant Green noted, "I use read alouds to build background knowledge, to make

connections. Also to model fluent reading and I use mentor text to teach certain

strategies."

The importance of daily reading practice was clearly evident in the participants'

responses as well as classroom observations.

Theme 3: Classroom Environment

I asked the participants, does your classroom have a library? If so, describe the

materials available in your classroom library. All of the participants have classroom

libraries.

Participant Smith stated:

> Okay, I do have a classroom library. We have two bookshelves. The main
>
> bookshelf has different compartments with different types of books and
>
> then we have a tall bookshelf. On that tall bookshelf, I display books that
>
> are specific to the content that I am teaching that particular week. So, one
>
> particular week I taught about the jungle. So I have jungle books that are
>
> there.

Participant Miller stated, "We have a classroom library with several different genres. Our media center has great books with different genres as well. We also have encyclopedias and dictionaries in our classroom library."

The classroom libraries have a variety of genres and reading levels. In addition to a classroom library, each classroom also had a word wall. Based on observations, each classroom was print a rich environment.

The second research question that guided this study was: How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to support student achievement and reading improvement? One theme emerged from the second research question, which was meeting students' needs.

Theme 1: Meeting Students' Needs

Differentiated instruction is an instructional strategy used by all of the participants to meet their students' individual needs. Participant Smith asserted:

> My literacy instruction is differentiated depending on the child. One thing
>
> that I try to do, I try to be sure I cover all of the modalities. Some children

are visual, some are auditory, some are kinesthetic, so when we are

working with our alphabet I make sure I have visual representation. I give

sound to it. Then they might have to match the uppercase with the

lowercase. For each child that is going to be different. Some of them learn

better through rhythm. They are rhythmic learners. So, I try to give some

rhythm to it. Some of them actually have to build it in order to get the

meaning of it. That's kind of how I differentiate.

According to participant Jones, "I do that by meeting with small groups, also students

have reading buddies. I vary the level of content; provide a variety of learning

environments. We have texts on CDs and our spelling and vocabulary lists are at different

readiness levels for children."

Participant Miller said, "I work with students in small groups. I so some whole group

instruction. I also do one on one instruction for those that may continue to struggle."

Participant Brown noted, "Through scaffolding and coaching. When I say coaching, I'm

talking about prompting at sometimes depending on the group of children I'm working

with small group, one on one."

All of the participants' lesson plans included differentiated instruction. Participant

Brown's lesson plans for Monday- Thursday documented the use of daily oral language

exercises, a video as the anticipatory set, shared reading, guided reading, and independent

reading. The Friday lesson plan indicated that weekly assessments would be

administered. For example, during shared reading time the lesson focused on identifying

facts and recording details from the story *City Treasures*. Then for guided reading,

students were to work in small groups to discuss the question of the week. Finally, during independent reading the students were to read silently as the teacher walks around the room listening for strategies in use. The lesson plan also called for guided practice and independent practice. During guided practice the lesson plan documented the use of an online game to help students identify prepositions. For independent practice the lesson plan indicated the students would complete a worksheet.

Participant William's lesson plans for Monday-Thursday documented the use of shared reading, word study, and intervention. For shared reading the lesson plan indicated the teacher would model the strategy of identifying the main idea of a story by reading paragraphs to the students. During word study the lesson plan documented the students would listen to a Flocabulary song on suffixes and prefixes and the teacher would provide examples of words ending in -ing, -es, -s, and -ed. The lesson plan also included a read aloud of the book *Mildred's Ostrich*. The lesson plan documented intervention in the form of small group instruction based on the needs and interest of the students. The activities included Compass Learning, Turtle Diaries, and Learning Farm activities.

Participant Smith's lesson plans documented the use of differentiated instruction in ELA in the form of the literacy circle, small group literacy time, center time, story time, and music and movement. During the literacy circle, the lesson plans document the study of blend phonemes. The lesson plan indicated that during small group literacy time, groups of students worked on activities with guidance from the teacher. The activities listed for center time included media and technology, pretend and learn, ABC fun, writing, and art. The lesson plan documented the repeated read aloud of the books *Pecos*

Spill and the Wild Weather and *Rain, Rain,* and *Go Away*. During music and movement the lesson plans indicated the students would play games and participate in-group activities.

Participant Green's plans documented differentiated instruction through the use of daily orals, anticipatory set, direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. The lesson plan indicated the daily oral was an opportunity for the teacher and students to review the previous day's homework and complete a daily fix-it activity. The anticipatory set included videos, games, and read alouds. During direct instruction, the lesson plan indicated the teacher would introduce sounds, amazing words, and introduce the skill of classifying and categorizing. The students were allowed to practice skills learned during guided practice. The activities included classifying and categorizing using the book *My Skills Buddy*. For independent practice the lesson plan indicated the students would complete writing activities.

During my classroom observations, I saw eight out of nine participants differentiate instruction during their lesson.

The third research question that guided this study was: How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target district? One theme was derived from the third research question, which was lifelong learning.

Theme 1: Professional Development

All nine participants believed that district level and school level professional development provided adequate support for the teaching of reading. Eight out of nine

participants had attended a reading professional development in the current school year. According to Participant Davis:

> We've attended several different reading professional developments. Every second and fourth Tuesday there is a reading professional development. There is one we've taken about strategies in reading. It is given every year; I think it is like a six-week course. We are always learning different strategies in reading to help us with the children.

Participant Jones said:

> I've attended a phonics awareness strategies session. That the district provided. In that particular one they actually did more like a make and take. So it was turning phonics instruction and phonemic awareness into some hands on activities for the students.

Participant Johnson stated:

> Alright, we have attended; we're talking about the standards. I have also attended a workshop for how best to use our reading series, which was a great big help. These workshops were conducted by teachers themselves. So, it was teacher friendly, and easy to implement into my classroom. And oh yeah, I also took a class, a reading course last semester. Just talking about reading, how to best get students to read and it was a great help. I took that course last semester.

Participant White was the only participant who had not recently attended any reading professional development. The participant stated, "I wish I had attended some recently. I

haven't attended any reading professional development recently. In the past though, I have taken specific reading courses and have gone to reading conferences."

The fourth research question that guided this study was: What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best support student achievement in reading? Two themes emerged from the fourth research question. The themes were communication and home environment

Theme 1: Communication

All of the participants felt that communicating with parents about their child is necessary to foster good home school relationships and to keep parents informed. The participants used various methods to communicate with parents. The modes of communication included behavior charts, newsletters, progress reports, notes home, phone calls, messages with a student's siblings, parent conferences, Class Dojo, and Remind to communicate with parents. Class Dojo is an online classroom management tool. Parents are able to see instant updates of their child's behavior and academic achievement. Remind is a text message service, where teachers are able to send group text messages to parents without giving out his/her cell phone number. Participant Williams stated:

> I send a weekly newsletter home each Friday that tells the parents what we will be working on the following week. And so with this newsletter they have a standard for each subject. Even with reading they have the vocabulary that we will be working on and that's done every Friday.

Progress reports are sent home every two weeks on Thursday which

allows the parents to know how their child is doing at that present level.

Participant White said, "Of course there are conferences, but now with technology, I love

Class Dojo so that parents get immediate contact or information. Also, I use Remind,

which is an instant text sent out for homework purposes."

According to Participant Smith:

We have phone conversations, we have daily behavior logs where we

express information to them on that behavior log. There is a section for if

there are any comments. Parents are, they know that we have an open door

policy. They are welcome to come in at any time and participate in the

lesson that is going on. We send home newsletters weekly that deal with

what's going on in the unit, different things that will be happening at

school and in the classroom. Outside of that if we see any special

concerns, or say for instance, the child struggled with a particular lesson

that day, then we do individual sheets that we will send home with

additional samples or activities that they can do at home.

Theme 2: Home Environment

In one of the interview questions I asked the participants, "In your opinion, what

role does parental involvement paly in the reading achievement of students?" All of the

participants felt that parental involvement is one of the most important factors in the

reading achievement of students. The home environment encompasses parent's activities

and resources available at home.

Participant Miller stated:

> Well, I think it plays a major role. A lot of students, you know you can tell
>
> that they go get help at home and those may be the ones that are proficient.
>
> But a lot of the strugglers you'll see that there is no homework done,
>
> reading logs are not completed. So you can see that the lack of parental
>
> involvement is continuing at home as well. I think a lot of students never
>
> even visited their county library. So, just the mere fact that some children
>
> don't even have a book, a single book at home. Their exposure, I think it
>
> makes that achievement gap so great because it's so many different levels
>
> of learning and some of them aren't exposed to different things. And you
>
> know, I wish everyone could be more exposed to a literate print rich
>
> environment.

Participant Davis said:

> Parental involvement plays a huge role. I always say, you can't get it all in
>
> the classroom. For example, we send out reading logs every month and the
>
> children only need to read twenty books for that month. And you know a
>
> lot of times you hear children day, well, I don't have a book at home. We
>
> always tell them, read the newspaper, read the Bible, whatever is
>
> available. Read a magazine, whatever your mom has available. So many
>
> children, I think a cereal box is in the average house, read something that's
>
> on the cereal box that you can or get someone to help you. And with this
>
> reading log, these children have to read day by day or night by night, with

that who do you expect to read with them? A parent, aunt, uncle

grandparent, anyone that's living in the house.

Participant Smith stated:

Parental involvement is major, because if I'm doing it here, I need backup

support at home. When we go over vocabulary, vocabulary is sent home to

encourage parents to use those terms at home to extend the child's

vocabulary. Manipulate it in different ways. Parental involvement with the

Teach Me to Read [series], how far they go with it depends on parents

reading with them at home. Because if they can come back, they can read

it with no problem, then they progress to the next lesson. So, at this point,

parental involvement is a major part in them progressing in the Teach Me

to Read series.

According to Participant White:

I think the best thing parents can do for reading development is to give

their child a wide variety of experiences. Speaking to them, helping them

to have, because I find that some children with it come to comprehension,

can't comprehend a certain reading story because of their experiences.

That story might be so different from anything that they have experienced.

So I just think, develop that vocabulary and give them a wide variety of

experiences. Show them that reading is not just for reading in school, but

there is a purpose for reading everywhere, at the grocery store as you ride

by and see signs.

Participant Green stated:

> The parent has to be involved. That's one of the things that's at the very
>
> top in bold letters in my newsletter is for parents to make sure that your
>
> child read at least 60 minutes home. Because they are only getting like 30
>
> minutes of independent reading. And I feel as though they need more that
>
> that even during the school day. So, I figured I would push the other 30
>
> minutes at home.

According to Participant Williams:

> Without parents, reading achievement would be nothing. Parental
>
> involvement is important because that is the way that students are initially
>
> introduced to words, to sounds, to speaking, to language. The words and
>
> the sounds that the parents are speaking to their children when they are
>
> first born, I believe plays a big part in reading achievement.
>
> Environmental print is something that babies see at a early age and they
>
> see that all the time. Mostly with parents, when they are in their cars,
>
> when they are at home, when they are watching TV. So, the more parents
>
> are involved, the higher the achievement I do believe it would be in
>
> reading.

Evidence of Quality

This qualitative case study followed all ethical rules for conducting research. Prior

to beginning the data collection; I obtained a letter of cooperation from the research site

and district as well as Walden University's IRB approval (approval # 03-25-16-0174432).

I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) "Protecting Human Research

Participants" training (Certification Number 1694788) to ensure human subjects are

protected. I received participants' consent (Appendix B). Data were collected in the form

of interviews, classroom observations, and documents analysis. I assigned each

participant a pseudonym to protect his or her privacy. Interviews were audiotaped. I used

an interview protocol during each interview. Observation notes were taken using an

observation protocol. The first step in the data analysis process was organizing the data. I

transcribed each interview verbatim. I typed handwritten observation notes. Data was

manually coded. I organized the codes into broad themes. I read and reviewed my

findings multiple times. I continued to analyze the data until I reached saturation. I used

data triangulation and code-recode, and reflexivity to enhance trustworthiness. I

attempted to set aside all personal biases about the topic in order to analyze the data

fairly.

Triangulation. Triangulation is the process of establishing the validity of a study

by examining data from different perspectives (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011; Miles

& Hubermann). I reviewed nine interview transcripts, nine observation logs, and nine

teacher lesson plans looking for common patterns. I identified six themes from the three

data points. Triangulation allowed me to establish the validity of my study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers,

for low student achievement in reading. I addressed teachers' perceptions of the gap in

practice in reading instruction. The conceptual framework that guided this study is the

ecological theory that postulates that students' academic achievement is influenced by several subsystems. The microsystem, which includes family and school and the mesosystem, which is the interaction of two systems were examined in this study. According to the theory, a person's environment and the people in it helps to shape their growth and development. The microsyetem is the system in which students have the most interactions. Parents and teachers are members of the microsystem. The findings of this study indicated that the interaction of the family and school systems impact students' reading achievement. The ecological theory supports the notion that children's educational success requires positive interactions between home and school. The teacher participants contended that what happens at home directly impacts how a child performs at school. For example, children who are exposed to early literacy activities are more likely to have a high level of academic achievement (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2013). On the other hand, children who are not exposed to early literacy activities are less likely (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison). The ecological theory takes into consideration multiple systems and how they relate to the academic achievement of children. The framework seeks to understand phenomenon in real-life situations (Yin, 2008). This study investigated teacher perceptions of how teacher effectiveness, professional development, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement influence student achievement in reading.

I sought the assistance of the school principal in identifying ELA teachers to participate in the study. I protected the participants' identities by using pseudonyms to replace the teachers' names. It is important to maintain confidentiality in research. Data

was collected using audiotaped one-on-one interviews, observations, and documents. The interviews were transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. Data was manually coded; the codes were used to develop broad themes. Seven themes emerged. The themes were back to basics, reading practice, classroom environment, meeting students' needs, professional development, communication, and home environment. The participants believed that reading proficiency is closely related to students' attainment of basic literacy skills such as phonics, phonemic awareness, rhyming words, word families, high frequency words, vocabulary, and fluency. The teachers also believed that students should read every day. In addition, participants believed that the classroom should be a print rich environment with a variety of resources. Differentiation is a strategy used by all of the participants to meet students' individual needs. The participants believed that school and district level professional development is adequate to equip them with the skills necessary to teach reading. With regard to parental involvement, the participants believed that communicating with parents is important. The teachers also believed that parental involvement and the home environment were two of the most important factors in student achievement in reading. The validity of the data was established using triangulation, code-recode, and reflexivity. In the section that follows I will discuss the project.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the reasons, as

perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. I analyzed data from

teacher interviews, classroom observations, and teacher lesson plans. The data indicated

that the teacher participants believed there is a need for increased parental involvement in

reading. Section 3 includes a description of the project that I developed based on the

findings of this study. This section includes the project description and goals, the

rationale, and a review of literature. In addition, the required project resources, existing

supports, and barriers are included in this section. Finally, Section 3 provides the project

implementation, roles and responsibilities, the evaluation plan, and project implications

as they relate to positive social change. The project that I developed is a family literacy

program. The project will include three family literacy workshops. After the workshops, I

will add the information to the school's existing parent resource area to allow parents

access to resources from the workshops. In addition, I will create a blog to allow parents'

access to resources online.

Rationale

According to the Walden University EdD Project Study Checklist-Qualitative

(Walden University, n.d.), there are four basic genres of projects. The genres are:

evaluation report, curriculum plan, professional development/training, and policy

recommendation with detail. I did not choose evaluation report as my project genre

because my study was not an evaluation study. According to Lodico, Spaulding, and

Voegtle (2010), program evaluation is done to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a program. Program evaluations are done for decision making purposes. I did not choose curriculum plan as my project genre. A curriculum plan is a plan for teaching standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). I was not interested in changing the current curriculum used at the school under study. I did not choose policy recommendation as the genre for my study because I was not interested in changing any policies that are in place.

Based on the findings presented in this study, professional development/training was the most appropriate genre for my project. The school administrators identified increasing the percentage of students in grades three, four, and five who scored met and above on ELA section of the state standardized test (School Improvement Plan, 2014).

The family literacy program was developed as the project for this study in response to the need for increased reading proficiency. The project is a family literacy program that seeks to equip parents with strategies and resources to help them facilitate the reading achievement of their children. The genre is appropriate to address the problem of low student achievement in reading; all nine study participants indicated that parents' playing an active role in their child's education is an important factor in the reading achievement of students. Read to Succeed (2014), legislation passed in the southeastern state where the target Title I school is located, focused on improving student achievement in reading. A key component of Read to Succeed is the development of home-school partnerships involving parent support of reading at home. The professional development/training has the potential to develop home-school partnerships through the

family literacy program. Education should be a collaborative effort between parents, students, and teachers (Sarmento & Freire, 2012). The ecological theory, the conceptual framework that informed this study and guided the development of the project, also supports the assertion that home and school interactions affect student development and academic achievement (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams & Keating, 2009). Professional development/training was selected as the genre for the project because it allowed me to use the study findings, the ecological theory, and Read to Succeed to create a family literacy program with the goal of increasing parental involvement in reading.

Review of the Literature

I conducted the literature review by searching databases available through the Walden University Library and the Internet. I used the following databases: Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and LearnTechLib. I used the Internet to locate books, articles, and websites. I also used Google Scholar to locate scholarly resources available on the Internet. I used the following keywords in the databases to locate data for the study: *professional development, effective professional development, family literacy programs, home literacy environment, parent engagement, parental engagement and technology,* and *educational technology.* I focused my search primarily on articles published within the last 5 years. The first section of this literature review includes literature about the development/training genre that I selected for the project. I provide literature to support my selection of a family literacy program as the project for this study in the final portions of the literature review.

Professional Development

The purpose of PD is to improve teacher instruction (Curwood, 2011). PD is defined as:

Activities that—(a) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and (b) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused (Learning Forward, n.d. , para. 3).

There are two types of PD: traditional and nontraditional (Bayar, 2014). Traditional PD includes workshops and conferences. Nontraditional PD includes mentoring, peer coaching, professional learning communities, and action research.

Teacher quality is a major factor in student achievement (Bayar, 2014; Brown & Militello, 2016; Kostadinovic, 2011). Teachers come from different educational backgrounds. Some teachers are not prepared to teach (Bayar, 2014).

PD is used by administrators to increase teacher competencies. According to Holm and Kajander (2015), continued PD helps teachers gain new knowledge and provides support. PD varies from school to school. PD is an important factor in teacher effectiveness, researchers do not agree on what constitutes effective PD (Bayar, 2014).

According to Curwood (2011), effective PD focuses on the content area being taught, is hands on, and related to teachers' previous experiences. Effective PD provides multiple opportunities for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues throughout the course of a school year (Curwood, 2011). Polkinghorne (2013) states that "effective PD requires active learning, coherence, content, duration, and collective participation" (2013 p. 37). Brown and Militello (2016) list the following as the best PD practices:

1. continuous and ongoing professional growth opportunities;

2. collaboration with experts and peers;

3. sustained examination of student learning;

4. addressed contextualized needs;

5. monitored trial implementation;

6. measured outcomes by multiple metrics;

7. focus on instructional matters;

8. practice, practice, practice; and

9. reflection on practice and measure of trials to re-inform future modified implementations and innovations (p. 705).

Three recurring qualities of effective PD that were found in the literature are that PD should be hands on, allow for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues, and include multiple sessions over the course of a school year (Bayar, 2014; Curwood, 2011; Polkinghorne 2013).

PD is often designed without input from teachers. To maximize its effectiveness, it is important to gain insight from teachers when designing PD (Byar, 2014). Byar found

that teachers perceived PD to be most effective when it addressed existing teacher needs, addressed existing school needs, allowed for teacher input, was hands-on, long term and have well qualified instructors. In a mixed-methods study, Polkinghorne (2013) examined teachers' perceptions of PD. The study findings indicated that teachers preferred instructors with content knowledge. Teachers also wanted to receive PD that was easy to apply to their classrooms. In addition, teachers favored voluntary PD opportunities over mandatory PD. Finally, the teachers in the study felt that conferences and lectures were less effective than hands-on activities and collaborating with their peers. According to Brown and Militello (2016), school principals have the ability to positively influence PD in their schools. Principals know their staff better than district level and state level administrators. Teachers and principals are two groups of people who should be actively involved in the planning and implementation of PD at their schools.

PD/training is the genre of my project. PD is the most common form of continuing education for teachers (Brown & Militello, 2016). The project for this study is a family literacy program. The PD/training genre is most appropriate for my project because, like effective professional development, family literacy programs equip parents with strategies to improve the reading achievement of their children, are hands-on, collaborative in nature, and provide multiple opportunities to learn. In the paragraphs that follow, I provide a review of current literature on family literacy programs.

Family Literacy Programs

Parents play an important role in the education of their children. The ecological theory helped to shift literacy intervention from child focused to family focused (Doyle,

2012). Family literacy programs can equip families with skills necessary to support student literacy, which can facilitate better home school relationships (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2015). There are various definitions of family literacy programs. Family literacy programs are "interventions that enhance family members' literacy skills through an intergenerational focus"(as cited in Kumar, 2016 p. 38). Barratt-Pugh and Rohl (2015) defined family literacy programs as programs that "introduce families to strategies that support young children's literacy in ways that potentially help bridge the gap between home and school" (p. 4).

Researchers suggested that family literacy programs could have a positive impact on parents and students. For example, family literacy programs can improve children's academic achievement (Steiner, 2014), language and literacy skills (Anderson, Anderson, & Gear, 2015; Roberts, 2013), behavior (Wilkins & Terlitsky, 2015b), school attendance (Portwood, Brooks-Nelson & Schoeneberger, 2015), and cognitive and social emotional development (Baker, 2013). Benefits for parents who participate in family literacy programs include improved parenting skills (Portwood, Brooks-Nelson & Schoeneberger; Roberts, 2013; Robinson, 2012; Wilkins & Terlitsky), increased literacy skills (Robinson; Terlitsky & Wilkins, 2015a), better critical thinking skills (Robinson), and better parent-child communication (Barratt-Pugh & Maloney, 2015).

While there are many benefits of family literacy programs, they have faced criticism. Some researchers argue that family literacy programs ignore families' cultures and existing home literacy practices in favor of more formal literacy practices (Anderson, Anderson, & Gear, 2015). Other critics claim that family literacy programs can be

ineffective because they are developed without input from participants (Kumar, 2016).

Parents' needs should be considered when implementing programs. According to Galarza

and Watson (2016), it is important that materials are user-friendly and to meet parents

"where they are" (p. 15). Programs should also include input from parents in the

planning, execution, and evaluation of programs (Kumar, 2016; Swain, Brooks, &

Bosley, 2014; Timmons & Pelletier, 2015).

Most parents want to be more involved in their children's education but lack the

skills to do so (Serres & Simpson, 2013). Family literacy programs can equip parents

with the skills necessary to be more actively involved in the education of their children.

Parents are their children's first teachers (Hammack, Foote, Garretson & Thompson,

2012). The participants of this study acknowledged the home environment as a key factor

in student achievement in reading. The home literacy environment includes anything that

contributes to a child's language skills (Niklas & Schneider, 2014). For example, the

number of books in a home, how often children read or are read to, how often parents

read, time watching television, and public library usage (Niklas & Schneider, 2013;

Niklas & Schneider). Family literacy programs can help to improve the home literacy

environment (Niklas & Schneider). Family literacy packs are literacy materials such as

books, flash cards, games, and worksheets that are packaged together around a common

theme or learning goal (Hammack, et al., 2012). Families take the packs home, work on

the skills together, and return the pack at the next family literacy program meeting.

Family literacy programs can improve home literacy environments through the use of

family literacy packs.

Family literacy programs engage parents in the education of their children. To effectively plan a family literacy program, it is important to understand the components of successful family literacy programs. A one-time workshop is less effective than a program that includes multiple meetings. According to Kumar (2016), family literacy programs are most effective when they are presented as a comprehensive program rather than isolated components. Learning does not occur in a vacuum; information taught in family literacy programs should be applicable to real-world situations (Timmons & Pelletier).

Family literacy programs are delivered in different formats. Programs range from formal to informal and vary in length. There are two program formats: parents only and parent-child programs (Wasik & Herrmann, 2012). Parents only programs are programs in which the delivery is parent-centered and parents are the only attendees. Parent-child programs are programs where parents and their children attend together. Parent-child programs provide content for both parents and children. Parent-child programs are more effective because they facilitate interaction (Timmons & Pelletier, 2015; Wilkins & Terlitsky, 2015). No two family literacy programs are alike because the populations that the programs serve are different.

Family Literacy Program Models

The Kenan Model emerged as an early family literacy program model in the late 1980s. The model was developed by the Kenan Trust Family with the goal of breaking "the intergenerational cycle of undereducation and poverty by improving parent's skills and attitudes toward education, by improving children's learning skills, by improving

parent's childcare skills, and by uniting the parents and children in a positive educational experience" (Darling & Haynes, 1989 p. 44). The Kenan Model has four components: early childhood education, adult education, parent-child together time, and parent time. Decades later, the model is still one of the most widely used family literacy program models and has influenced the development of other models in the United States and abroad (Anderson, Anderson, & Teichert, 2013; Doyle, 2012). One program inspired by the Kenan Model is The Even Start Family Literacy Program.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program is a federally funded family literacy program. The goal of the program is "to improve literacy of parents and children simultaneously through a partnership with the school and community" (Robinson, 2012 p. 20). The Even Start Family Literacy Program is based on the Kenan Model and includes the four components of early childhood education, parenting education, adult education, and parent-child activities (Robinson, 2012). Robinson found that Even Start Family Literacy Program participants had better parent-child relationships, increased literacy skills, and improved critical thinking skills.

Parent University is a family engagement program developed by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The objective of Parent University (PU) is to engage parents in their children's education. "The program model is based on the premise that by inviting parents to participate in activities designed to facilitate in their child's education, schools can not only enhance communication with parents, but also begin to build trust with is an integral part for parent involvement" (Porthwood et. al, 2015 p. 146).   PU is structured as a parents only program. The focus of PU is not solely literacy; however literacy is a key

component. Parents are able to attend workshops and classes in four categories or "strands" which are: (a) Parenting Awareness, (b) Helping your Child Learn in the 21st Century, Health and Wellness, and (c) Personal Growth and development (Porthwood et. al, 2015). To attract more parents, PU workshops and classes are held at various times and locations. The researchers found that there is a positive relationship between parent attendance in PU and student attendance in school and academic achievement.

Family Literacy in ConTEXT is a family literacy program for fourth graders and their families. The goal of the program is to "create stronger communication skills in students and parents through a series of language arts activities that promote collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation" (Chasek & Rosen, 2011 p. 58). The program is based on the Rutgers Family Involvement Model. According to the model, the following components must be in place for programs to be successful:

1. Time and space in schools for families to learn mathematics, science, art, technology or engage in literacy activities together in an informal, cooperative, non-threatening atmosphere.

2. The use of inexpensive and readily available manipulative materials, as well as technology and tools that can be found at home to encourage parents to continue working with their children after the session is over.

3. A focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills and strategies that will reduce frustrations and increase the willingness

to accept new challenges or create new ways to look at old
challenges.

4. The encouragement of *all* children, especially females and
   minorities, to see themselves, and their gender, race and culture, as
   contributors to the future worlds of language, mathematics,
   science, art and technology.

5. A commitment to dialogue and collaboration among parents,
   teachers, and schools.

6. Information, resources, and role models for parents and their
   children to learn about how to think and to prepare for future
   careers. (Chasek & Rosen, 2011 p. 59)

Sessions based on the Rutgers Family Involvement Model are structured as a "dinner party" (Chasek & Rosen, 2011). The programs begin with "hors d' oeuvres" which are opening activities, then transition to the "main course" which is the main activity, the final activity is "dessert" which includes closing activities and feedback (Chasek & Rosen, 2011 p. 60). The program format is one that parents and students from all walks of life can identify with.

The previous section of the literature review supports the development of a family literacy program as the project for this study. One component of the project is to develop an online resource for parents to access information from the family literacy program workshops. In the next section of the literature review, I discuss technology that would be useful in engaging parents.

Engaging Parents Using Technology

The ecological theory supports the assertion that what happens at home has an impact on students' performance in school. Students should be learning at home and at school (Ponciano, 2014). According to Olmstead (2013), home-based parental involvement has the greatest impact on student learning. The Internet and educational technology provides an opportunity to engage parents in their children's education virtually (Ford, 2015). While the digital divide still exists, it is important to note that 86% of adults in the United States aged 18-29 and 83% of adults aged 30-49 in the United States have smartphones with access to the Internet (Pew Research Center, 2015). Parent engagement in their children's education is a proactive measure (Olmstead, 2013). A family literacy program blog would be a communication tool that could facilitate parent engagement.

Parent-Teacher communication is essential to foster strong home-school relationships. Online communication can have a positive impact on home-school relationships (Ozcinar & Ekizoghu, 2013). Traditional parent communication methods such as sending home memos, newsletters, and calling parents can be ineffective means of communication and parent involvement (Ozcinar & Ekizoghu, 2013). A blog is a non-traditional method of communicating with parents. Technology allows schools to communicate with parents is multiple ways. "A blog is an online journal, a small website, where regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other material such as pictures, video, and/or links can be posted" (as cited in Powell & McCauley, 2012 p. 21). Bruder (2013 p. 30) listed the fundamental purpose of blogs as "distributing information,

discussing (inviting student reflection), and demonstrating." Good blogs should include: "hyperlinks, graphics, videos, and photos, reflections, opinions, questions, answers" (Bruder, 2013 p. 32). Blogs facilitate teaching and learning outside of the classroom.

There are benefits of creating a blog rather than a traditional website. Tingen, Philbeck and Holcomb (2011), contended that traditional websites are less effective than blogs. First, creating a blog does not require much technological knowledge (Bruder, 2013; Deng & Yuen, 2011). Second, there are platforms such as Word Press, Blogger and Edublog that allow users to create blogs for free (Bruder; Larkin, 2012; Shana & Aublibdehb, 2015). Blogs display information in reverse chronological order (Deng & Yuen, 2011). Users will see the most recent postings first. Users can also subscribe to receive updates from the blog. Blogs foster interaction and collaboration (Deng & Yuen, 2011). Users can interact with blogs by commenting on postings. Post and comments can be created anywhere an Internet connection is available. Blogs are user friendly and are convenient for users to access (Powell & Wheeden, 2012). Blogs allow for self-expression and self-reflection (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Shana & Aublibdehb, 2015). Blogs can increase the knowledge of parents and children (Ozcinar & Ekizoglu, 2013), build closer relationships with parents and children (Ozcinar & Ekizoglu, 2013), and increase communication with parents (Powell & Wheeden; Ray, 2006).

Creating a family literacy blog would be an effective means to communicate with parents about the family literacy program workshops. In addition to a communication tool, the blog will extend the learning from the workshops into the homes of parents and students. Blogs are user friendly and allow users to interact. Parents and students can

benefit from educational blogs. In the section that follows, I will discuss the project description.

Project Description

The teacher participants in my study indicated that parental involvement is a key factor in the reading achievement of students. Based on the results of this study, a three-day family literacy program was developed. The goal of this family literacy program project is to increase parental involvement in reading by offering family literacy program workshops, creating a family literacy program blog, and making family literacy resources available in the school's parent resource room. The family literacy program will be comprised of three family literacy program workshops. The workshops will be held once a month. The program will be structured based on the Kenan Model. During each workshop the participants will participate in parents only, students only, and parent and student activities. In addition, family literacy packs will be made available for parents to check out. After each workshop, the workshop materials and resources will be posted to the family literacy program blog and made available in the school's parenting resource room.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The implementation of the project requires staff, facilities, physical, technological and financial resources. Most of the resources are available at the local school. The first support required is administrative support. The school administrators are onboard and are in support of the family literacy program. The workshop facilitators will include the school librarian, ELA teachers, reading interventionist, and the reading coach. The

workshops will be held in the school library and school cafeteria. A school custodian or other employee will be required to provide after school access to the building. The school has agreed to allow access. The workshops will require copies of workshop handouts and other resources, books, and games. The copies will be made using the copy machine and paper available at the school. The books and games will come from the school library. A laptop computer, projector, screen, and Internet connection are required to present the PowerPoint presentation and other computer based resources. The school has a laptop computer, projector, screen, and Internet connection available for use during the programs. Creating the family literacy program blog will require a laptop, Internet connection, and a free subscription to a blog host. I have a laptop, Internet connection, and subscription to Wordpress blog hosting. I will make copies of family literacy program resources and make them available in the parent resource center. I will use the copy machine and paper at the school to make the copies. The meals and snacks will require financial resources. I will solicit donations from local businesses.

Potential Barriers

The potential barriers of the proposed project include lack of family participation, unavailability of staff, and cost. While family literacy programs have well document benefits for parents and students, parents in the local community may not want to participate in the workshops. The workshops will be held on Saturdays, which is another potential barrier. Multiple methods will be used to recruit and retain attendees in the program workshops. The methods include making announcements on the intercom, sending out notices and emails, posting flyers in the school and local venues, and posting

information on the school website. The family literacy program blog will be a vehicle used to recruit and retain parents. Word of mouth is another method that will be used to help recruit parents. Teachers and other school personnel will be recruited to facilitate workshop sessions. Due to other commitments or lack of interest, some teachers may not be available for all of the sessions. In conjunction with the school administrators, we will form a team of ELA teachers and other staff who are passionate about improving student achievement in reading to serve as facilitators for the program. Cost is the final potential barrier. One of the greatest costs associated with the program will be food. Funding and donations of food will be solicited from local businesses. The school currently has the physical materials available to facilitate the family literacy program, however, the availability of funding and resources change. If cost becomes an issue, I will seek donations from the school staff and local community.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

After my final study is approved, I will contact the principal at the target Title I school to schedule a meeting to discuss this proposed implementation and timetable. After receiving approval from the site principal, I will schedule the workshops. The timeline for implementation includes the months of June, July, and August. The workshops will be held on Saturdays. Saturday was selected as the day of the week for the project in an effort to accommodate parents' work schedules. The project will consist of 3 full days of sessions. The format will include sessions for parents only, students only, and parent and child together time (PACT). Each workshop will begin at 8:30 a.m. with continental breakfast followed by the first breakout session at 9:00 a.m. Each day

will conclude at 3:00 p.m. After each workshop, the information from the workshop will

be made available on the family literacy program blog and in the parent resource room.

Parents will be encouraged to interact with the family literacy program blog.

Roles and Responsibilities

As the researcher, I developed the program based on the findings from my study.

My role in the family literacy program is as a program director and facilitator. As

program director, it is my responsibility to coordinate the implementation of the program

with school administrators and other personnel. As a facilitator it is my responsibility to

present at the family literacy program workshops. It is also my responsibility to create the

blog postings, monitor the blog, and interact with blog users. In addition, I am

responsible for ensuring that program materials are made available in the parenting

resource room. Upon the conclusion of the program, I am responsible for getting program

feedback.

The school administrators and personnel have additional roles and

responsibilities. The school administrators are responsible for ensuring facilities and

resources such as the copy machine and paper are available for use. The school

custodians are responsible for ensuring that we have access to the building. The ELA

teachers, reading interventionist, and reading coach have roles as facilitators. The

facilitators are responsible for presenting at workshops. The school librarian is

responsible for checking out family literacy packs to parents.

Parents and students have the role of program participants. The parent

participants' responsibilities include attending the workshops, interacting with the blog,

access materials from the parent resource room, and providing feedback after each workshop and upon the conclusion of the program. The students' responsibilities include attending workshops and providing feedback after each workshop and upon the conclusion of the program.

Project Evaluation Plan

The project is a three-day family literacy program. The program includes family literacy program workshops, creating a family literacy program blog, and making family literacy resources available in the school's parent resource room. The program has three goals:

Goal 1: To equip parents with strategies to facilitate the reading achievement of their children at home.

Goal 2: To foster a love of reading in children.

Goal 3: To strengthen family relationships.

The project will be evaluated using formative and summative evaluation. The key stakeholders are parents, students, program facilitators, and school administrators at the target Title I school. Additional stakeholders are local community members. The parent stakeholders are those of students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The students are students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The program facilitators include the researcher, ELA teachers, the reading interventionist, and reading coach. The school administrators include the site principal, assistant principal, and guidance counselor. The community members include local business owners and

residents who live near the school. All of the stakeholders are important for the implementation and evaluation of the family literacy program. Feedback will be gathered from the parents, students, school administrators, and program facilitators stakeholder groups.

Formative evaluation is evaluation that is conducted while a program is being developed or implemented. Parents and students will be asked to complete a paper evaluation after each workshop (See Appendix A). The simple evaluation will be in the form of an exit ticket. The data from each workshop will be used to improve the following workshop. Summative evaluation is evaluation that is conducted after the conclusion of a program. Parents will be asked to complete an evaluation after the conclusion of the three workshops (See Appendix A). The summative evaluation will allow the parents to provide feedback on the program as a whole. I will be using both formative and summative evaluation because I would like to get ongoing feedback during the program and feedback at the conclusion of the program. Program facilitators and school administration will meet at the conclusion of the program to review the evaluation data and reflect on the program as a whole. The overall evaluation goal is to use both formative and summative evaluation to determine if the family literacy program was effective in improving parental involvement in reading. The facilitators and school administrators will use the evaluation data to make a decision on if the program should be continued, modified, or canceled.

Project Implications

Local Level

On a local level, the family literacy program has the potential to bring about positive social change for parents, students, and teachers. The program can help to improve parental involvement in reading by equipping parents with the skills necessary to facilitate the reading development of their children. Parents can become more knowledgeable about home literacy activities, which in turn can improve students' achievement in reading. The project can help teachers by improving home school communication and relationships, getting parents active who may not have been active, and improving students' literacy skills. The family literacy program has the potential to increase parental involvement in reading, improve parents' and students' literacy skills, and bring about positive social change in the local school by creating a community of readers.

Far-Reaching

The family literacy program has the potential to positively impact reading achievement in a broader context. Other schools in the local school district, state and United States could use this program as a guide to develop family literacy programs. The programs can improve parent involvement in reading and parents' and students' literacy skills.

Conclusion

The proposed project for this study is a family literacy program. Section 3 discussed the project. The section included the rationale for choosing professional

development/training as the project genre, review of the literature on professional

development, family literacy programs, and engaging parents using technology, the

project description, potential resources and existing supports, potential barriers, proposal

for implementation and timetable, project evaluation plan and project implications.

Section 4 is the final section of the project study. In section 4, I will reflect on the project

study as a whole. The section will include a discussion of project strengths and

limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship, project

development, and leadership and change, reflection on the importance of the work,

implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introductions

I used the information gleaned from the literature review to create the project for this study; I developed a family literacy program. Section 4 includes a discussion of the project strengths, limitations, and plan for remediation of limitations. In addition, Section 4 includes recommendations for alternative approaches, a discussion of scholarship, project development, leadership and change, reflections, implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The major strength of the project is the family literacy program has the potential to have a lasting impact on the local school. The family literacy program can improve parental involvement and student achievement in reading. Upon the conclusion of the project, the program could be continued and expanded. Another strength of the project is that the project can be implemented using resources that the local school already has.

One of the study limitations is that not all parents will participate in the family literacy program, which will lessen the impact of the program. The project will include three full day family literacy workshops. Another limitation would be retaining the parents throughout the entire program. Parents may not attend all three workshops, which would also lessen the impact of the program. The limitations can be remediated by increased recruitment and retention efforts. Teachers, administrators, project facilitators, and other parents can help recruit and retain parents. I will use flyers, announcements,

automated calls home, the school website, and personal conversations to recruit and retain parents.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**</div>

Based on the findings of the study, the teachers indicated a need for increased parental involvement in reading. I approached the problem of low student achievement in reading from the parents' perspective. Alternative approaches such as producing a white paper, professional development for teachers, and forming PLCs for teachers could have been used to address the problem.

One alternative approach to increasing low student achievement in reading is to create a white paper. A white paper is a document written in a problem/solution format. First, the problem is presented and then the possible solutions are presented. White papers provide background information, a summary of research findings, and recommendations. First, the white paper would be presented to district administrators. After approval from the district administrators, the white paper would be presented to school administrators and teachers. In addition, after presentation to school and district personnel, the findings would be made available to parents and other community stakeholders.

A second alternative approach is to create PD for teachers. PD is an effective approach to increasing teachers' knowledge and skills (Holm & Kajander, 2015). PD should be ongoing (Brenna & Chen, 2013) active experiences that are specific to teachers' needs (Center for Public Education, 2013). The PD would focus on training teachers in strategies to improve parental involvement in reading.

A third alternative approach to improving parental involvement in reading is to create PLCs. According to D'Ardenne et al. (2013), a PLC is a group of people who work together to improve student learning through ongoing collaboration, research, and reflection. PLCs are teacher-centered; teachers can work together to find solutions to problems that are important to them. The teachers at the target Title I school identified improving parental involvement in reading as an issue that they felt was an important factor in increasing student achievement in reading.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

When I matriculated at Walden University I knew that scholarship was paramount. Over the years I have learned that scholarship means to keep growing and learning. Scholarship includes research, reading, and writing. As a researcher, it is important to reach saturation. I used databases available through the Walden University library and Google Scholar to locate peer reviewed articles for my study. Based on the literature, I was able to develop interview questions and the project for this study. As a reader, it is necessary to read critically, set aside biases, and read a wide range of literature. As a writer, I learned to present multiple perspectives even if they are contrary to my own beliefs. It is also necessary to support statements with references. It is important to accept constructive criticism. I learned very quickly not to take my reviewer's comments personally. Everything that I have learned in pursuit of my doctorate degree has helped me to become a scholar practitioner.

Project Development and Evaluation

The project was the culmination of my study. I learned that to develop a project effectively, I must first have a clear understanding of the problem that I would like to address. After identifying the problem, my next step was to determine the end result that I wanted to achieve. Using the backward design approach, I began the development of my project with the end in mind. The main goal of my project was to increase parental involvement in reading. After examining the data from my research and conducting a second literature review, I was ready to begin the development of my project. One of my biggest takeaways from the development of the project is that project development is not a linear process. I found that I often had to go back to a previous step before moving on in the development of the project. In addition, projects can evolve over time and can change during implementation. I decided to use formative and summative evaluation methods to evaluate the effectiveness of my project. I selected two types of evaluation methods because it would give me the opportunity to have data on each individual workshop as well as the program as a whole.

Leadership and Change

I remember learning about leadership styles in one of my previous Walden University courses. In that course, we talked at length about servant leadership. According to Greenleaf (n.d.), "A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong." At that moment, I realized that I would be a servant leader. My main purpose as a leader is to ensure that

those whom I work with and serve are growing and developing. The servant leadership style can bring about positive social change in my school and community.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

This has been an eye-opening experience. I have learned so much about myself, the teacher participants, and the local school in which the study took place. First, through my literature review, I learned the importance of parental involvement in reading. I learned during data collection that the teachers all want the best for their students and are willing to go the extra mile to ensure student success. The teachers all felt that parental involvement was paramount in student achievement in reading. During my project development, I leaned the importance of involving parents and students in family literacy programs to improve the effectiveness of such programs. Parents make a great difference in the reading achievement of their children. Not all parents understand their importance in their child's development and achievement; therefore, it is imperative that the school presents opportunities to educate the parents. Overall, I learned that I am a scholar-practitioner; I can overcome obstacles and achieve my goals.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

A family literacy program is my project for this study. The family literacy program seeks to improve parental involvement in reading. The project will equip parents with the skills necessary to facilitate the reading development of their children at home. Family literacy programs can improve parents and children's literacy skills, which have the potential to bring about positive social change in the local school and greater

community. Adults with adequate literacy skills can find better employment. Children with adequate literacy skills perform better in all subject areas.

This project can be adapted and used in other schools and subject areas. The model includes parent only time, children only time, and parent and children time. The project implementation requires little financial resources and makes use of materials available in the average school. Future research could include a broader scope of participants. For example, my study only included participants from one local school. The study could be expanded to study an entire school district or several schools within a district.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons, as perceived by teachers, for low student achievement in reading. There are several factors that contribute to low student achievement in reading. The findings from this project study indicated that parental involvement is one of the most important factors in reading achievement.

I developed a 3-day family literacy program for parents and students at the target Title I school. The project was developed based on the results of the data collection and review of relevant literature. The family literacy program has the potential to increase parental involvement in reading, improve parents' and students' literacy skills, and bring about positive social change in the local school by creating a community of readers.

In Section 4, I presented the project strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. In addition, I conducted self-analysis and reflections. Finally, I provided implications, applications, and directions for future research. As a scholar-

practitioner and project developer, I look forward to bringing about positive social

change.

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Appendix A: The Project

Family Literacy Program

Project Outline

The family literacy program will include three full day workshops. The workshops will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m.

- Location: workshops will be held in the school cafeteria and school library. One month prior to the workshop, confirm the location, dates, and time with school administration.

- Materials needed:

    o Laptop computer, screen, and projector

    o PowerPoint presentations

    o Books

    o Laptop computers and iPads

    o Paper, pens, crayons, scissors, glue tape

    o Copies of handouts

    o Chart paper

    o Copies of "exit slip" evaluation

- Workshop facilitators: ELA teachers, reading coach, reading interventionist, and school librarian. Additional personnel needed: school administrator, greeters and custodian. Confirm facilitators and other personnel one month prior to the workshop.

Family Literacy Program Day 1 Agenda
[Date to be determined]

Session Time	Activity/Presentation/Workshop
8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Registration Continental breakfast
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Opening presentation Icebreaker Transition to breakout sessions
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	**Breakout Session 1** Parents: Fostering a love of reading Students: Literacy Centers
11:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.	Morning Break
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.	**Breakout Session 2** Parents: Read aloud strategies Students: Read alouds
12:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.	Parent and Child Together Time (PACT) Families will work together to write and illustrate their own story using the prompt: Once upon a time there was a …
2:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Afternoon break
2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	PACT presentations Families will present their books to small groups
3:00 p.m.	**Evaluation of Day 1** Homework: Parents interact with the blog

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM
OPENING PRESENTATION
LAKESHIA DARBY DAWKINS

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

INTRODUCTIONS

- Researcher/Project Developer
- ELA Teachers
- Reading Interventionist
- Reading Coach
- School Librarian
- Families

PROGRAM GOALS

The goals of this family literacy program are:
- to equip parents with strategies to facilitate the reading achievement of their children at home.
- to foster a love of reading in children
- Strengthen family relationships

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM FORMAT

- The program includes 3-full day workshops.
- Each workshop is broken down into breakout sessions. Breakout sessions are:
  - Parents only
  - Students only
  - Parent and Children Together time (PACT)

ICEBREAKER

Find someone who activity

TRANSITION TO BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- Parents remain in cafeteria
- Students transition to media center

ICE BREAKER
Find Someone Who…

Directions: It is time to get up and move! Walk around the room to find someone who matches each statement and have them initial your sheet. No one person can initial your sheet more than one time. The first family to complete their sheet wins a prize!

1. Served in the military _____

2. Has the same number of children in their family as yours _____

3. Is wearing something red _____

4. Has traveled outside of the United States _____

5. Is in the 5th grade _____

6. Can roller skate _____

7. Plays a musical instrument _____

8. Is a member of a sorority or fraternity _____

9. Has been to Disney World _____

10. Has a dog _____

11. Reads everyday _____

12. Likes to dance _____

13. Was born in October _____

14. Is the oldest sibling in their family _____

15. Plays a sport _____

Literacy Centers

- BOGGLE
    - Students will use the BOGGLE sheets to create as many words as possible from the letters provided.
- Listening Center
    - Students will use the CD player, CDs, and books to listen to stories of their choice.
- Sight Word Play
    - Students will use magnets and lap boards to build sight words from sight word flash cards.
- Computer Center
    - Students will complete literacy activities on abcya.com
- Reading Buddies
    - Students will select books from the library to read with a partner or read to a stuffed animal
- Vocabulary Center
    - Students will complete word search and ABC order activities

BOGGLE
How many words can you find?

E	T	V	S
D	F	W	Y
O	S	A	O
I	G	D	O

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Listening Center Books and CDs

Baker, K. (2002). *Brave little monster*. New York: Scholastic

Lord, C. (2010). *Hot Rod* Hamster. New York: Scholastic

Piper, W. (2011). *The little engine that could*. New York: Scholastic.

Shannon, D. (1998). *A bad case of stripes*. New York: Scholastic

Slobodkina, E. (1999). *Caps for sale*. New York: Scholastic.

Wilson, K. (2009). *Bear feels scared.* New York: Scholastic.

Parent and Children Together (PACT) Time

Using the supplies provided on your table write and illustrate an original story using the prompt:

Once upon a time there was a …

You will present your story to a small group.

Family Literacy Program Day 2 Agenda
[Date to be determined]

Session Time	Activity/Presentation/Workshop
8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Registration Continental breakfast
9:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.	County Library Presentation Library card sign up Book Mobile tour
11:00 p.m. to 12:00 p.m.	**Breakout Session 1** Parents: Home literacy environments Students: Readers Theatre
12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.	**Breakout Sessions 2** Parents: Using poetry, nursery rhymes, and Seuss books to promote literacy. Students: Readers Theatre
2:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.	Afternoon break
2:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	PACT Time: Seuss Stations The families will rotate to three different Seuss themed centers. Center 1: Seuss mini books. Using craft supplies the families will make a mini book around a Dr. Seuss theme. Center 2: Oobleck The families will read the oobleck recipe. Then using cornstarch, water, and green food coloring the families will make oobleck. Each family will take home their own container of oobleck. Center 3: Wacky words BINGO The families will play BINGO together
3:00 p.m.	Evaluation of Day 2 Homework: Parents interact with the blog

Home Literacy Environemnts

Lakeshia Dawkins

Parents are Important!

✿ Achievement in reading cannot be accomplished only at school.

✿ Parents, schools, and communities need to work together to foster and encourage children's literacy development (Jeewek & Gerwin, 2012).

✿ Parents can make a significant impact on their children's lives.

You CAN Make a Difference!

✿ Parental involvement is related to fewer behavior problems in school, better attendance, lower dropout rates, and less grade retention (Fan & Williams, 2010; LaRocque et al., 2011).

✿ Parental involvement is also associated with increased learning and academic achievement (Fan & Williams, 2010; Wilder, 2014; Xu, et al, 2010).

✿ The benefits of parental involvement transcend race and type of community (urban, suburban, or rural) (Jeynes, 2003, Jeynes, 2005).

You CAN Make a Difference!

- ✿ Parents assist in developing literacy skills in their children (Buckingham, et al. 2013; Hawes & Plourde, 2005).

- ✿ Parental involvement makes the greatest difference in reading during the early years (Reglin et al. 2012).

What Happens at Home Matters

- ✿ The family and home environment have the largest influence on children (Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2013).

- ✿ Home-based parental involvement has a huge impact on student success.

- ✿ Home-based activities include parents providing homework help, reading with their children, and teaching their children school related skills.

What Happens at Home Matters

✿ Activities that promote reading achievement in children are not limited to school- related activities.

✿ Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman, (2013) found that students benefit from varied social and cultural communication.

✿ The following activities were associated with higher scores in reading: conversations with parents about general issues; discussions with parents about "books, film or TV; as well as political or social issues" (Hampden-Thompson, Guzman & Lippman, 2013 p. 255).

What Happens at Home Matters

✿ Eating meals together also improves reading development.

✿ Families who share meals often have time to talk during the meal, these conversations help with vocabulary and literacy skills development.

✿ Harris and Graves (2010) determined that cultural activities such as visiting museums, libraries, and zoos were associated with higher reading achievement.

What Happens at Home Matters

❖ Parents who stress the importance of reading to their children by modeling reading, have children who are more likely to read (Clark, 2010).

❖ Loera, Rueda, and Nakamoto (2011) found parents reading to their children, reading with their children and allowing the children choice in reading materials improved student engagement in reading.

❖ Parent-child communication about school is also linked to reading achievement (Patrick et. al 2011).

Strategies to Use

❖ Read together

❖ Model reading

❖ Eat dinner together

❖ Have conversations

❖ Play games

❖ Visit a library, museum, or park

❖ Help with homework

Readers Theatre

Readers Theater is a strategy that can increase fluency. Students read scripts aloud and perform the story.

1. Prior to the session scripts will be printed from the resources below:

    http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm

    http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html

    http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html

2. The students will be placed in to small groups. One adult will facilitate each small group. Groups will select a script.

3. The students will be assigned parts and will practice their parts.

4. Students will use props to perform their Readers Theatre story for the group.

PACT Time: Seuss Stations

The families will rotate to three different Seuss themed centers.

Center 1: Seuss mini books.
Using craft supplies the families will make a mini book around a Dr. Seuss theme.

Center 2: Oobleck
The families will read the oobleck recipe. Then using cornstarch, water, and green food coloring the families will make oobleck. Each family will take home their own container of oobleck.

<u>Oobleck Recipe</u>

Ingredients
-1 cup of water
- 1 ½ cup of corn starch
-a few drops of food coloring

Directions
-Add water to the bowl
-Slowly add in corn starch while mixing
-Add food coloring
-Once your oobleck has been made, place in container to take home

Center 3: Wacky words BINGO
The families will play BINGO together. BINGO cards will be generated using free BINGO card generator found at http://www.freebingomaker.com/

Family Literacy Program Day 3 Agenda
[Dates to be determined]

Session Time	Activity/Presentation/Workshop
8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Registration Continental breakfast
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	**Breakout Session 1** Parents: Accelerated Reader, STAR Reading, Achieve 3000 Students: Accelerated Reader, STAR Reading, Achieve 3000
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	**Breakout Session 2** Parents: Apps, websites, and tech tools to support literacy Students: Apps, websites, and tech tools to support literacy
11:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.	Morning Break
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 a.m.	**Breakout Session 3** Parents: Apps, websites, and tech tools to support literacy Students: Apps, websites, and tech tools to support literacy
12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.	PACT Time: Exploring technology resources that support literacy Each family will choose a different technology resource from a container. The families will explore their website/app and report back to the group about their resource.
2:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Afternoon Break
2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	PACT presentations
3:00 p.m.	Evaluation of Day 3 and the Family Literacy Program Homework: Parents interact with the blog
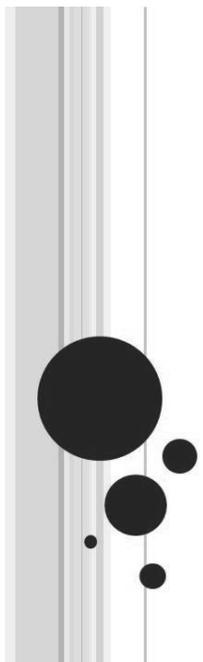
ACCELERATED READER
STAR READING
ACHIEVE 3000

LAKESHIA DARBY DAWKINS

OVERVIEW

- Renaissance Place
  - Accelerated Reader
  - STAR Reading
- Achieve 3000

RENIASSANCE PLACE

- Accelerated Reader
- Star Reading

ACCELERATED READER

- Accelerated Reader (AR) is a computer based system in which students take quizzes on books that they have read.
- Students receive a goal each nine weeks. To meet his/her goal students have to earn 100% of the points assigned with an 85% or higher average.

AR TOUR

- How to log in
- Take a sample quiz
- View your student's progress
- Using AR at home
- Questions?

STAR READING

- STAR Reading is a progress monitoring tool used to assess students' reading skills.
- STAR Reading Assessments are administered three times a year in the fall (usually August), winter (January or February), and spring (May).
- STAR Reading results are used to set AR goals.

STAR READING TOUR

- How to log in
- Take a sample assessment
- View your student's most recent STAR report
- Questions?

ACHIEVE 3000
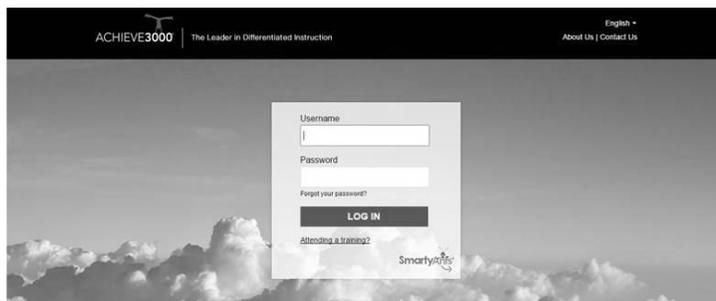
ACHIEVE 3000

- Achieve 3000 is an online differentiated instruction resource.
- Lessons are individualized based on students' reading levels.
- Achieve 3000 is used:
  - to build literacy skills
  - as an assessment tool
  - for intervention
  - for gifted and talented students

ACHIEVE 3000 TOUR

- How to log in
- Read an article
- Take a sample assessment
- View your student's ACHIEVE 3000 portal
- Using ACHIEVE 3000 at home
- Questions

Apps, Websites, and Tech Tools to Support Literacy

1. abcya.com
2. starfall.com
3. spellingcity.com
4. abcmouse.com
5. bookadventure.com
6. speakaboos.com
7. getepic.com
8. storylineonline.net
9. tumblebooks.com
10. storynory.com
11. pbskids.org
12. interactivesites.weebly.com/language-arts.html
13. BrainPOP Jr.
14. Bookabi
15. iBooks
16. My Word Wall
17. Booksy
18. gonoodle.com
19. activelylearn.com
20. bookopolis.com

PACT Time: Exploring technology resources that support literacy

Each family will choose a different technology resource from a container. The families will explore their website/app and report back to the group about their resource.

Parent Exit Slip

Circle Workshop Number   1   2   3

What I learned:

_____
_____

What I liked:

_____
_____

What can be improved:

_____
_____

Overall rating: ☆   ☆   ☆   ☆

1 star= horrible
4 stars= great

Comments:

_____
_____

Child Exit Slip

Circle Workshop Number   1   2   3

How did you like the books?

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

How did you like the family activity?

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Is there any thing you would like to tells about the program today?

_____
_____

1 star= I did not like, 2stars= I kind of liked, 3 stars= I really liked,   4 stars= I loved

Family Literacy Program Evaluation

Date: _____

Number of workshops attended: _____

The presentations and materials provided were useful for me as a parent.

strongly disagree   disagree   agree   strongly agree

The family activities helped me to bond with my child(ren).

strongly disagree   disagree   agree   strongly agree

I have used some of the strategies learned in the program at home.

strongly disagree   disagree   agree   strongly agree

I would recommend this program to others.

strongly disagree   disagree   agree   strongly agree

Overall, how would you rate the program?

poor   fair   good   excellent

If this program were continued would you attend? Why or why not?

_____

_____

Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the program?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Subject of E-mail: Invitation to participate in a doctoral study on factors influencing student achievement in reading

Dear Teacher,

I am a media specialist in a local school district. I am contacting you because you are an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in the school and I would like you to participate in my study titled "Factors Influencing Student Achievement in Reading."

I provide full details about the study and your rights as a participant in the attached letter of consent. If you are willing to help, please read the attached consent form then reply to this email with your preferred method of contact.

I know your time is valuable and greatly appreciate your participation.

Thank you,

Lakeshia Darby Dawkins

Appendix D: Teacher Interview Protocol

Teacher's Name (Pseudonym): _____

Date:_____

Years of Teaching Experience: _____

> RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions regarding effective classroom reading
>
> practices that improve student reading achievement?
>
> RQ2. How do teachers perceive and document differentiated instruction to
> support student achievement and reading improvement?
>
> RQ3. How do teachers perceive district level and school level professional
>
> development has supported the teaching of reading for students in the target
>
> district?
>
> RQ4. What parent involvement activities and strategies do teachers perceive best
> support student achievement in reading?
>
> Interview Template

1. What is your teaching philosophy when it comes to reading?

2. In what ways do you differentiate literacy instruction? (Differentiated Instruction)

    a. Tell me about how you use read-alouds in your classroom. What type of

       books do you use for read-alouds?

3. How do you promote independent reading? (Differentiated Instruction)

4. Describe the different types of reading resources your students have access to at

   school. (Differentiated Instruction)

    a. Does your classroom have a library? If so, describe the materials available

       in your classroom library.

5. Tell me about a typical reading lesson in your classroom. (Differentiated Instruction and teacher effectiveness)

6. What do you consider to be the major factors in developing proficient readers?

7. Describe some particular strategies that you do you use in your classroom to facilitate the reading success of your students. (Teacher effectiveness)

8. Describe a student who showed gains in reading after being in your class. (Teacher effectiveness)

    a. What would you consider the contributing factors to those gains?

9. Tell me about reading professional development that you have attended. (Professional Development)

    a. Were you able to implement any of the content from the Professional Development in your classroom?

10. If you were asked to develop reading professional development what would be the key components? (Professional Development)

11. In what ways do you communicate with parents about their child? (Parental Involvement)

12. In your opinion, what role does parental involvement play in the reading achievement of students? (Parental Involvement)

13. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix E: Observation Protocol

Teacher's Name (Pseudonym): _____ Grade Level: _____

Date:_____

Observation Start Time: _____ Observation End Time: _____
Number of Students: _____ #of Boys: _____ #of Girls: _____

Lesson Objective:

Description of the classroom:

Resources used during the lesson:

Differentiated Instructional Strategies Used:

Lesson Activities and Duration:

Classroom Management:

Student Grouping:

Other Observations/Notes:

Appendix F: Coding Matrix

Raw Data	Preliminary Codes	Final Code
Children are able to read Children can learn to read All kids can read Read in their own time If you teach a child, then the child will learn All children can read Every child learns to read at a different pace The more you read, the more you know	Ability to read	Reading Philosophy
Model what you would like for them to be able to do	Modeling	Abstract vs concrete
Read that book or story at least three times a week Read, read, read, read	Repetition	Repetition
Fiction, nonfiction, informational, encyclopedias, dictionaries, science, social studies, math, different holidays, novels, chapter books, different reading levels	Genres	Variety of genres
Phonics Phonemic awareness Letter sounds Sight words Letter recognition Rhyming words Word families Word wall High frequency words Introducing sounds Nursery rhymes Frye list Sounding out words Four Blocks Model Sound blends Matching letters with sounds	Basics	Back
Characters and setting		Literary elements
Whole group and small group Reading buddies Level of reading	Grouping	Grouping

Skill needs Small group Centers Literacy Circle Kagan Structure		
Learn to read by reading Sustained Silent Reading Reading for at least 20 minutes per day Read 60 minutes a day	Reading practice	Reading practice
Accelerated Reader Teach Me to Read Compass Learning Book It HeadSprout Study Island Tumblebooks Starfall Imagine Learning Scholastic	Reading programs	Reading programs
Teacher friendly professional development	Professional Development	Professional development
Choral reading, pair or peer reading, group reading, reading discussion, book conferences, back-to-back reading, shared reading	Grouping	Grouping
Reading log	Tracking reading	Reading practice
Rote reading Start from basics	Back to basics	Scaffolding
Parents reading Parents reinforce what's done at school Variety of experiences Exposure to literature	Parental involvement	Home environment
Builds confidence and better understanding	confidence	confidence
Calling parents, sending notes home, sending letters, sending notes, weekly letters, special notes, homework/behavior/ information worksheet	Communication	Parental communication

Conferences Class Dojo, newsletters		
Classroom library School library Have books at home Visiting the county library Not just books	Print rich environment	Exposure to literature
See family members reading at home Show them that I'm a reader	Home environment	Home environment
Read alouds daily Build vocabulary Introduce new subject Build background Build interest Introduce current topic	Modeling	Exposure to literature
Self selected reading Choose books on their level Select books that are of their interest	Student choice in reading material	Reading practice
IPad Texts on CD Educational games Educational videos	Educational technology	Educational technology
Book baskets Classroom library	Classroom environment	Classroom environment
Writing	Writing	Writing
Don't let them give up Building confidence	Motivation	Motivation
Vocabulary Prefixes Suffixes Breaking down words	Background knowledge	Back to basics