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Effects of Journeys Reading Intervention on Reading Achievement of Students With Disabilities

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Antre' Cloud

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2017

Abstract

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Disabilities

by

Antre' Cloud

MA, American Intercontinental University, 2009

BS, National University, 2008

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

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August 2017

Abstract

In Georgia, students with disabilities are falling behind students without disabilities in reading. Students with disabilities need to learn how to read fluently and comprehend because reading is embedded in all academic areas. Guided by LaBerge and Samuels's theory of automatic information processing in reading, the purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of the Journeys reading intervention on the reading achievement of students with disabilities using a comparative research design. The guiding research question for this quantitative project study addressed the difference in reading achievement scores for 3rd through 5th-grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading program and those who did not. The convenience sample consisted of 34 students with disabilities in Grades 3 through 5 during the 2013 and 2014 school years. Data from the 2013 and 2014 state reading assessments were collected and analyzed using a Mann-Whitney U Test. Results indicated that students with disabilities who received the Journeys program made more significant gains in reading than students who received the traditional program. The doctoral project included a program evaluation report that will be presented to the local school district. Social change implications include enhancing the reading achievement for students with disabilities through a more effective reading curriculum.

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Dedication

First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because without GOD nothing is possible. I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my phenomenal wife Ivory and beautiful daughters Charity and Chasity. My parents, Ronnie and Sharon, have been an integral part in making me into the man I am today. They have guided me with words of wisdom during my childhood to adulthood. My core belief system is based on faith, family, and love. My family has been instrumental to my success. Their love has been my motivation during this long journey. My family is the most important thing to me in this world. They inspire me to be great in life.

Next, I would like to thank my committee chair and committee members for their support, understanding, patience, encouragement, and excellent leadership throughout this process. I could not have completed this amazing accomplishment without all of the caring members of my team. The support of the team was the key to achieving the goals that I set forth.

Last, I would like to dedicate my dissertation to the memory of my beloved Nephew Kevon and Aunt Nadine who passed away while I was completing my doctoral program. Through their loving spirit, I was able to persevere during this difficult task without giving up. My research is dedicated to all educators who invest in the lives of students to make a difference. I am committed to changing the face of education and becoming a social change agent.

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Section 1: The Problem

According to the Georgia Department of Education (2013a), students with disabilities have been struggling in recent years on standardized testing. Most students with disabilities in the state of Georgia have not met the standards in reading the past several years. A possible cause for students with disabilities not meeting the standards could be the current reading curriculum (Gadoe, 2013b). Therefore, I conducted a project study to determine whether an alternative reading program, Journeys, increased reading achievement test scores of students with disabilities compared to a traditional reading program. The Journeys reading intervention is a program for struggling readers in Grades K-5. Journeys focuses on phonics, decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Journeys provides students who read below grade level with support to make growth in reading (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). The convenience sample consisted of 34 students with disabilities during the 2013 and 2014 school years. I examined students with disabilities' standardized reading test scores to determine which curriculum was more effective for reading achievement.

Definition of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study was that the local school district had not met the targeted goals for students with disabilities in reading in 2010 and 2011 (Gadoe, 2013c). The students with disabilities reading scores were lower than 40% proficiency. The state of Georgia targets for third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities in reading for 2010 and 2011 was 65% proficiency. The state target for fourth-grade students without disabilities in reading for 2010 and 2011 was 92% proficiency (Gadoe,

2013a). The state targets are set according to federal mandates from the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2006). The problem impacts third-through fifth-grade students with disabilities because reading test scores are declining. There are several likely factors contributing to this problem, including traditional reading curricula and instruction. I examined whether the Journeys reading intervention program would be more effective in producing proficient readers. The study contributed to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by examining the reading achievement of students with disabilities using a new reading intervention program.

National Reading Data for Fourth-Grade Students

The 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report showed the range of scores in reading for fourth-grade students included 208 (basic), 238(proficient), and 268(advanced). The minimum scale score was 180 and the maximum was 300. Fourth-grade students with disabilities scored 190 out of 300 in 2009 and 186 in 2011 in the content area of reading. The report showed a slight decline across the country for elementary students with disabilities in reading (NAEP, 2013). The report showed fourth graders at the top of the performance curve scored lower in 2011 than in 2009 (NAEP, 2013). The national average top scores in fourth grade declined from 269 to 266 (NAEP, 2013). Also, the report showed achievement levels in reading for fourth-grade students with disabilities below basic increased from 64% in 2007 to 65% in 2009 to 68% in 2011 (NAEP, 2013), meaning more fourth-grade students with disabilities were reading below basic level each year. Achievement levels in reading for fourth-grade students without disabilities below basic decreased from 37% in 2007 to 29% in 2009 to

23% in 2011 (NAEP, 2013), meaning fewer fourth-grade students without disabilities were reading below basic level each year.

In 2013, 69% of fourth graders with disabilities scored below proficiency on the NAEP reading test, showing performance far below grade-level standards. In comparison, in 2013 only 27% of fourth graders without disabilities did not meet grade-level standards on the NAEP reading test. According to these data, the current reading instruction that students with disabilities are receiving is not adequate to meet their learning needs. Research suggests that students with disabilities who struggle in reading due to their deficits need additional support through appropriate reading interventions (Edmonds et al., 2009; Scammacca, Roberts, Vaughn, & Stuebing, 2013; Solis et al., 2012); Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). Each year, the reading achievement of students with disabilities is declining at both the federal and the state school district level (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013)

State Reading Data for Fourth-Grade Students

According to Gadoe (2013a), fourth-grade students with disabilities in the state of Georgia who were in the general classroom less than 40% of the time scored 15.7% in 2010 and 15.1% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Fourth-grade students without disabilities in Georgia who were in the general classroom scored 89.6% in 2010 and 88.2% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the CRCT. Based on the data from the state's performance assessment from the previous 2 years, there was a significant achievement gap of 73 points between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in the content area of reading.

According to the NAEP and Gadoe reading assessment data, the current traditional reading program is not helping students with disabilities achieve reading proficiency, so a new reading program may be a possible solution to providing these students with the support they need to have academic achievement in reading (NAEP, 2013). At the local level, there is a significant achievement gap.

Local District Reading Data for Fourth-Grade Students

The local school district reported students with disabilities who were in the general classroom less than 40% of the time scored proficiently 23.5% in 2010 and 20.7% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the CRCT (Fulton County Board of Education, 2013). The local school district reported students without disabilities scored proficiently 96.8% in 2010 and 96.3% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the CRCT (FCBOE, 2013). According to the local data, fourth-grade students with disabilities are falling behind general education students in reading achievement using a traditional reading program; the reading achievement gap of students with disabilities has increased in recent years (FCBOE, 2013).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Over the past 5 years, students with disabilities have demonstrated a reading achievement gap compared to students without disabilities (Gadoe, 2013a). Hall and Kennedy (2006) found that states have made inconsistent progress in closing the achievement gaps and have particularly struggled at the secondary levels. Students with disabilities have been using the same traditional reading program as students without

disabilities. An instructional coach at the local school district with more than 20 years in education stated, “Students with disabilities need an intervention reading program because the traditional reading program doesn’t help them become proficient readers” (“Wonka” personal communication, April 2, 2015). The achievement of students with disabilities lags far behind students without disabilities. Only half of all students with disabilities leave high school with a standard diploma (Gadde, 2013c). A special education lead teacher with more than 10 years of experience in education stated, “Traditional reading programs are not adequate for students with disabilities. Over the years, traditional reading programs have not been proven to increase the reading achievement of students with disabilities” (“Charlie” personal communication, April 2, 2015). This statement is common among special education teachers.

In some states, the achievement gap on the state achievement test between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers were more than 45 percentage points (Dillon, 2007). Many students with disabilities struggle with decoding, phonics, diphthongs, and word blending because of a specific learning disability. When students with disabilities have challenges with basic reading skills, it often becomes difficult for them to become fluent readers.

Students with disabilities have difficulty with comprehension because of their inability to read fluently. Cognition has led researchers to focus on the development of strategies that are practical to improve comprehension of students. Nearly three decades of research with cumulative results showed that “there is ample extant research supporting the efficacy of cognitive strategy training during reading as a means to

enhance students' comprehension” (Baumann, Seifert-Kessell, & Jones, 1992, p. 162).

According to Pachtman and Wilson (2006), student engagement is an important factor in the components and practices that are part of a reading program. To close the achievement gap, schools must accelerate the achievement of the lowest performing students (Catapult Learning, 2014).

Reading test scores of students with disabilities are declining each year according to national, state, and local reports (Gadoe, 2013a). In the past 2 years, the local school district has shown a decline of reading scores for students with disabilities with scores going from 40% in 2011 to 32% in 2012 (FCBOE, 2013). The local school district has shown an increase of reading scores for general education students with scores going from 87% in 2012 to 93% in 2013. Also, the local school district has shown a decrease of reading scores for students with disabilities scores going from 32% in 2012 to 28% in 2013 (FCBOE, 2013). The latest benchmark scores indicated that fourth-grade students with disabilities average reading level is 2.3 and general education students average reading level is 4.9 (Gadoe, 2013c). The results indicate that students with disabilities are on average two grade levels below general education students (FCBOE, 2013).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The Learning Disabilities of America (LDA, 2001) showed that 20% of early learners are at risk for not being proficient in reading, and 5-10% of those learners have difficulty in reading even when receiving effective reading instruction. LDA stated students with learning disabilities should receive personalized reading instruction that supports them to be successful. The difference between reading competences of early

readers and the difficult reading requirements of the recent era indicated previous policies that demand greater hours focused on language arts and reading classes for students not meeting grade-level expectations (Cervetti, Jaynes, & Hiebert, 2009). According to the NAEP (2013), over 70% of learners nationally begin high school with reading levels below proficient. Wanzek and Roberts (2012) stated teachers must recognize when students are not learning and intervene before the achievement gap widens.

Understanding the literacy development of students who start the school with poor reading skills, including students with disabilities, is important (Wanzek, Al Otaiba, & Petscher, 2014). For students with disabilities, decoding plays a major role in learning to read and developing fluency when reading. Meeks, Kemp, and Stephenson (2014) stated not all school-age students possess the necessary preskills to be fluent independent readers, especially those students with learning disabilities who often struggle to decode single words.

Decoding skills include identifying the letter sounds and letter blends within a word, determining the meaning of words, knowing what part the word plays in the sentence (both grammatical and contextual), and how the word can change by adding prefixes and suffixes (Bailey, 2016). Decoding skills are essential to interpreting and analyzing words during reading. Students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, processing skills, or retention skills often have challenges learning how to decode words and may require practice (Bailey, 2016). Students who do not learn how to decode words can have difficulty with reading fluency and comprehension. In intermediate grades, teachers are usually confronted with the difficult task of giving alternative instruction for

learners with prior known reading challenges who have not been appropriately taught. Teaching students how to read is one of the major responsibilities of elementary school teachers (Reutzel, Petscher, & Spichtig, 2012).

It is common for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia to require additional practice and time learning skills compared to students without learning disabilities. Students who struggle with reading or have learning disabilities in early grades may have difficulties with word recognition; other students may have difficulties comprehending more rigorous vocabulary and more complex text (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). Word recognition skills may have more positive outcome for students who continue to have challenges in decoding (Wanzek et al., 2010). To address this problem, struggling readers sometimes require repetition of drills and practice of phonics and decoding skills over an extended period of time compared to students without disabilities (Wanzek et al., 2010). Gersten et al. (2009) stated struggling students should be given reading support from the start of their school careers. “If the ability to read, write and communicate is the ultimate goal, then we must better understand how to maximize access to the reading curriculum while providing comprehension instruction that addresses the individual needs of each student with disabilities” (Erickson, Hanser, Hatch, & Sanders, 2009, p. 17).

Many students, including students with learning disabilities, have reading difficulties in early grades due to the lack of basic word decoding and word recognition skills (Hoover & Patton, 2004). Students may be allowed to fall behind for 2 or 3 years without an appropriate intervention. Basic requirements for developing reading skills are

effective instruction and learning strategies (Beaver, 2012). Unless students are identified in a timely manner and adequate instruction is received, they may fall behind in school. Schools must provide the appropriate reading instruction at the appropriate age to decrease reading deficits. If accommodations are appropriate, they should never be replaced for direct reading instruction (Hoover & Patton, 2004). Whether term modification, differentiation, or adaptation is applied, the underlying constant for students receiving special education services is that their diverse educational needs must be met (Hoover et al., 2004). The purpose of study was to examine the effects of the Journeys reading intervention program on reading achievement test scores of fourth students with disabilities.

Definition of Terms

Achievement gap: The difference of academic performance by particular groups using a variety of demographic factors on educational measures (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

Direct instruction: A method of teaching that is skills based and teacher directed. Direct instruction implements one-on-one and small group instruction by providing excellent communicated instruction in which learning skills are chunked into smaller parts, ordered purposely, and taught explicitly (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004.)

Emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD): Behavioral issues related to emotional problems. Emotional and behavior disorders are identified as emotional

behavioral disability and mental and behavioral disorders. The terms are mostly associated with education and referenced to students (Behavior Disorder, 2008).

Guided reading: A strategy teachers use to support students to become better readers. Teachers provide small group instruction to students by using different reading strategies to support them to make gains in reading (About Education, 2015).

Mild intellectual disabilities (MID): Drastically below average intelligence that happens simultaneously with insufficiencies in adaptive behavior that negatively affect educational performance (Gadoe, 2013b).

Reading achievement: Students' performance in the content area of reading. Reading achievement shows the progress or lack of progress for students over a period of time in the content area of reading (Cox, 2007). The state of Georgia uses the content of reading on the CRCT to determine students' reading achievement (Gadoe, 2013b).

Reading comprehension: The ability to understand a text. Reading comprehension is the ability to summarize a text and identify key details in a timely manner after reading the text (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

Reading instruction: Reading instruction is the process of teaching reading. Effective reading instruction involves teaching each domain separately and collectively. Reading instruction should directly and explicitly provide students opportunities to make connections to the text (Gersten et al., 2001).

Students with disabilities: Students who receive special education services according to national and state guidelines. These students have at least one deficit that

impedes their ability to learn effectively (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Specific learning disability (SLD): A disorder involving deficits in processing information and difficulties understanding materials. The disorder affects the ability to make connections to previously learned skills. Students with specific learning disabilities often struggle with retaining information, verbal and written expression, and organizational skills (Gadoe, 2013c).

Significance

Students must improve their ability to read and understand text. Comprehending text is essential to the federal education policy intended to decrease the reading achievement gap between below and above average students (James-Burdumy et al., 2009). In the past, most students were not provided extra assistance in reading until they were identified as having a learning disability. NAEP data indicated that 69% of all eighth-grade students are not meeting grade level standards, and 26% of all eighth-grade students read below level (Kamil et al., 2008). Mackay (2007) argued that students need to learn to read in order to travel to different places, have a license and drive a car, place an order at a restaurant, obtain employment, go to a doctor, and make payments on time. People who cannot read have difficulty living independently and effectively. According to national data, about 14% of adults are illiterate and incapable of doing daily functions that require reading skills (NCES, 2013).

According to the data from the local school district, there was an even greater achievement gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in

reading (FCBOE, 2013). The state of Georgia data for fourth-grade students with disabilities in reading for 2010 and 2011 indicated 65% proficiency (Gadoe, 2013a). The state of Georgia targets for fourth-grade students without disabilities in reading for 2010 and 2011 was 92% proficiency (Gadoe, 2013a). In the past, educators have expressed major concerns over improving students' reading skills especially in early grades, but elementary students' reading difficulties in reading instruction has been less apparent (Edmonds et al., 2009). Locally, the project study allowed the school district to make an informed decision about an alternative reading program for students with disabilities using the findings from this project study.

Research Questions

To examine the lack of reading achievement gains for students with disabilities, the project study relied on the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What is the difference in overall reading achievement scores for third-through fifth-grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H₀1: There is no significant difference in overall reading achievement of third-through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

H_a1: There is a significant difference in overall reading achievement of third-through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

RQ2: What is the difference in literacy comprehension reading achievement scores for third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H₀2: There is no significant difference in literacy comprehension reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

H_a2: There is a significant difference in literacy comprehension reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

RQ3: What is the difference in information and media literacy reading achievement scores for third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H₀3: There is no significant difference in information and media literacy reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in information and media literacy reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the

Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

RQ4: What is the difference in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement scores for third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H₀4: There is no significant difference in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program and those who received the traditional reading program.

Review of Literature

To review the literature, I conducted a range of searches with the ERIC, THOREAU, Google Scholar, and the National Reading Panel. Using the terms *reading interventions*, *special education students*, *reading achievements*, *reading gap*, and *reading difficulties*, I compiled more than 500 articles of which 67 studies pertained to this study. A major term in the literature was *reading instruction*. More than 300 articles were found in Google Scholar, and 80 articles were found in the THOREAU database. I reviewed the public education laws available on the United States Department of

Education website. Test data were obtained from the Georgia Department of Education's website. National test data were obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics website. The ERIC database produced 200 articles with the search term *reading gap*, of which 33 were related to this study. Using *reading achievement* as a search term in National Reading Panel, I found 127 studies of which 43 were included in the theoretical framework. As a result of added screening, a total of 82 articles were identified as relevant to this project.

Theoretical Framework

LaBerge and Samuels's (1974) theory of automatic information processing in reading is used to explain how information is understood and processed based on two factors: decoding words accurately and automaticity of word recognition. The theory explains how reading fluency is developed. The theory also explains the connection between decoding words and word recognition at an accurate rate of speed and comprehension. Phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency are critical areas to processing information while reading. By teaching these areas collectively, educators can provide students with effective reading skills. Basaran (2013) stated reading is a process with cognitive areas involving perceiving written symbols, knowing letter sounds, understanding information, and linking the information with interlocutors and previous knowledge. As students develop reading skills in each domain, they will become proficient readers.

Phonics

Phonics is the relationship between sounds and letter symbols. Phonics is the blend of sounds and symbols to make words (Bear, Ivernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2011). Vandervelden and Siegel (1997) studied a phonics program for kindergarteners. Individual learners began instruction at appropriate levels. In the control group, students engaged in activities used in their classrooms. Activities included identifying letters and phonics. Students need to learn to hear sounds in words and that words are created from the smallest parts of sound, or phonemes. Phonics is one of the key building blocks of reading. Without an understanding of the connection between letters and sounds, reading cannot occur (Bear et al., 2011).

Systematic phonics instruction addresses letter-sound acquisition that connects through spelling and reading words (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Weiser and Mathes (2011) examined decoding instruction and guided practice that involved manipulatives to create the relationships of words and writing words to show the phoneme–grapheme relationships. Findings indicated that decoding instruction can improve reading practices for elementary students with disabilities (Weiser & Mathes, 2011).

Phonics instruction is tailored for early readers who struggle in reading. Cowden (2010) explained an example of student and teacher experiences and described instructional practices that offered informal assessments by the educator to give the most proficient, informative, and productive experiences with students identified as requiring their special needs in the learning literacy addressed. Analogy phonics programs are used to teach students to associate word parts they learned to recognize unfamiliar words

(National Reading Panel, 2000). Systematic phonics instruction is based on supporting students including learning the alphabet and decoding words fluently (Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder, & Wood, 2014). Determining how letters connects to phonemes and longer words is vital for allowing early readers to pronounce word parts and combine components to make new words (Rasinski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016). Knowing alphabets is needed to determine new words by analogy and to support early readers' recall of words they have seen. Determining letter-sound correspondences supports students to be concise in predicting words from context. Knowing the alphabet allows students to read words separately or in text (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Torgesen et al. (1999) conducted a study addressing phonics instruction in the early grades. Torgesen et al. (1999) compared two types of phonics instruction. The first type of phonics instruction used very intensive and explicit instruction in phonetic decoding and phonemic awareness called PASP (phonological awareness plus synthetic phonics). The second type of phonics instruction used a systematic approach in decoding phonics in the context of training in reading comprehension, called EP (embedded phonics). The PASP students were provided the Auditory Discrimination in Depth program. The program started by students learning that phonemic awareness uses interesting method. Students were guided to find and name the articulatory gestures related to each phoneme by evaluating their own mouth movements as they spoke. The EP program started by teaching students to identify new words and teaching letter-sounds in the context of learning to read words from memory. The importance was on acquiring

word level reading skills, phonemic decoding skills, and sight words. Also, attention was given to building the meanings of stories the students read (Torgesen et al., 1999).

There has always been a discussion of whether phonics instruction supports the remediation of reading deficits for both types of low-performing readers. Legere and Conca (2010) studied the development of literacy in a third-grade student diagnosed as learning disabled in a public primary school in the Midwest United States. The study suggested several practical teaching strategies that were effectively implemented with a student for 2 years. At the end of the 2-year remediation, the student was able to fluently read at her grade level and surpassed all predictions and expectations of her teachers and parents.

Wexler, Vaughn, Roberts, and Denton (2010) investigated the efficacy of repetitive reading and widespread reading training interventions for secondary students with serious reading deficits. The study addressed the effects on word reading, fluency, and comprehension included 96 students with reading deficits in Grades 9 through 12. Students were paired into one of three groups: repeated reading ($n = 33$), wide reading ($n = 34$), or typical instruction ($n = 29$). Interventions were done every day for 15-20 minutes for 10 weeks. Findings showed no overall differences for any condition, with effect sizes ranging from $-.31$ to $.27$. Most students with reading struggles lack understanding of the alphabetic principle and knowledge of phonemic awareness (Hurford et al., 2013).

Tunmer and Hoover (1993) conducted a case study in which the letter segment of the Reading Recovery lesson was substituted by extra systematic phonics instruction.

Two control groups made up the study. One group was given unmodified Reading Recovery lessons. The other group was given the standard treatment used for struggling readers by the school district. The study included a pull-out program in which students worked in small groups with teachers. Word analysis activities were included. The study involved first-grade students in their second year of reading instruction. Students who were given posttests after Reading Recovery met the goals of the program. Findings indicated students who were given rhyme lessons outperformed control students on assessments of word and pseudoword reading but not on assessments of reading comprehension. The results revealed that the rhyme-analogy phonics program showed more progress in word reading than the entire word program. Phonemic awareness is a prerequisite to reading, and it is imperative that it is included in beginning reading or prereading instruction. However, there are numerous strategies to teach, and the following established methods should be considered when teaching phonemic awareness to students (Boushey & Moser, 2009).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is understanding the meaning and pronunciation of words. Students must actively use and extend their understanding of written and spoken words, including how they are used and their meaning (Flanigan, Hayes, Templeton, & Bear, 2010). McGeown, Johnston, and Medford (2012) discovered that vocabulary skills predicted students' beginning reading acquisition when they learn to read by an approach of instruction that includes sight word identification and recognizing words in books, but not when they learned to use a phonics-focused method. Vocabulary is significant in

word recognition. Vocabulary plays a major role in comprehension. Learning spoken and written words requires that the meaning of words and sentences be included in a mental model of the text (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Understanding the meanings of words on a page is important for reading comprehension. A robust vocabulary is one of the supports of reading comprehension (Flanigan et al., 2010).

Leung (1992) examined kindergarteners and first-grade students who learned that the most often chosen word in stories proved the occurrence of the word in the student's summaries to support unintentional learning of new words. New research studies in the section indicated that indirect learning can most likely happen, and that vocabulary can be gained through unintentional exposure. Wu and Solman (1993) studied the effects of extrapictorial cues on the learning of new words by kindergarteners. Wu and Solman discovered most learning happened equally in two situations: in the absence of the pictorial cues, and in a response-prompting condition. Research does not suggest that vocabulary inadequacies are not seen with older students in all level of schools. Technology instruction helps vocabulary building and is presently accepted by educational research findings (Sweeny & Mason, 2011). Reinking and Rickman (1990) discovered that sixth-grade students learning using technology instruction of challenging text scored better on vocabulary assessments than students who read printed text.

Stump et al. (1992) measured the effects of adequate teaching intervention for special and general education. Measures of timed vocabulary assessments helped the students score better on measures of fluency and accuracy. Rinaldi, Sells, and McLaughlin (1997) studied third-grade students with reading problems to determine

efficiency of practice intervention on sight word acquisition. Throughout the intervention, all the learners progressed in scores for reading. Sedita (2005) stated vocabulary must be learned indirectly and directly using various instruction at the same time and frequently. Sedita referred to the purpose of showing students unfamiliar words, reading often, and integrating new vocabulary into instruction. Sedita and Stahl (1999), discussed how vocabulary knowledge can be enhanced due to read-aloud practices that occur early.

Bryant, Goodwin, Bryant, and Higgins (2003) acknowledged that the aim of vocabulary instruction is to promote students' ability to interact with language circumstances, mainly in understanding text. Woolley (2010) reported that students who have insufficiencies in reading comprehension have insufficient verbal expression and minimal lexical, syntactic, and semantic understanding. Woolley suggested that new vocabulary knowledge improves reading comprehension and promotes learning of phonological and orthographic words. Foorman, Herrera, Petscher, Mitchell, and Truckenmiller (2015) stated the importance of identifying words is the ability to connect word segments. Decoding and word pronunciation may not increase lexical comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition is also a significant skill.

A variety of instructional methods such as technology-supported instruction, fluency-building vocabulary skills, mnemonic instructional strategies, and concept improvement instruction are valid practices. Heller, Sturner, Funk, and Feezor (1993) studied the problems of cognitive demands of technology for early readers by examining the effect of various input devices on vocabulary recognition. Heller et al. found that higher cognitive requirements of keyboard use interrupted the students' ability to

comprehend spoken words. Heise, Papelweis, and Tanner (1991) compared third- and sixth- through eighth-grade students in classrooms with conventional direct and technology-based instruction. The aim was for increased performance with computer support; however, the difference was not statistically significant.

Vocabulary strategies could be integrated in reading instruction. There is a demand for explicit instruction of vocabulary words that are essential for a particular text to be read as part of the lesson (Tomeson & Aarnoutse, 1998). Explicit instruction was found to be to the most proficient strategy for vocabulary learning (Tomeson & Aarnoutse, 1998). Direct vocabulary instruction often requires that students fully recognize the task and how to solve it. Redesigning tasks can ensure learning is taking place. Tomesen and Aarnoutse (1998) studied direct instruction and reciprocal learning to determine word meanings from context to support fourth graders; the instruction was more supportive for struggling students as opposed to average students. Other research has shown the effectiveness of ensuring that readers successfully comprehend assignments and parts of vocabulary learning, as opposed to focusing solely on new words (Schwartz & Raphael, 1985).

Redesigning the task, such as collaborative learning or changing learning materials, can help to improve vocabulary learning (Kameenui, Carnine, & Freschi, 1982). Restructuring the task seems to be proficient for at-risk or low-performing readers. Kameenui, Carnine, and Freschi (1982) suggests having unneeded material aided understanding and strategies on challenging vocabulary text also supported learning vocabulary learning in intermediate grades.

A comprehensive analysis of the collective research studies recommends that a variety of indirect and direct methods of vocabulary instruction is proficient. Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) studied a meta-analysis and determined that vocabulary instruction is a major part of comprehension. Stahl, Richek, and Vandevier (1991) concluded that indirect instruction of vocabulary text of sixth-grade learners identified as struggling learners and determined that readers were capable to recognize most of vocabulary words from hearing to read aloud presented text. The most effective instructional strategies were blends of and definitional programs; the keyword technique made substantial progress in memory. McKeown, Beck, Omanson, and Pople (1985) results showed that fourth grade students achieved when taught beyond one period and included numerous practices of original text. Instruction included exercises using words learned previously and high-frequency words. Repetitive interactions to words were also concluded to be successful. Dole, Sloan, and Trathen (1995) studied 10th graders who worked on an “alternative” vocabulary instruction: taught readers to choose appropriate words and learn them on a profound level.

Readers who learned using differentiated reading strategies outscored readers who learned using traditional strategies. However, the ability and age effects stated that various strategies should be widely successful. Although, relying on one specific strategy could be dangerous (National Reading Panel, 2000). It is both an empirical and a theoretical fact that not all vocabulary must or can be taught using formal instruction and that vocabulary words is taught using indirect and incidental methods (Robbins & Ehri, 1994).

Fluency

Reading fluency consists of two distinct parts at two ends of the reading spectrum automaticity in word identification and expression in oral reading that shows the meaning of the text (Rasinski, 2014). The ability to recognize many words with little conscious effort also underlies the ability to read aloud with fluency (Allington, 2014). The National Assessment of Educational Progress studied the reading achievement in education of American students (Pinnell et al., 1995). The study assessed a sample of reading achievement of fourth grade students at the national level, and concluded 44% of learners were uneven using grade-level stories that the learners had read using accommodations during testing; however, the case study showed a connection between reading comprehension and fluency. Below average students in fluency struggled comprehending the meaning of the text. Although, it is unexpected that the National Research Council report, “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children”(Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), states “Adequate progress in learning to read English (or, any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different texts” (p. 223), and suggests, “Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent” (p. 7).

Definitions of reading fluency include the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression while other definitions emphasize speed and accuracy of reading (Kuhn,

Schwanenflugel, Meisinger, Levy, & Rasinski, 2012). In the beginning development of fluency, it was identified that fluency needs high-speed word recognition that allows students' cognitive abilities so that the meaning of a text can be the emphasis. Furthermore, it is evident that fluency may also contain the knowledge to sort text correctly into significant grammatical units for understanding (Schreiber, 1987).

Lo, Cooke, and Starling (2011) conducted a study in which 3 second-graders with reading difficulties participated in a direct instruction reading program that involved error analysis, choral reading, single word reading practice, performance prompting and feedback methods. Throughout the intervention periods, the students read five challenging words important on a first-grade level, involved in choral reading with the teacher, and frequently read the passage several attempts using error analysis. The study included multiple investigations, which presented frequent reading program increased all students' reading scores on the grade level cold read text.

Reading comprehension and fluency are two key components of reading ability that are lacking for many students with learning disabilities. Cirino et al. (2013) stated that identification for students with reading challenges from the Texas assessments of knowledge and skills overlapped significantly with norm-referenced tests of reading comprehension. Almost 20% of the struggling readers had challenges with reading comprehension. Almost 33% the sample was incompetent in fluency, comprehension, and decoding however the other third showed incompetency in comprehension and fluency. Throughout the course of their education, they have fallen behind in their ability to decode words; therefore, their struggle with reading has become more significant.

Reichrath, de Witte, and Winkens (2010) investigated what interventions are utilized in general education and what is identified about their efficiency so that educational institutions can trade best practices and students with disabilities have helpful opportunities for productive participation in general education. A systematic literature investigation was examined in four databases. Three researchers assessed the importance of the studies discovered. In only half of the studies are data on the success of interventions reported. Due to huge category in the types of interventions, valid measures, disability groups, and attention on various types of education, they decided to focus on reading interventions for increasing the literacy skills of students with learning disabilities. Eight reading interventions discovered seem to have positive effects on literacy skills.

Setting a goal of fluency gives the student something to work towards. Setting goals gives the student a purpose to repeatedly reading a passage (Burns, Riley-Tillman, & VanDerHeyden, 2012). Rasinski et al. (2005) that suggests that reading fluency is a key goal for reading instruction beyond the early grades. In the prior work cited, Rasinski and his associates note that reading fluency continues to be major predictor of reading achievement in the intermediate grades through secondary grade levels and that important numbers of students have not attained adequate levels of fluency in their reading. The current study shows that practices in fluency, albeit silent reading fluency, for students past the early grades can result in positive results in reading comprehension and overall reading advancement. Fluency is a principal contributing factor to overall reading

achievement and must be a component that is addressed during reading instruction (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2013).

Reading fluency is specifically important given the need of reading across many domains of life (Malouf, Reisener, Gadke, Wimbish, & Frankel, 2014). It is commonly known fluency is an important part of skilled reading. Nonetheless, it is frequently ignored in the classroom. The abandonment has begun to yield as research and theory have conceptualized this component of reading, and recent studies have suggested the effectiveness of particular strategies to learning fluency (National Reading Panel, 2000).

According to Pardo (2004), students should focus on the meaning of the word as opposed to the pronunciation. Comprehension is a reader's ability to make meaning out of the text that they have encountered. These two concepts are directly related to one another and so a student lacking in fluency would most likely experience difficulties with reading comprehension as well. Kuhn (2004) states that fluency is a major role in determining the reader's ability to connect meanings from text, which creates comprehension.

Improving fluency is important for reading development because it will lead to an increase in comprehension of age appropriate texts (Kuhn, 2004). Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, and Francis (2006) study investigated a supplemental reading program adequate as one part of a response-to-intervention (RTI) model. Local first-graders in 31 schools with reading difficulties were randomly chosen to get supplemental reading program or traditional reading instruction (TRI; $n = 240$). About 43% of the TRI students were given an alternate school-provided supplemental reading program. Findings showed

the SRP group had considerably higher results than the TRI group on various reading measures. About 91% of SRP students and 79% of TRI students achieved word reading measures for appropriate program response, but significantly less met the reading benchmark. An increase in comprehension will allow students to become more productive.

Mathes and Torgesen (2012) conducted a case study in which first-grade students with reading challenges were given advanced reading instruction. Teachers were given professional development and were given graphs each month to determine the students' growth in reading fluency. Mathes and Torgesen (2012) study showed positive effects related to advanced reading instruction when performance was standardized and of top quality, what was undetermined was whether the advanced reading instruction would had been successful if used in different schools. Many tasks that students are given in school are reading based so those students with difficulty in some area of reading often have trouble in all of their academic classes. Many teachers in the past felt that an increase in reading would help students to become more fluent readers; however, it has become clear through research that some students will need explicit instruction in order to be able to improve fluency and become more effective readers (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

Comprehension

Reading comprehension skills are obtained easily through good communication between the teacher and the student (Alharbi, 2015). An important step to increasing comprehension is teaching students to observe and think about their understanding of text. The practices involve learning how fluently to progress through material, involving

when to stop and re-read unclear or detailed passages; however, we realize that reading fluency is a basis for comprehension, we are still uncertain of the importance that performance tasks improves comprehension as to other fluency building activities (Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

Proficient readers typically make mental images as they read using information given by the author joined with their previously information of the topic. In comparisons, difficulties readers often “see” only the words on the page. They are working so firm to decode them that they miss a deeper critical layer of meaning (Thompson, Johnstone, Thurlow, & Clapper, 2004). A constant movement of questions should arise within while a reader is going over text both literal (i.e., who, what, and where) and inferential (i.e., why, how, and what if) questions. Collectively, they target key information that supports the reader follow the story line or receive the facts, monitor comprehension, make predictions, and grasp the author’s message (Thompson et al., 2004).

Early or struggling readers often move directly throughout text without thinking about if it makes sense, or if their prior knowledge can help them comprehend the information (Thurlow et al., 2009). Comprehension is mostly important when reading content-heavy nonfiction material. Also, it is connected to identifying the author’s purpose. Struggling readers often dive directly into a passage without a strong understanding of what their purpose in reading can be. Struggling readers frequently give a string of disengaged parts of information or segments of a story, or they ignore major themes or the main ideas (Thurlow et al., 2009).

Comprehension strategies can be explicitly taught as well. Davis (1988) recommended the effect of Scaffold Silent Reading on reading comprehension for eighth graders. Students were given reading classes in random order. Classes were 50 minutes each day. About half of the period was required for SSR the remainder was used for explicit reading instruction. The program was during the school year. The researcher planned to examine the results for high, middle, and below-level readers independently; regression in the below-level reader groups decided the investigation was unreasonable. Two similarities were found for the medium and high-level groups, and it was discovered that the median-level students showed progress with SSR than with directed reading, but there were not any substantial changes in the two high-level groups. The progress credited to SSR for the average-ability group were educationally and significantly valuable. Although comprehension can be dependent upon a student's fluency skills, reading comprehension can be its own area of focus. To improve comprehension, teachers need to start by helping students to activate prior knowledge and make connections to text. Making connections to the text is what skilled readers do automatically, but struggling readers are unable to create relationships in their minds (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001).

In a study by SSR (Manning & Manning, 1984), three deviations of SSR were analyzed with fourth graders. Differences examined during one school year with a low performing labeled control group. Students ($n = 415$) from 24 classrooms assigned to the four groups. The program was for one school year. The study concluded that two of the SSR differences showed greater reading gains and that the other did not. The SSR

differences required students to read an additional 35 minutes daily, resulted in less reading achievement than the other group of students. Although, when SSR was combined with teacher conferences or peer discussions, little reading progress was shown for the SSR group. The study recommends reading independently probably do not support readers, but extra reading in blending with other tasks that may result in progress.

Most reading components need to be addressed effectively in order to establish a successful and motivated group of students. Edwards and Taub (2016) suggests each reading domain is important in alternative reading programs. Each domain should be taught adequately with fidelity in order to support students with reading comprehension. Kemp (2010) examined a random sample of third-graders in three schools in a local school district. In 13 classes, an initial sample of 168 students was selected to participate in two groups using block randomization methods. The final analysis sample consisted of 158 students. Kemp (2010) conducted six assessments using various domains. Kemp concluded there was a significantly difference between the two reading groups.

Heistad (2010) studied the effects of intervention on the reading achievement of third-graders in primary schools a local district. Reading intervention program students were compared to students from other schools in the same district based on similar academic records and demographics. There were 44 students were involved in the study's analysis, with 22 students in each group. The case study used various assessments for each group. The study concluded a substantial effective reading measure.

Legal Requirements

Public Law 94-142. In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act) legislation that was intended to increase opportunities in education for individuals with disabilities within the law of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Federal law gives individuals with disabilities ages 3-21 the freedom to be educated in the “least restrictive environment” to the fullest possible extent, stating that they are educated within the same general education setting as their non-disabled peers whenever possible. The law helped over 1 million individuals with disabilities who were previously not allowed to attend school with their counterparts. The law also helped individuals with disabilities previously had minimum rights, therefore deprived of a free and appropriate education. Before the law more than half of individuals with special needs lived in America without educational rights. Problems of improved once guidelines and policies passed by congress from the advancements in educating individuals with disabilities over the past decades (USDOE, 2006).

No Child Left Behind (2001). President Bush signed into law The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, The law made revisions to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (PL 107-110) mandated all students in grades 3-8 meet yearly progress (AYP) in grade level standards. The ESEA, first passed in 1965 and earlier reauthorized in 1994, includes Title I, the federal government’s flagship assistance program for disadvantaged children. During that time of extensive national concern about the country’s educational system, the NCLB legislation set provisions that reached most public school in the United States. The law extended the

federal role in education and took specific focus on increasing the effective education for disadvantaged children. At the center of the No Child Left Behind Act were a quantity of measures designed to push wide improvements in student achievement and to hold states and schools more liable for student achievement. The law represented important transformation to the educational landscape (USDOE, 2006).

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law guarantees educational services to individual with disabilities all over America. IDEA mandates schools provide special education services to qualified students determined by their Individualized Education Program (IEP). IDEA also offers detailed guidelines to ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities receiving an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). FAPE and LRE secures rights all individuals with disabilities in the United States (The National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). IDEA rules outline regulations how states and public agencies implement early intervention, special education services to millions of individuals with disabilities. Children with disabilities ages birth-2 obtain early intervention services under IDEA Part C also referred to as “Babies can’t wait”. After the age of 3 to 21, students receive special education and associated services under IDEA (USDOE, 2006). Reading skills are important to gaining knowledge, being independent, and making decisions (Houston & Torgeson, 2004). Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 (PL 105), previously was changed in 2004, to provide all students with disabilities with access to the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers. Reading is a vital

component of the general curriculum for students with disabilities (Houston & Torgeson, 2004).

Traditional Reading Instruction for Students With Disabilities

The most fundamental job of this nation's education system is to teach children to read (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Despite this manifesto, teaching children with intellectual disabilities (ID) to read has been mainly disregarded in the national rhetoric. Typically, it has been expected that reading is a skill further than the intellectual abilities of many students with ID and that at best they might learn to identify a limited amount of sight words (i.e., high frequency words). As such, four in five children with mild to severe ID never achieve even minimal levels of reading (Katims, 2001).

Recent research supports the view that students with disabilities can learn to read in a manner familiar to other students who have difficulties learning to read (Allor, Mathes, Roberts, Cheatham, & Champlin, 2010). Particularly, students with ID can learn to read using strategies and methods that will give them with the skills needed to fully process single words in paired text and derive meaning from the text. The findings suggest that when given scientifically based and rigorously intensive reading instruction over an extended period of time, these children respond positively, making important gains in literacy development.

Instruction must be systematic and explicit, have all reading parts; repetition in its use of routines and instructional language; fluent; and highly motivating (Allor et al, 2010). Lessons can be completely implemented by teachers skilled in effective reading instruction. Students with ID need large amounts of repetition to make significant

progress. Increasing practice of critical skills is extremely challenging. Resources are finite; therefore, feasible methods for increasing the intensity of interventions need to be examined (Allor et al., 2010).

Klingner, Urbach, Golos, Brownell, and Menon (2010) completed 124 studies of reading instruction with 41 special education teachers, discovered 82 lessons required comprehension (66%), only 40% targeted comprehension mostly using below-level questions. Specific elements of strategy instruction were seldom monitored. Also, over 2,000 hours of reading instruction in 10 resource classrooms assisting students in grades third through fifth. Swanson and Vaughn (2010) noted comprehension strategies being used 26% of each period, of which 66% included teacher-led discussions after reading and 23% involved students working independently to complete comprehension assignments.

In the last decade, several pertinent studies have been investigated that states that individuals with ID can learn single word reading skills with appropriate instructional interventions (Browder, Wakeman, Ahlbrim-Delzell, & Algozzine, 2006). Assessing students reading levels can be difficult. Students should be assessed using various methods based on the student's learning style. Students' reading levels can be assessed by using observations, progress monitoring, formative and summative assessments, and performance based assessments. Children may read aloud, and teachers listen closely in documenting detailed errors students say as they read. Teachers can have children read lists of words in addition to sentences and paragraphs to assess their skills. Lang et al. (2009) suggested hopeful techniques were those that offered targeted reading intervention

in comprehension, multiple reading components, or word-identification activities. When teachers address reading errors, they can design instruction to ensure meeting students' learning goals.

Nontraditional Reading Instruction for Students With Disabilities

Most English words have been made by putting together prefixes and suffixes with root words. When students comprehend how words are formed, they gain an effective tool for progress of vocabulary (Templeton, Bear, Invernizzi, & Johnston, 2010). The main objective of reading instruction is to build reading skills and learning so students can understand and critically analyze more difficult texts. Research proves the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Helping students successfully develop reading and vocabulary skills are essential components to effective reading instruction. Vocabulary knowledge is key the beginning stages of reading development (National Reading Panel, 2000) and secondary grade-levels, as the needs of readers change depending on content-area instruction requires advanced-level vocabulary. Vocabulary is the focus in all school grades of the Common Core Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Proficient instruction can support children to gain the rigor of vocabulary learning needed for understanding complex texts. Research suggests often words can be learned indirectly, direct instruction has a valuable part in reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Solis et al. (2012) investigated an analysis of reading comprehension interventions for secondary school students with learning disabilities. Solis examined 12 case studies between 1979 and 2009 with experimental or quasi-experimental designs and

independent content studies were found. Intervention sections involved strategy instruction, main idea-summarization, mnemonics, multi-component interventions, mapping, and self-monitoring procedures. Results showed significant increase of ESs for researcher-developed measures and marginal increase of ESs for standardized measures of reading comprehension. Literacy programs can be successful at building students' vocabulary acquisition, it takes a focused and engaging instruction.

The Journeys intervention reading program emphasizes three main strategies for teaching vocabulary: (1) Instructors facilitate comprehension; (2) Develop vocabulary acquisition; and (3) Instructors teach words that involves elements that provides word learning independently (Harcourt, 2013). To achieve targets, the intervention serves students using various exercises, direct vocabulary instruction, strategies for learning new vocabulary, and strategies in word morphology (Harcourt, 2013).

Brenner and Hiebert (2010) previously produced research related to a professional development program planned to support teachers add more time students focus on reading text silently. The researchers and others have also investigated the independent, silent reading process, found prior accounts of the focus on text phenomenon had apparently missed a fundamental contributing factor that produces focus (Samuel, Hiebert, & Rasinski, 2010). For example, if a teacher thinks a reading program is applicable in a general sense, does not mean it will work for their students (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, Briesch, & Chanese, 2008). Normal instruction focuses on expending pre-reading tasks, mediated reading strategies, graphic organizing, and increasing comprehension and retention.

Vaughn et al. (2010) suggested offering appropriate rigorous interventions includes experienced teachers, along with extended time for learning and small class sizes. Teachers use testing data to find the particular types of reading problems a student has, and they select effective instruction to address the problems; though it is necessary to point out that these studies are exploratory and does not show common connections between the early stages of implementation milestones and differences in effects on student's reading achievement (Corrin, Somers, Kemple, Nelson, & Sepanik, 2008).

Many students become good readers of printed text using systematic and explicit instruction. Rasinski et al. (2011) previous reported on research which examined 4th–10th students using a technology-based, guided silent reading fluency program identified as Reading Plus. The intervention develops use of infrared eye-movement photography tests, placement assessments, comprehension tests, and computer-adapted levels of reading domains over different genres to guide, monitor, and change the silent reading strategies of students. Students' initial placement and increasing levels of reading are established on ongoing computerized feedback as students receive visual and perceptual modeling practice using reading passages that systematically increase in difficulty and length. Rasinski et al. (2011) discovered a powerful relationship between grades 4 and 10 students who learned silent reading receiving this intervention and consequent gains in reading comprehension and basic reading achievement on a state and national criterion and normative-referenced reading assessments.

Compensatory education programs identified difficult content but focused on other strategies for students to gain knowledge. Compensatory methods show students

how acquire skills in reading affected by disability and account for failures using technology (Gadde, 2013a). Compensatory approaches are mostly taught to older students or to students who have reading difficulties, or who have higher levels of listening comprehension skills (Gadde, 2013c). Thompson et al. (2004) concluded that students with various disabilities may learn from a blend of strategies.

The importance of ensuring that students learn how to read is a major responsibility for all educators (Bryant, Smith, & Bryant, 2008). All students with learning disabilities are at-risk for being misjudged in their abilities. Students with learning disabilities in reading comprehension have basic learning ability that in some cases can be higher than students without learning disabilities. They often have a skill deficit in just in reading. Students with learning disabilities must work twice as hard as their non-disabled peers to be proficient readers.

There are two studies (i.e., Johnson, McDonnell, Holzwarth, & Hunter, 2004; McDonnell, Johnson, Polychronis, & Risen, 2002), conducted implementing reading instruction in regular education classes. The studies measured the vocabulary learning that transpired not in the regular education classroom but instead in a special education classroom. Each case examined an intervention strategy where opportunities to learn vocabulary were offered in regular education classroom by methods of implementing the assessments in the regular education classroom procedures. Each case were independent subject cases with appropriate methods and measured intensity to allow calculation of effect size statistics, and each case showed that embedding was a proficient reading program. In fact, research that examine failures in valid efforts reveals that a certain way

not succeed is to create a program that is very slim in scope (Dörner, 1996), and research what works in early interventions with students with disabilities has determined that a common component of effective practices is the occurrence of multi-domains reading programs (Levy, Kim, & Olive, 2006).

Implications

The project study examines if an alternative reading program, Journeys, increases reading achievement compared to a traditional reading program using a causal comparative research design. To examine the lack of reading achievement gains for students with disabilities, the project study relies on the following guiding question. The effects of Journeys intervention reading program on the reading achievement of fourth-grade students with disabilities. The findings allowed for an effective evaluation of the new reading program at the research site. Based on the possible findings, students who receive special education could receive effective instruction with a new reading curriculum that may allow them the opportunity to close the achievement gap in reading.

The new reading curriculum may potentially have a major impact in special education, because it can allow students who are served in special education to improve their learning in all areas of reading. New innovative reading strategies may allow educators to provide student with disabilities with improved instruction. The strategies possibly support students with disabilities' reading scores of summative assessments in the future on all levels. Increased reading scores for students with disabilities may allow school and district administrators to have overall reading achievement at the school and district level.

The overall reading improvement may have a direct impact on graduation rates and school performance. After the data has been analyzed, a final report can be created to present the findings. The final report can be disseminated to district leaders to determine if the reading program can be beneficial to their students with disabilities in supporting to improve reading achievement.

Summary

Students who are served in special education are struggling to achieve gains in the reading achievement. This problem occurs at the national, state, and local level. The reading theory outlines all components of reading are essential to becoming proficient readers, such as phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Throughout the years, laws have been put in place that support students with disabilities and provide them with the right to an equal education. The traditional reading programs have failed to provide effective instruction for students who are served in special education over the past years. Past case studies (e.g., Vaughn et al., 2010 and Gersten et al., 2009) have shown that reading interventions programs can provide differentiated instruction to support students' progress in comprehension. Non-traditional reading programs can increase the reading abilities in students who are served in special education (Edmonds et al., 2009). The implications are educational reform for students with disabilities in reading. Educational reform provided students with disabilities an even playing field in education.

Section 2 contains the methodology. Section 2 discussed the research design, and the sampling and setting is identified. The intervention is examined closely to determine the effectiveness of the reading program. The measure of the project study is the state

assessment. The section also examined the procedures used for data analysis for the project study. Section 3 contains the description of goals and rationale for the project study. Section 3 provided the implementation and timetable for the project study, and the section identifies potential resources and existing supports. Section 3 reported on potential barriers that interfere with the validity of the findings. Last, section 3 presented the project evaluation and its implications on social change in the local community. Section 4 contained the project strengths. Section 4 addressed the recommendations for the remediation of the limitations, and it discussed all aspects of the scholarship. The discussion included an overall reflection on the importance of the work and what was learned. The section examined the project's potential impact on social change at the local level and beyond. Section 4 reviewed the implications, applications, and directions for future research. The section reflected on the importance of the work and what was learned. Last, the section provided applications that can be made to the educational field.

Section 2: Methodology

Students with disabilities have not been academically achieving in the content area of reading. The traditional reading program has been ineffective for students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities need a reading intervention program that helps them be successful in the classroom. Teachers must use an array of strategies to ensure students are learning. The purpose of the study examined the effects of Journeys reading intervention program on reading achievement test scores of third through fifth grade students with disabilities at an elementary school in Georgia.

Research Design

The project study conducted used a causal comparative research design that examines students with disabilities' reading test scores on state assessments. The project study examined students with disabilities' reading scores using pre-existing data on the end of the year state summative assessment from the 2013 school year to the 2014 school year in April (Gadoe, 2013a). Using a causal-comparative research design, the quantitative study evaluated the Journeys reading intervention program through an assessment for the reading achievement gap of third through fifth grade students with disabilities on the state test. Study data consisted of disaggregated standardized test results published in annual 2013 and 2014 Office of State Achievement (OSA) test scores of students with disabilities for third through fifth grade reading students: passing, meeting, or exceeding standards and not passing or not meeting standards. Qualitative research is most appropriate to address a research problem in which one does not know

the variables and need to explore; however, quantitative research problems require that the researcher to examine how one variable affects another (Creswell, 2012).

In quantitative research, the researcher examines a research problem based on trends in the field or on the right to justify why something occurs (Creswell, 2012). The problems most appropriate for quantitative research are those in which trends or explanations are required to be made. For qualitative research, the problems require to be investigated to obtain a profound understanding.

There were not any random assignments of groups for this study; instead, the sampling was convenience based on student assignment to designated classroom. The intervention is the Journeys reading intervention program throughout the year for 24 weeks. The treatment group, received the Journeys reading intervention program, the control group, received the traditional reading program.

The traditional reading program consisted of spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Vocabulary is valuable in word identification. Vocabulary also has a major part in comprehension. Learning the meanings of words in text is important for reading comprehension. Although, not many would deny this fact, the role that vocabulary has in reading is often disregarded or unnoticed in reading instruction. A powerful vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension (Flanigan et al., 2010).

In the traditional reading program, language is connected rather than separated into fragments or skills. The philosophy, students are required to learn to read and write in the similar style that they learn to talk. Reading comprehension and fluency are two key components of reading ability that are lacking for many students with learning

disabilities. Reading, writing, and oral language are regarded as being linked. Reading does not consist of phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency. Each group of fourth-grade students with disabilities' reading scores is measured once at the end of the year by the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a). Based on the scores, the data determines if the new reading program was effective. If there is an increase in the readings score the new reading program is a success.

Participants

There are 53 faculty and staff members at the project site. The school had a student population of approximately 500 students comprised of 78% African-American/Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% Multi-racial, White, and Asian. Of these students, approximately 97% of the student body receives free/reduced lunch, 10% of the students are classified as SWD, 12% are ELLs, and the school has a 44% mobility rate. There are only 34 students with disabilities in grades 3rd-5th (FCBOE, 2013).

The convenience sample consisted of 34 third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the CRCT Reading Assessment during the 2013 and 2014 school years. The number of participant was small because of the number of students with disabilities at the project site was limited. The control group consisted of 10 students with specific learning disabilities who were served by special education in the co-taught setting. There were both male students and female students. The treatment group consisted of 24 students with various disabilities. The students were served in the resource setting. There were both female students and male students. The students were African-American who received for free and reduced lunch and lived in low-income

housing projects. The students received special education services for an average of 3 years. The sample and setting was chosen because the researcher has access to elementary schools. All of the data were pre-existing from past years. The data were retrieved from the local school district database. There was no need for any recruitment procedures because the data were pre-existing data.

Intervention

The treatment group used the reading intervention program. The new reading intervention program used guided reading. Guided reading is small-group reading instruction intended to use differentiated teaching that helps students in developing reading ability. The small group model encourages students to learn in a way that is expected to be more centered on their particular goals, improving their progress. During guided reading a teacher uses prior knowledge, develop schema, set a purpose for reading, review the text, and make predictions with students. Usually a group focus on a variety of pre-reading strategies such as predicting, learning new vocabulary, and discussing a variety of text features. The students participate in a discussion about the story, ask questions, develop expectations, and observe information in the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Journeys is a comprehensive intervention system for students in grades K-5 who have difficulties in reading (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). The program systematically incorporates the five major domains of reading into an easy to deliver, coherent instructional routine (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). The reading intervention program focuses on the five reading domains: phonemic awareness, phonics,

fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). The reading intervention system assists teachers to monitor progress and develop instructional practices based the level of rigor needed for each student, using the differentiation instruction and re-teaching offered within the curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). As a supplement to students who have not showed sufficient progress in the core reading instruction, it allows struggling readers access to direct instruction, constructive feedback, and extended time on tasks in order to master important reading skills.

Journeys reading intervention program is a 24-week program comprised of 12 two-week adventures which consists of 120 lessons delivered 5 days a week (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Each lesson was 30 to 45 minutes long and delivered in the small-group setting. Students were assessed weekly using a complete assessment component that enables teachers to monitor student progress and make informed instructional decisions (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Journeys' flexible instructional model supports diverse learners, allowing teachers to modify instruction depending on the assessed needs (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Intensive, explicit, systematic instruction ensures understanding and strengths skill acquisition. The program addressed priority reading skills for students 1 to 2 years below grade level to accelerate them to on-level reading. Journeys provide educators with a comprehensive easy-to-follow reading curriculum to successfully meet struggling learners' needs (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

The control group used the traditional reading program. The program consisted of three basic components which are reading aloud, decoding, and independent reading

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Reading aloud is a basic component of a balanced reading program. The teacher reads and models both fluency and decoding strategies. Reading aloud also allows students to engage with stories that they would be unable to read independently (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Decoding helps students figure out unknown words. Students in a balanced reading program are taught to decode unfamiliar words by sounding them out, looking for context clues and comparing them to known words (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Independent reading gives students' time to read independently allows them to practice the decoding skills that they are learning. Students read books at their reading levels and may even read them repeatedly to develop fluency and increase comprehension (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

Measure

The CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) is the state of Georgia end of the year summative assessments for students in grades three through eighth. The assessment determines how well students obtain the skills and ability defined in the state adopted curriculum involving the 2013 Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in reading, English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The CRCT provided information on academic performance at the student, class, school, system, and state levels. The data were examined to determine if students has met state standards in each content area as connected to the instruction of the state adopted curriculum and to measure the quality of education within Georgia (Gadoe, 2013a). The reading section consisted of comprehension, grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The CRCT is scored based on a composite score of all five sections. To acquire

proficiency in reading the students must have a standard score of 800 or above to meet the state-mandated requirement.

Each Student Test Booklet contains all five content areas (Gadoe, 2013a). Each content area test consisted of two sections; each section is timed for up to 70 minutes (Gadoe, 2013a). The Reading Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (Gadoe, 2013a) has two sections. Both sections of the test consisted of multiple-choice questions. Section 1 of the reading test has 25 multiple-choice questions. Section 2 of the reading test has 25 multiple-choice questions for a total of 50 questions for the reading portion of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a). The students had 70 minutes to complete each section of the reading test with a 10-minute break in-between sections.

The main purpose of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) is to present an effective measure of the quality of educational services offered within the state. The Georgia CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) is comprehensive tests that consisted of multiple-choice questions that align with Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (Gadoe, 2013a). The items were aligned with the Common Core standards. The items were field tested by both teachers and students. Teachers were shown the field test items during training for administration of the assessment. Students receive field test items on the previous year's assessment. The items were selected based on the feedback from teachers and the performance of the students on the field test items.

The standard error of measurement (SEM) is the amount a student's score that differs based on the reliability of the test. It is important to consider the SEM when analyzing assessment scores. The SEM is analyzed individually for each content area and

domain on the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a), and an error analysis for each band is generated collectively to determine students' scale scores. The SEM is a method to determine this difference in student achievement (Gadoe, 2013a).

Procedure

The data were collected from the 2013 and 2014 reading sections of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a), which is during the third week of April of the following year. The data were collected from overall reading scores and each reading domain score. The CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) was administered in the order proposed: Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Students in grades third through fifth take the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a). Each section of each assessment was administered in one period of time. At the midway point during the testing of each content area assessments (between sections, students are provided a 10-minute break. Student are tested on the same day for each sections of a content area.

The test was administered during one week with make-up days to follow as necessary (Gadoe, 2013a). The tests were administered by certified teachers only and non-certified staff served as proctors in testing groups. Students with disabilities were tested in small groups. The small groups were divided according to the individual education plan's accommodations for each student. Some accommodations included; small group, extended time, frequent breaks, reading of test questions and passages, optimum time of day, reading directions, explaining/ paraphrasing directions, repeating directions, test sessions over multiple days, one-on-one test administration, marking answers in test booklet, and test booklet in braille or large print. Also, students with

disabilities may be allowed to participate in a modified version of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) in the content area of Math, Reading, and English Language Arts.

The requirements for the modified version of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) depends upon the number of years the students have been receiving special education services and whether they passed the regular CRCT in previous years with accommodation in the specified content areas. After the test has been completely administered, the testing booklets and answer documents are collected by state testing officials from each school. All testing documents is examined and scored by the state department of education and the testing results are released to each school district in the following weeks.

The unofficial summative scores were released to each school from the district during the second week of May. The scores showed the results for students over tested grade levels when it relates to meeting or exceeding standards and scoring above state averages. The content areas assessed are Reading, English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. By Georgia being one of the rare states to submit a petition successfully the federal government for a waiver from the law, Adequate Yearly Progress has changed as the standard measure of a school's achievement (Gadoe, 2013a). The CRCT can be used to specifically to determine the overall proficiency of a school through the national performance standards. All third graders are required by state law to pass (Level 2 or Level 3 performance) the reading portion of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) to be promoted to the fourth grade.

Schools are recommended to support parents comprehend the CRCT score reports, and educators can support parents with understanding student's effectiveness

regarding the curriculum. School districts and individual schools use the school, system, and state summary reports to determine the effectiveness of the system's or school's curriculum and instruction. The CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) is a measure of the state's required curriculum, and score interpretation focuses on if students have met the grade-level expectations in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. After the school has received the report, the data were examined and interpreted for valid results. The results were examined to determine gains or lack thereof. Based on the results, the determination of the effectiveness of the reading intervention program was obtained.

The raw data are provided by the local school's administration upon request. The raw data are sub-group not individual data. The raw data are created using graphs, charts, and tables for each grade level. Data are collected does not have students' name associated with the scores. Data are displayed using an Excel spreadsheet for each group

Data Collections and Analysis

The causal comparative research design used pre-existing data from the CRCT 3rd-5th Grade Reading Assessment in April of the 2013 and 2014 school years to determine students' reading achievement. The study was conducted using a control group of students who are served by special education using the current reading program and a treatment group who received the new reading intervention program.

The independent variable was the grouping variable, the students who receive the traditional reading program and the students who receive the new reading intervention program. The independent variable was categorical. The dependent variable was the third through fifth grade students with disabilities overall reading scores and each reading

domain score as measured by CRCT, which is a continuous variable. The CRCT reading domains are aligned at each grade level in third through fifth grades (Gadoe, 2013a). The requirements of the CRCT are the same in grades third through fifth. Students with disabilities in grades third through fifth received reading instruction in the treatment group, which used the Journeys reading intervention program or the control group, which used the traditional reading program. Therefore, the results were presented collectively in one statistical analysis in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Error Level of Reading Scores (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Control Group (n = 10)			Treatment Group (n = 24)		
		Median	M	SD	Median	M	SD
Reading	900	793.07	768.21	24.86	838.31	800.45	37.86

Table 1 illustrates the means CRCT reading scores of third through fifth grade students with disabilities. The table also displays the standard deviation, error levels, and results for the control group and treatment group.

The average score for control group was estimated to be 768. The average score for treatment group is estimated to be 800. The standard deviation for the control group is 24.86. The standard deviation for the treatment group is 37.86. The Alpha error level is 5%. The Beta error level is 50%.

The 2012 Mann-Whitney U test is an appropriate option for comparing the two variables in the study. The test can be used to compare the difference control and

treatment groups. Certainties within the measures are shown in the standard deviation. The differences in the measures are determined by calculating the two averages and dividing them (Creswell, 2012). A Mann-Whitney U test is used for examining the means of two populations and compare them against a standard to determine the standard deviation using limited sample; $n < 30$ (SISA, 2013).

The Mann-Whitney U test uses statistical analysis methods that are adequate for small samples. The t-tests can compare the differences of two groups. The expected sample size for the t-test is 30. Whereas t-test uses independent-samples, the Mann-Whitney U test allows for various outcomes about data relying on the predictions made about data's dissemination (Creswell, 2012). The findings may vary from easily examining how two populations differ to concluding if there are changes in medians among the groups (Creswell, 2012). Being that the population for this study is small the Mann-Whitney U test is the best method.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

The assumptions are the new reading program increases the reading achievement of students with disabilities. The new reading curriculum improves reading scores of students with disabilities on the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a) that is comparable to general education students. The scope of the project study focused on a specific group that allows the researcher to gain detailed information and ensure for accurate results. A limitation for the project study is the size of the sample. The size of the sample for the study is a small group which provided limited data as opposed to larger group for more data.

Protection of Participants' Rights

The data used for the project study were pre-existing test data from the 2013 and 2014 school years. The data included the entire sub-groups of third through fifth grade students with disabilities not individual students. Pre-existing data do not require for any consent from the participations. For confidentiality purposes, the names of the students and teachers are not disclosed to the researcher. There was not any harm to any participant in the project study. The researcher obtained the data from the director of strategic planning and program evaluation at the local school district. Obtaining data required prior approval from the school district. The researcher provided the school district with a form explaining what information is needed for the study. The data use agreement provides the researcher with constant from the school district to obtain data needed for the study. The school district granted permission after submission of the data usage agreement form. The researcher is not the teacher of record for either classroom. Permission is not required from parents because testing data is pre-existing. The data is stored on a computer with a protected password which only the researcher has access. The data is stored until the conclusion of the study. At the conclusion of the study, all files and information will be deleted by the researcher.

Data Analysis Results

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare performance of the two groups of students on the 2013 and 2014 Criterion Referenced Competency Tests. The data were analyzed according to the sources of evidence which included state assessment documents. Data collected on 34 students with disabilities in grades third, fourth, and

fifth were analyzed using two groups. The control group, examined students that do not receive the Journeys reading intervention program. The treatment group, examined students that received the Journeys reading intervention program.

Table 2 contains a description of the participants. Fewer scores were collected on students in the control group ($n = 10$) than in the treatment group ($n = 24$). In addition, the sample included a preponderance of fifth-grade resource students.

Table 2

Description of the Sample Used by Setting, Grade, and Gender (N = 34)

Grade/Gender	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Control Group						
Third	3	37.5	1	50.0	4	40.0
Fourth	3	37.5	0	0.0	3	30.0
Fifth	2	25.0	1	50.0	3	30.0
Total	8		2		10	
Treatment Group						
Third	6	60.0	3	50.0	9	55.0
Fourth	4	42.9	1	16.7	5	29.8
Fifth	6	60.0	4	42.9	10	51.5
Total	16		8		24	

To examine the lack of reading achievement gains for students with disabilities, the project study relied on the following guiding questions.

RQ1: What is the difference in overall reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H_o : There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional intervention reading program on the overall reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a : There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the overall reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

The overall reading section data analyses revealed students with disabilities in the treatment group ($M=800.43$) scored significantly higher than the students with disabilities in the control group ($M=785.60$) in Table 3. In all cases, the treatment group who used the Journeys reading intervention program met the state standards in reading. The control group who received the traditional reading program, did not meet the state standards in reading. There was a 14.83-point difference between the two groups overall reading scores. Table 3 displays the median, mean, and standard deviation for the overall reading scores by group. Table 4 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U statistic for overall reading.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Reading Scores Used in Analysis (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Control Group (n = 10)			Treatment Group (n = 24)		
		Median	M	SD	Median	M	SD
Reading	900	786.50	785.60	9.72	805.00	800.43	15.24

Table 4

Differences Between Class Types

Score	Control Group (<i>n</i> = 10)		Treatment Group (<i>n</i> = 24)		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>P</i>
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mean rank	Sum of ranks		
Reading	5.50	55.00	17.00	408.00	9.00	< .01

Table 3 indicated the treatment group ($n=24$) received higher overall reading scores $M = 800.43$ ($SD = 15.24$) on the CRCT. By comparison, the control group ($n= 10$) received lower overall reading scores $M = 785.60$ ($SD = 9.72$). To test the hypothesis there will be a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the overall reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

The results of the Manny-Whitney U revealed the null hypothesis was rejected. The Mann-Whitney U test is shown above in Table 4. The table displays the difference between class types. Also, Table 4 displays mean ranks ($MR = 17.00$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 408.00$) treatment group ($n=24$) and mean ranks ($MR = 5.50$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 55.00$) control group ($n = 10$). The Mann-Whitney test revealed the treatment group scored statistically higher in overall reading achievement compared to the control group ($U = 9.00, p < .01$).

The students in the treatment group performed significantly better than the control group on the CRCT according to the data in Table 3 and Table 4. Rasinski et al. (2011) discovered a connection between students with disabilities that received reading interventions and progress in reading achievement on a state and national summative assessments. The overall reading scores indicated that the treatment group that received the Journey reading intervention program benefited from the use of differentiated instruction in the small group setting. According to Vaughn et al. (2011), students who receive reading interventions that use differentiated instruction tend to perform better on reading assessments.

The control group performed below third through fifth grade-level standards in overall reading on the CRCT. The control group mean score was 785.60. The treatment group performed on third through fifth grade-level standards in overall reading on the CRCT. The treatment group mean score was 800.43. The mean score needed to meet third through fifth grade-level standards is 800. The control group that used the traditional reading program did not perform as well as the treatment group that use the Journeys reading intervention program. The below average performance of the control group may have been because of the curriculum of the traditional reading program and the larger group setting. The control group had 10 students and the treatment group had 24 students in grades third through fifth. Although, the numbers were disproportion with the control group having fewer and the treatment group having more the mean scores indicated the Journeys reading intervention program was effective for students with disabilities and traditional reading program was ineffective for students with disabilities.

RQ2: What is the difference in literacy comprehension reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the literacy comprehension reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the literacy comprehension reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

The literacy domain data analysis revealed students with disabilities in the treatment group ($M=7.30$) scored significantly higher than the students with disabilities in the control group ($M=5.50$). There was a 1.80-point difference between the two groups. Table 5 displays the median, mean, and standard deviation for the overall reading scores by group. Table 6 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U statistic for literacy.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of Reading Scores Used in Analysis (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Control Group (n = 10)			Treatment Group (n = 24)		
		Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Literacy	16	6.00	5.50	2.07	7.00	7.30	2.74

Table 6

Differences Between Class Types

Score	Control Group (<i>n</i> = 10)		Treatment Group (<i>n</i> = 24)		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>P</i>
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mean rank	Sum of ranks		
Literacy	7.45	74.50	15.50	372.00	19.50	< .01

Table 5 indicated the treatment group ($n=24$) received higher literacy scores $M = 7.30$ ($SD = 2.74$) on the CRCT. By comparison, the control group ($n= 10$) received lower literacy comprehension scores $M = 5.50$ ($SD = 2.07$). To test the hypothesis there will be a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the literacy comprehension reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

The results of the Manny-Whitney U revealed the null hypothesis was rejected. The Mann-Whitney U test is shown above in Table 6. The table displays the difference between class types. Also, Table 6 displays mean ranks ($MR = 15.50$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 372.00$) treatment group ($n = 24$) and mean ranks ($MR = 7.45$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 74.50$) control group ($n = 10$). The Mann-Whitney test revealed the treatment group scored statistically higher in literacy comprehension reading achievement compared to the control group ($U = 19.50, p < .01$).

The students in the treatment group performed better than the control group on the CRCT according to the data in Table 5 and Table 6. The second reading domain was

literacy on the CRCT. In literacy, the treatment group mean scores were higher than the control group. Solis et al. (2012) found implementing various literacy program can increase measures for students with disabilities in reading. The treatment group received a proficient literacy program using the Journeys reading intervention program. The Journeys reading intervention program implemented guided reading in the small group instruction. Guided reading instruction allowed for various reading strategies that improves reading skills for students with disabilities. The results prove that alternative reading programs can increase reading skills for students with disabilities (Edmonds et al., 2009).

The control group scored a low average in the literacy domain. The control group mean score was 5.50. The treatment group performed on third through fifth grade-level standards in literacy domain on the CRCT. The treatment group mean score was 7.30. The mean score needed to meet third through fifth grade-level standards is 7.00. The control group used the traditional reading program which uses three reading components as opposed to five reading components used by the Journeys reading intervention program. The use of only three reading components may have contribute to the low mean scores on the CRCT. Another contributing factor to low mean scores of the control group were students with disabilities being in the larger group setting for reading instruction. The students in the control group read independently, while the students in the treatment group received direct instruction using guided reading. Research found explicit and direct instruction has a meaning role in reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Guided reading supports students with disabilities with learning to read according to the data.

RQ3: What is the difference in information and media literacy reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys intervention reading program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the information and media literacy reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the information and media literacy reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

The media domain data analyses showed students with disabilities in the treatment group ($M=6.09$) scored significantly higher than students with disabilities in the control group ($M=4.10$). The standard deviations for each score in each group were similar. There was a 1.99-point difference between the two groups. Table 7 displays the median, mean, and standard deviation for the overall reading scores by group. Table 8 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U statistic for media.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of Reading Scores Used in Analysis (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Control Group (n = 10)			Treatment Group (n = 24)		
		Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Media	16	4.00	4.10	0.88	5.00	6.09	2.70

Table 8

Differences Between Class Types

Score	Control Group (n = 10)		Treatment Group (n = 24)		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mean rank	Sum of ranks		
Media	7.40	74.00	15.54	372.96	19.00	< .01

Table 7 indicated the treatment group ($n=24$) received significantly higher information and media literacy scores $M = 6.09$ ($SD = 2.70$) on the CRCT. By comparison, the control group ($n= 10$) received lower higher information and media literacy scores $M = 4.10$ ($SD = 0.88$). To test the hypothesis there will be a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the information and media literacy reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

The results of the Manny-Whitney U revealed the null hypothesis was rejected.

The Mann-Whitney U test is shown above in Table 8. The table displays the difference between class types. Also, Table 8 displays mean ranks ($MR = 15.54$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 372.96$) treatment group ($n=24$) and mean ranks ($MR = 7.40$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 74.00$) control group ($n = 10$). The Mann-Whitney test revealed the treatment group scored statistically higher in information and media literacy reading achievement compared to the control group ($U = 19.00, p < .01$).

The treatment group performed significantly better than the control group on media domain on the CRCT according to the data in Table 7 and Table 8. The findings indicated the mean scores in the media domain for the treatment group were below the average, but higher than the control group. The treatment group achieved higher scores due to the effectiveness of the Journeys reading intervention program. The Journeys reading intervention program provided the treatment group with the media reading skills to score significantly higher than the control group on the CRCT. Levy, Kim, and Olive (2006) states interventions for students with disabilities provide effective strategies for multi-domains of reading.

The control group failed to yield the results required to meet the third through fifth grade-level standards. The control group mean score was 4.10. The treatment group performed on third through fifth grade-level standards in information and media literacy domain on the CRCT. The treatment group mean score was 6.09. The mean score needed to meet third through fifth grade-level standards is 5.00. The results of the Mann-Whitney U could be due to lack of the intensity and focus the traditional reading curriculum does not provided. Allor et al. (2010) suggests that reading resources are

limited and more intense intervention should be used for struggling readers. Traditional reading programs must provide direct based instruction over an extended time period to support students with disabilities with reading progress. The findings indicate the traditional reading program failed to meet the needs of the learners.

RQ4: What is the difference in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys intervention reading program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

The vocabulary domain data analyses showed students with disabilities in the treatment group ($M=5.46$) scored significantly higher than the students with disabilities in the control group ($M=3.60$). There was a 1.86-point difference between the two groups. Table 9 displays the median, mean, and standard deviation for the overall reading scores by group. Table 10 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U statistic for vocabulary.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations of Reading Scores Used in Analysis (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Control Group (n = 10)			Treatment Group (n = 24)		
		Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Vocabulary	8	3.00	3.60	1.35	4.65	5.46	0.81

Table 10

Differences Between Class Types

Score	Control Group (n = 10)		Treatment Group (n = 24)		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mean rank	Sum of ranks		
Vocabulary	7.40	74.00	15.54	372.96	19.00	< .01

Table 9 indicated the treatment group ($n=24$) received reading skills and vocabulary acquisition scores $M = 5.46$ ($SD = 0.81$) on the CRCT. By comparison, the control group ($n= 10$) received lower reading skills and vocabulary acquisition scores $M = 3.60$ ($SD = 1.35$). To test the hypothesis there will be a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

The results of the Manny-Whitney U revealed the null hypothesis was rejected. The Mann-Whitney U test is shown above in Table 10. The table displays the difference

between class types. Also, Table 10 displays mean ranks ($MR = 15.54$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 372.96$) treatment group ($n=24$) and mean ranks ($MR = 7.40$) and sum of ranks ($SR = 74.00$) control group ($n = 10$). The Mann-Whitney test revealed the treatment group scored statistically higher in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement compared to the control group ($U = 19.00, p < .01$).

The treatment group performed significantly better than the control group on domain on the CRCT according to the data in Table 9 and Table 10. The findings indicated the treatment group achieved higher mean scores than the control group. The treatment group acquired reading and vocabulary acquisition skills through the Journey reading intervention program. Johnson et al. (2004) study discovered students with disabilities acquired vocabulary acquisition in the small group setting that implemented intervention strategies. The treatment group being supported through small group instruction increased vocabulary mean scores significantly. Also, the results indicated the treatment group performed above average on the vocabulary domain compared to the control group who performed below average.

The control group struggled in the reading and vocabulary skills domain on the CRCT. The control group mean score was 3.60. The treatment group performed on third through fifth grade-level standards in the reading and vocabulary skills domain on the CRCT. The treatment group mean score was 5.46. The mean score needed to meet third through fifth grade-level standards is 4.00. The mean scores indicate the traditional reading program did not provide the control group with the vocabulary skills to meet grade-level standards. The traditional reading program does not offer the appropriate

vocabulary acquisition instruction for students to be successful on summative assessments. Tomeson and Aarnoutse (1998) states direct instruction is the best strategy for learning vocabulary. Therefore, students who do not receive direct instruction will continue to have difficulties with vocabulary acquisition.

Summary

The methodology in the study is a major component in yielding accurate results. The causal comparative research design is the most significant to use in the study for assessing the reading intervention program. The research design allows the researcher to make a comparison between the new reading intervention program and the traditional program. The sample size consisted of 34 students with disabilities in grades third through fifth. In the treatment group students received the Journeys reading intervention program. The treatment group were in the resource setting. The control group received the traditional reading program. The control group were in the co-taught setting. The intervention used in the study is a reading program that supports struggling readers who are reading 2 to 3 grade levels below their grade level. The Journeys reading intervention program has various components and innovative strategies that helped improve students' reading level. The data were measured from the scores of the CRCT (Gadoe, 2013a), which was a reliable assessment tool for reading comprehension. The CRCT reading section was compiled into four reading domains: reading, literacy, media, and vocabulary. The data collection procedure used pre-existing data over 2 years. The data collected was from the CRCT reading section and each reading domain. Assumptions are the Journeys reading intervention program improved the reading achievement of students

with disabilities in the treatment group. Limitations were the small sample size of students with disabilities in grades third through fifth in the local school. All participants in the study are kept confidential. Names of participants were not provided to the researcher. All data used in the project study was pre-existing. Therefore, all participants' rights are protected. Last, data were analyzed using a Mann-Whitney U test to answer the guiding question. Through the methodology, the study provided the researcher with results in determining the effectiveness of the reading program for students with disabilities. The study served as baseline data for the reading program. The program evaluation report provided stakeholders with a full report of the findings of the project study. The results from the study provided the school and district leaders with data to make informed decision on how to support students with disabilities in reading.

Section 3: The Project

The purpose of the study was to examine whether the Journeys reading intervention program contributed to the reading achievement of third- through fifth-grade students with disabilities in a local elementary school in Georgia. The specific intent of the study was to examine the instructional reading program, which included the components of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, at one elementary school in the local school district. The reading intervention program focused on the five reading domains: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). I examined the current reading achievement of third-through fifth-grade students with disabilities through an analysis of district and school documents at each grade level. I also examined the effectiveness of the Journeys reading intervention program compared to the traditional reading program through statistical analysis. Findings may be used by stakeholders to promote the implementation of the Journeys reading intervention program.

Rationale

The reading achievement of students served by special education is declining in the local school district. To address this problem, I examined the influence of the Journeys reading intervention program on reading achievement. Findings provided the district with information to improve the reading achievement of students with disabilities by updating the reading curriculum for the intermediate grades.

Program evaluation was used to examine the major outcomes of the Journeys reading intervention program for students with disabilities. Program evaluation provides

stakeholders with useful data to improve the reading curriculum for students with disabilities. I summarized the findings in a report that will be disseminated throughout the district. The program evaluation included a description of the Journeys reading intervention program's curriculum and components. By providing appropriate recommendations to stakeholders, I offered effective solutions for addressing reading achievement problem of students with disabilities. Supporting the strengths of the Journeys reading intervention program through the program evaluation data provided stakeholders an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

I chose a program evaluation because of the design for reporting the information effectively. The program evaluation included the purpose of the project study, the sample size, the data collection and analysis procedures, and the results. In addition, the program evaluation provided stakeholders with recommendations to improve the reading curriculum for students with disabilities.

Review of the Literature

The focus of this study was instructional factors that contribute to the reading achievement of students with disabilities in Grades 3 through 5. During the last decade, students with disabilities have shown insufficient growth in reading compared to the significant progress of their nondisabled peers (Vaughn & Wanzek, 2014). The reasons for the lack of progress in reading for students with disabilities are not known. Many think it is the extended time in regular education classes (NCES, 2014) where the setting might not support students with disabilities' learning needs.

Studies of learning to read have included intense interventions for students who have reading challenges (Snowling & Hulme, 2011). Saracho (2015) stated researchers must be diligent in their examination of elementary education programs, interventions, and evaluation methods. Determining an effective method of evaluation in elementary education is the foundation for predicting outcomes. Baughman, Boyd, and Franz (2012) suggested claims for accountability in early childhood programs have caused demands for program evaluation in the educational system. Program evaluation supports users on how a program is evaluated with appropriate procedures (Chacon-Moscoso, Anguera, Sanduvete-Chaves, & Sanchez-Martin 2014).

Braskamp (2013) suggested program evaluation offers many benefits to researchers: (a) helps teachers to improve instruction, (b) offers data to stakeholders for making decisions about district budgets, and (c) gives information to students for selecting courses. Program evaluation guides the types of data collected, the analysis and representation of the data, and the distribution and use of the findings (Braskamp, 2013). Program evaluation serves many functions including improving programs, accountability and decision making, value, noteworthiness, and prompting social skills (Gargani & Miller, 2016).

An evaluation report identifies the program's purpose and goals, the research questions, and data to be collected. The program's evaluator and staff must create the plan before the start of the program, using a process that involves all stakeholders of the program. If evaluators focus their attention on the concepts that motivate the programs they evaluate (Jones, 2013), educational program evaluations can be beneficial in

increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Evaluators have an obligation to present clearly the results of their evaluative efforts (Johnson, Hall, Greene, & Ahn, 2013).

A program evaluation report supports evaluations in the future. Disseminating the report to all stakeholders ensures that the findings are clear and that all stakeholders agree on the purpose of both the program and the evaluation. The evaluation report provides a guide that answers questions regarding mandates, requests for program and evaluation funding, and stakeholders' concerns (Yates, 2012).

Baizerman, Fink, and VeLure Roholt (2012) suggested that during daily evaluation practices, evaluators must gather information from staff and stakeholders who are invested in their specific development. Jacob and Desautels (2014) suggested that the introduction of standards monitoring evaluation practice promotes a more critical view of the quality of evaluations. This process of ex-post revision, also known as metaevaluation, is frequently recommended by the evaluative norms of different evaluation organizations.

Judgment-oriented evaluations are designed to identify the efficiency and value of the program and to determine whether the goals and purpose have been accomplished (Hassan, 2013). Improvement-oriented evaluations identify whether the program has been implemented effectively to increase the value of the program (Hassan, 2013). Knowledge-oriented evaluations address how programs operate and how individuals may differ in opinions because of positive interventions (Hassan, 2013).

Evaluation approaches focus on self-reflection about learning by providing specific information on personal learning experience and may enhance understanding of the larger influence of leadership development programs (King & Nesbit, 2015). Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer (2010) recognized two main factors for evaluation activities: (a) to have a better account for program funds and (b) to increase the overall program effectiveness. Evaluators and chief officials consider the effectiveness of the program as the more important of the two (Wholey et al., 2010). Benjamin (2012) stated that many programs give top priority to outside reporting to funders practices that frequently do not point to improving programs. Recent evaluation reports show it is common to seek information, ideas, and references that the evaluator assesses and to use informal and formal feedback for the interest of users from various stakeholders of a specific study (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Evaluation reports suggest the use of information from others for conducting, analyzing, and completing an evaluation, and specifically for improving program effectiveness (Pankaj, Welsh, & Ostenso, 2011).

Effectiveness of the evaluation process depends on meeting the learning needs of students (Kimbel & Clemens, 2014). Evaluating a program involves making fact-based judgments, and there is a growing demand for evidence that not only ask questions such as “What works?” and “What is the effect size?” but also how or why a specific program is effective (Wong, Greenhalgh Westhorp, Buckingham, & Pawson, 2013). Linzalone and Schiuma (2015) noted that evaluation is the process of examining the effectiveness of a practice including decision-making about the progression of programs. Linzalone and Schiuma (2015) suggested quantitative designs offer systematic relations that allow

evaluation reporting and the preparation of attainable results. Program evaluation models and data offer insight about the forms of participant evaluations and program components that may be regularly distributed for detailed settings, behaviors, providers, and participants (Ward, Atkinson, Smith, & Windsor, 2013).

Program evaluation reports are the most important components of any curriculum. Program evaluation reports are a type of checks and balances in which features of educational programs are examined. Borrás and Hojlund (2015) stated it is essential to know that the evaluation outline is far from automaticity in defining learning. Stakeholders learn to use their perceptions of the evaluation outline and develop an awareness of the evaluated intervention. Program evaluation is an activity in which various forms of a curriculum are critiqued. The highest goal of program evaluation is to guarantee that achievement is happening, learning methods and procedures are helpful, resources are appropriate, and materials are accessible and sufficient (Zohrabi, 2012). Chyung (2015) stated evaluation is a vital stage in the process of improving academic achievement. Evaluation provides fact-based data to improve performance. Evaluation reports must be examined during performance analysis, program design, development, collection, and intervention application.

According to Young, Denny, and Donnelly (2012), an evaluation report may be modified for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The rigor of program evaluations demonstrates effective findings that may lead to broader distribution of appropriate programs (Young et al., 2012). Guerra-López's (2012) impact evaluation process demonstrated a methodical PI evaluation process that allowed for successful steps for

programs as they develop and apply evaluation that leads to positive results. The evaluation process provides stakeholders with information to ask questions regarding the value and efficiency of projects, interventions, and solutions while determining whether internal goals were achieved (Guerra-López, 2012).

Most research presents effective findings from reading interventions for struggling adolescent learners, including those who have been diagnosed with a learning disability (Flynn, Zheng, & Swanson, 2012). Ko and Hughes (2015) stated that teachers reading aloud can be important to reading comprehension for older students with reading difficulties because it gives students access to more complex material they cannot read independently and provides them with an opportunity to become exposed to text with a skilled reader. For students with disabilities, instructional strategies such as reading aloud independently are not effective for increasing reading comprehension and should not be substituted for direct reading instruction (Ko & Hughes, 2015).

Broadman (2016) showed that students without LD in different environments made progress in a limited period with no variation between treatment and comparison groups. The study indicated that students without LD seemed to learn from the instruction being implemented in their class regardless of whether Collaborative Strategic Reading was received. Broadman et al. (2016) also showed students with LD who used CSR implemented by their regular education teacher made considerably more progress in reading comprehension than students with LD who did not receive the CSR program. The findings were limited due to the sample size.

When conducting applied research studies, Bloom and Michalopoulos (2013) reported that there is concern not only in the overall average outcomes of an intervention but also the outcomes for various subgroups. However, there are strong causal designs that require the cognitive devices that are important for the process of reading fluency (Hulme & Snowling, 2013). Jacobson, Azzam, and Baez (2013) conducted a content analysis focusing on evaluations of programs for students with disabilities, and examined whether stakeholders were involved in the development of evaluations, how program recipient feedback was collected, and in which phase of the evaluation stakeholder involvement happened. The results showed that program recipient type of disability can predict the type and level of inclusion, and inclusion happens in later stages of the evaluation process (Jacobson et al., 2013).

The significance of wider verbal language skills for the development of both decoding and reading comprehension skills are critical to development of the role of verbal language interventions as instruction for particularly increasing reading comprehension skills (Fricke, Bowyer-Crane, Haley, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013). Based upon the findings, adjusting the reading curriculum was necessary. Although the amount of time students with disabilities are in regular education classes has extended slowly over time, their academic progress remains below their non-disabled peers (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014).

Project Description

The evaluation report concluded the findings to be valid for the project study. The program evaluation observed significant differences between the two groups on each of

the scores. In all cases, the students that used the Journeys reading intervention program scored significantly higher. The evaluation report suggests the Journeys reading intervention program was effective in supporting students with disabilities to obtain reading achievement.

The researcher was responsible for collecting and analyzing data for the project study, and therefore, a potential barrier was the bias of the researcher. To prevent any subjectivity, the researcher adhered to guidelines and policies for collecting and analyzing data. It is also important to note that at the time of this study, this researcher was employed as an elementary special education teacher by the school district where this study was conducted; however, the researcher selected an elementary school site where he was not employed.

The program evaluation report is disseminated to the school district in May 2017. The evaluation report is distributed via e-mail after the report has been completed. If required by the district the researcher meets to present the evaluation report to the curriculum administrators. Meetings will be held at the administrative offices in June 2017. After the meeting, the committee will determine to share the findings of the report to all stakeholders. The evaluation report will be presented to stakeholders during two meetings in July 2017. In August 2017, a decision will be determined rather to investigate the current reading curriculum for students with disabilities and make amendments based on the information in the evaluation report. Based upon that decision the changes are implemented to the current reading curriculum for students with disabilities in September 2017.

Project Implications

The results for this study revealed that the majority of students with disabilities at the local school met state standards for reading proficiency in the intermediate grades due to the use of Journeys reading intervention program that targeted phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension using research based scripted daily lessons and weekly complete assessment component that enables teachers to monitor student progress. Most students with disabilities in local school met standards in reading that received the Journeys reading intervention than other students with disabilities that used the tradition reading curriculum.

An immediate action of change to improve reading curriculum is still needed for students with disabilities in particular to become proficient readers. Students with disabilities can benefit from the Journeys reading intervention program. By implementing a new innovative reading program students with disabilities can improve reading achievement. Students with disabilities has been proven to benefit from direct reading instruction, which the Journeys reading intervention program uses. Implementing the Journeys reading intervention program can change the way educators teach reading to students with disabilities. Direct reading instruction uses explicit reading strategies that support the learning styles of students with disabilities. Through the implementation of the Journeys reading intervention program the impact on the reading curriculum can bring change in how all students learn reading skills.

The project study is important to stakeholders because of the validity of the results. Findings of the program evaluation explain to stakeholders the need for reading

curriculum that enhanced the way students with disabilities were thought reading skills. The evaluation report validates the Journey reading intervention program as the new standard in teaching students with disabilities how to read. The evaluation reports present evidence to stakeholders of how to successfully close the reading achievement gap among students with disabilities. From the information in the program evaluation stakeholders can determine if the Journey reading intervention program is suitable for all students with disabilities in the school district.

Conclusion

The implications of the project study suggest the Journeys reading intervention program was effective for students with disabilities. The finding determined the students with disabilities that received the Journeys reading intervention program within the treatment group scored at a proficient level on the CRCT in the content area of reading. However, the findings suggest the traditional reading curriculum was insufficient for students with disabilities. Therefore, using the Journeys reading intervention program supported students with disabilities in closing reading achievement gaps.

Section 4 will summarize the program evaluation report. Also, the project's strengths will be examined. The recommendations and limitations of the project study will be addressed. Next, the project's potential impact for social change will be discussed. The discussion includes an overall reflection on the importance of the work and what was learned. In addition, recommendations for action and future research will be presented as well as implications for positive social change in education. The researcher will reflect on

the importance of the work and what was learned. Finally, the project study will be concluded.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to compare the effect of the Journeys reading intervention program and the traditional reading curriculum on the reading achievement of students with disabilities in third through fifth grades. The results of the project study indicated that students with disabilities who received the Journeys reading intervention program made more significant gains in reading achievement compared to students who received the traditional reading curriculum. A program evaluation report was developed to present the results of the project study to stakeholders to promote an effective reading program for students with disabilities to close the reading achievement gap. The program evaluation recommended alternative approaches to improve reading among students with disabilities. The project study was a small step in the right directions toward change for how students with disabilities are taught reading, and further research is needed to decrease the reading achievement gap for students with disabilities nationally.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of the program evaluation can be discussed in relation to research on the topic, to practice in the field, to educational policy, and to social change in the field of education. A strength of the program evaluation was data analysis. By using the Mann-Whitney U test, I compared data between the control and treatment groups. The Mann-Whitney U test design allowed a researcher to compare the small sample sizes of each group. I desegregated data in each reading section of the CRCT and reported the findings in a comprehensive manner so that stakeholders can complete a systematic

review. The program evaluation provided descriptions of the Journeys reading intervention program for stakeholders to examine in depth.

Some limitations that were potential researcher bias and sample size. I am a special education teacher who may have bias about the subject. The sample was a small group of students with disabilities, which limited generalizability of findings. Future studies should include a larger sample to provide more generalizable results.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on the data analysis, I concluded that the district can improve the reading achievement of students with disabilities in the following areas: an updated reading curriculum for the intermediate grades, more reading initiatives for students with disabilities, additional staff development for phonics instruction and reading comprehension, and an effective support group who can reach out to parents to provide support for their children's learning. The reading instructional materials need to be updated to match the state standards that are currently used for third through fifth grade students with disabilities. The reading components of the traditional reading curriculum need to be updated to include reading interventions that address students who perform below grade level. The reading curriculum needs instruction materials and strategies for ESOL learners and students with disabilities.

For students with disabilities, receiving continuous effective reading instruction is crucial. Students with disabilities should engage in opportunities that allow them to receive modeling of effective reading instruction. According to Allington and Gabriel (2012), students must (a) be afforded the freedom of choice to read materials that spark

their interest, (b) read materials according to their reading level to ensure fluency, (c) have discussions and provide feedback about the reading material, and (d) hear teachers consistently modeling effective reading fluency daily. Effective modeling of reading is demonstrated through reading aloud, direct instruction, and guided reading instruction. Effective reading instruction includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Reading intervention programs support students with disabilities reading achievement. Students with disabilities require more intensive reading curriculum instead of the traditional reading program for general education students. Reading intervention programs will also benefit struggling general education students and English language learners.

English as a second language (ESL) students also benefit from the same kinds of effective instructional strategies from which all students benefit. ESL students may require specific instructional accommodations such as extended instruction time, small groups, explanations, and paraphrasing of text. Additional instructional support in vocabulary specifically benefits ESL students. Geva and Farnia (2012) found that English language learners who received reading interventions made significant progress at the elementary level. Instruction that connects the visual and the auditory appears to lead to achievement gains for ESL students (Richards-Tutor, Baker, Gersten, Baker, & Smith, 2016).

More effective reading initiatives should be provided to support students with disabilities to read. These initiatives could be incorporated during the school day or through tutoring and after-school programs. To provide the foundation for future reading

and academic success, the program should include improving oral language skills, building alphabet knowledge, developing phonological awareness, increasing print awareness, implementing and maintaining a researched-based language and print-rich school environment to provide abundant opportunities for students to use print and practice literacy skills, and increasing fluency and comprehension skills (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). Effective teaching strategies ensure all students with or without disabilities learn reading skills successfully. Best practices of instruction followed with fidelity each day provide students with an opportunity to improve reading and learning skills. Educators must design a specific plan to support students with disabilities to accomplish their reading goals and objectives. Daily effective reading instruction and best practices is top propriety in educating all students.

The third recommendation is that staff development in reading needs to address new and experienced teachers who need help in providing instruction in the areas of phonics, phonetic segmentation, diagraphs, diphthongs, onset and rhymes, and comprehension practices for each grade level. Teachers receive phonics instruction training during monthly district professional learning days. Phonics trainings occur weekly with reading content specialists. Phonics instruction should also be continued in the intermediate grades, and teachers at these grade levels might also need additional staff development.

The final recommendation is that coalitions should be developed for the school, district, and state concerning how to help parents assist their children in improving their reading skills. These parent coalitions could increase parent participation and increase the

reading achievement of students with disabilities, especially in the intermediate grades. The school community liaison would identify parents who are willing to participate in the initiative. The community liaison would offer monthly trainings sessions that would include teacher observations, reading method workshops, and grade level standard assessments. The groups would rotate each month into a new workshop. Each workshop would meet for 3 months. At the end of the year, parents would be nominated to conduct workshops for other parents under the supervision of instructional leaders at the school. The purpose of this initiative would be to increase reading achievement by making parents the literacy leaders in their homes.

To create change, stakeholders should be focused on expanding the project study from one local school to an entire school district to promote effective strategies to improve the reading achievement of students with disabilities (see McMahon & Smith, 2012). School, district, and state administrators could also be included to understand the role of administrators in meeting the learning needs of students with disabilities (see Carnahan, Basham, Christman, & Hollingshead, 2012). The district curriculum alignment committee would be responsible for implementing these needed revisions. In addition, the curriculum adoption committee should purchase curriculum materials that are consistent with the standards of the current primary grade level curriculum.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

The project was developed based on the need to improve reading achievement of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are capable of learning reading skills given an appropriate reading curriculum that fits their learning style. All students can

learn in the right circumstances. Having students with disabilities receive direct instruction is critical to their learning in all subjects, not just reading. By providing students with disabilities an opportunity to be successful, they can achieve.

As a scholar, I gained knowledge in researching a topic I am passionate about. During my research, I found interventions were proven to be productive for students with disabilities. I often asked myself why more schools are not using alternative methods for reading. Finding the literature was often difficult at times. There were limited resources on the reading achievement of students with disabilities. I realized students with disabilities often get overlooked in education. Although students with disabilities are different, they are equally important in education. I chose to become an interrelated teacher to support students with disabilities and to prove to stakeholders these students can learn the same as general education students when given the right teacher and curriculum. Teaching students with disabilities requires patience, passion, and caring. Education is about teaching all students regardless of obstacles students may face.

As a practitioner, the process has been rewarding. Researching can be powerful and fulfilling for an educator. My research has enabled me to be a better educator. Throughout the research process, I discovered effective methods for data collection and analysis. The design for the project study was appropriate for the research questions. Gathering data can be a strenuous process, and choosing an appropriate method for data collection was top priority for ensuring accurate and valid results. The results were analyzed using statistical methods to provide credible results. I also chose an appropriate theoretical framework to support the findings. Organizing the project study was

challenging, and time management was my biggest obstacle. I created a schedule to effectively manage my time while I work full time as a teacher, father, husband, and student. I was determined that the investigation was necessary to improve the reading achievement of students with disabilities.

I determined that students with disabilities can have the same reading achievement as their nondisabled peers. Through the project study, I improved my researching skills. As I analyzed the data, I found the results to be astonishing. I learned to be patient and to persevere through difficult situations. I learned never to give up and to stand up for what is right. I made a closer connection to students with disabilities, and the connections allowed me to be more mindful of the abilities of students with disabilities when given the appropriate resources to succeed.

I can truly appreciate the hard work and dedication of educators. Teachers can have a significant impact on the lives of students at all levels. During my project study, I have grown as a student and an educator. My journey has been long and difficult, but satisfying.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

Supporting students with disabilities should be a top priority in schools. The reading achievement of students with disabilities must be addressed for the gap to be closed. The importance of the project study was to determine a more efficient curriculum for students with disabilities to learn reading skills and to close the reading achievement gap. The Journeys reading intervention program enables students with disabilities to make progress in reading. The results showed that students with disabilities could meet

state reading standards when provided with a reading curriculum that met their learning styles. Innovative reading strategies have to be implemented daily to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities.

Wanting students with disabilities to be proficient readers should be a major concern for all stakeholders in education. Students with disabilities often get overlooked in schools. Students with disabilities are sometimes pushed to the back of the classroom and not expected to learn because of disabilities. When examining schools' data, students with disabilities' results are an afterthought. Students with disabilities are not expected to perform on grade-level. The stigma of students with disabilities in education must be removed. Students with disabilities can achieve and should be expected to perform on the same level as their non-disabled peers. When provided with appropriate instruction that tailors to the learning styles of students with disabilities achievement can be sustained. The key to meeting the learning needs of students with disabilities is consistency and expectations with providing adequate instruction.

The project study is important because it relays the data to the learning community about the reading achievement of students with disabilities. The Journeys reading intervention program will support students with disabilities in their efforts to make gains and meet state standards in reading. The evaluation report serves as evidence that students with disabilities can meet state standards. The importance of the project study is significant to the field of education especially students with disabilities.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The core of impacting social change in education is to increase awareness of the special learning needs of students with disabilities. Changing the paradigm of education in the way that teachers perceive, instruct, and assess will assist educators and stakeholders in how to decrease the reading achievement gap of students with disabilities. Developing a national rubric for evaluating reading achievement of students with disabilities, and providing continuous training concerning how to teach reading to students with disabilities in school districts in grades K-5 should be top priority. Furthermore, there is a need for on-going strategies to increase positive perceptions of students with disabilities about reading. Administrators and teachers in schools should learn the important dynamics relative to the history, culture, and the family structure of students with disabilities because the public perceives students with disabilities as individuals connected to low achievement, therefore, changing the way that teachers and administrators think about students with disabilities will remain a core issue in the 21st century.

In addressing the implications for social change, four components should be targeted at the school, district, and state levels in order to close the achievement gap in reading. The district, state, and federal reading standards should be consistent with grade level and school expectations. Most students with disabilities are two to three grade levels below of their peers due to having processing deficits. There needs to be realistic expectations set for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are working well below grade level standards because of their disability. Therefore, students with

disabilities should not be required to meet grade level standards. Students with disabilities should be only required to meet goals and objectives of their individualized education plan.

The project study can be enlarged by including two or more schools in a comparative project study that would include participation from students, teachers, and parents. The sample size was small due to the number of students at the school. By including more students and schools the study can involve a larger sample size. A larger sample size can produce more accurate results using a variety of factors. Also, examining various reading curriculums used by students with disabilities would add more variables, which increases validity and reliability of the findings. The researcher believes meeting the learning needs of students with disabilities, especially in reading, involves a number of variables, and therefore, an expanded study should include student perceptions about the instructional factors that contribute to their reading success and the role of parents in the reading achievement of their children.

School districts should work with their communities to promote instructional reading strategies for students with disabilities that are proven by research to increase reading comprehension, with the assistance of all education stakeholders for the purpose of raising the efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies of each school. School districts can hold monthly community meetings for stakeholders to make decisions about the reading curriculum for students with disabilities. Having monthly community meetings will offer an opportunity for effective communication of all stakeholders in the best interest of students with disabilities.

Effective learning and inclusion classrooms should be explored and incorporated to assist with the motivational, instructional, and learning difficulties of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities must be included in the general education classroom through co-teaching. Co-teaching allows specialized instruction to benefit all students in the resource and general education classroom. Specialized instruction helps all students to learn using various strategies, such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning. Inclusion settings provide students with disabilities to be in the least restrictive environment for learning. Students with disabilities need to be in the classroom with their non-disabled peers as much as possible to provide a sense of normalcy and comfortably for them.

Print rich content area classrooms with appropriate technology should be promoted to address the challenging learning styles and abilities of each student. Students with disabilities require differentiated strategies for learning as opposed to traditional methods. Using technology enable students with disabilities to learn using numerous methods at once, which contribute to their success.

Future research would be to conduct a study to understand the role of administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school in developing instructional reading programs that intervene, mentor, and motivate students with disabilities. This study would compare the difficulties of creating a climate conducive for reading success at each school level. In addition, this study would include an analysis of the financial concerns that administrators face in providing quality instructional reading programs for students with disabilities at all grade levels.

Conclusion

Theories related to understanding the achievement gap between students with disabilities have been developed from a variety of disciplines, including education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and medicine. More specifically, LaBerge and Samuels' (1974) theory of automatic information processing in reading examined the speed of processing information and comprehension in reading. Basaran, (2013) theory connected the perception of letters and sounds to understanding information and using prior knowledge. Reading theories have caused today's educators to consider more than just test scores when evaluating the academic achievement of students. For years, educators have correlated academic achievement with formal assessments. However, the project study found that the majority of third through fifth students with disabilities in the resource setting at the local school performed on grade level in reading due in part to differentiated instructional strategies which allowed reading achievement on the CRCT.

The findings of the project study indicate that, at the local school, the reading achievement for third through fifth grade students with disabilities that received the Journeys reading intervention program has improved. However, the challenge still remains for administrators, teachers, and parents to discover innovative strategies for students with disabilities by continuing to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment in reading through a flexible and collaborative approach.

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Appendix A:

Evaluation Report of The Effects of the Journeys Reading Intervention on the Reading Achievement of Students with Disabilities

Introduction

The local school district reported students with disabilities who were in the general classroom less than 40% of the time scored proficiently 23.5% in 2010 and 20.7% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the CRCT (FCBOE, 2013). The local school district reported students without disabilities scored proficiently 96.8% in 2010 and 96.3% in 2011 in the content area of reading on the CRCT (FCBOE, 2013).

In the past 2 years, the local school district has shown a decline of reading scores for students with disabilities with scores going from 40% in 2011 to 32% in 2012 (FCBOE, 2013). The local school district has shown an increase of reading scores for general education students with scores going from 87% in 2012 to 93% in 2013. Also, the local school district has shown a decrease of reading scores for students with disabilities scores going from 32% in 2012 to 28% in 2013 (FCBOE, 2013). The latest benchmark scores indicate that fourth-grade students with disabilities average reading level is 2.3 and general education students average reading level is 4.9 (Gadoe, 2013). The results indicate students with disabilities are on average two grade levels below than general education students (FCBOE, 2013).

Data has shown that instruction given through current educational practices may not be adequately robust to satisfy the instructional needs of most students with disabilities. Although, there is empirical research to support the belief that students who struggle in

reading and have reading disabilities will progress their reading ability when supported through intensive reading interventions (Edmonds et al., 2009; Scammacca et al., 2007; Solis et al., 2012; Wanzek et al., 2014).

Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of the project study was to examine if the Journeys reading intervention program contributed to the reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities in a local elementary school in the state of Georgia. The specific intent of the study was to examine the instructional reading program at one elementary school in the local school district which included the components of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The reading intervention program focused on the five reading domains: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Harcourt, 2013). The project study examined the current reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities through an analysis of CRCT reading scores at each grade level.

The program evaluation can support stakeholders to design reading intervention programs that will meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. Based on the findings of the program evaluation, stakeholders can examine Journeys reading intervention program as the framework to designing a quality reading curriculum for students with disabilities. The reading curriculum can be amended to provide the intensive instruction needed for students with disabilities. A new innovative reading curriculum can provide students with disabilities with effective reading skills using fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. Improving the reading curriculum for students

with disabilities increases overall student achievement in reading. Educators can examine the strategies that are being currently used and make appropriate adjustments in reading.

The program evaluation is important to all stakeholders invested in the lives of students. The program evaluation provided valid findings to stakeholders for improving student achievement and designing a supportive reading program for students with disabilities. The program evaluation allowed district leaders to make informed decisions about the reading curriculum for students with disabilities in the future. The examination of the Journey reading intervention program shows the benefits of using direct and explicit instruction in all five reading domains for students with disabilities. The local school district can examine the data to determine the effectiveness of the Journeys reading intervention program.

The evaluation report presents the local school district with valid results of students with disabilities using the Journeys reading invention program. The results from the CRCT shows students with disabilities met state standards using the Journeys reading intervention program. Also, the project study allows the local school district to examine the ineffectiveness of the current reading program being implemented to students with disabilities. The current data from students with disabilities using the traditional reading program proved to be ineffective for student achievement in reading. The findings serve as evidenced-based research to support students with disabilities' reading achievement. The results afford district leaders to make amendments to the current reading curriculum for students with disabilities that would be in the best interest for learning proficient reading skills. Most importantly, the project study provides educators evidence examine traditional

reading instruction and curriculum to find better solutions for students with disabilities to make progress going forward. The results can potentially have a significant impact on how schools teach reading to students with disabilities at all levels. The project study has the potential to change the way educators teach reading to students with disabilities all over the world bringing about social change. Through the use of innovative, intense, explicit, and direct reading instruction there can be progress in the way students with disabilities learn.

Program Description

The intervention used in the study was a reading program that supports struggling readers who are reading 2 to 3 grade levels below their grade level. The Journeys reading intervention program has various components and innovative strategies that will help improve students' reading level. The program consisted of three basic components, which are reading aloud, decoding, and independent reading. Reading aloud is a basic component of a balanced reading program. The teacher reads and models both fluency and decoding strategies. Reading aloud also allows students to engage with stories that they would be unable to read independently. Decoding helps students figure out unknown words. Students in a balanced reading program are taught to decode unfamiliar words by sounding them out, looking for context clues and comparing them to known words. Independent reading gives students' time to read independently allows them to practice the decoding skills that they are learning. Students read books at their reading levels and may even read them repeatedly to develop fluency and increase comprehension.

The Journeys reading intervention program provides teachers with a wealth of resources for effective reading instruction. The resources include materials for planning,

instruction, and projects. The primary focus of the Journey reading intervention program is decoding. Decoding is a critical component to helping early readers learn proficient reading skills. Learning decoding skills supports early and struggling readers learn how to read and spell effectively. When students understand the relationship between sounds and letters, they can use these sounds and letter together to decode unfamiliar words. The specific focus on decoding instruction is essential to the success of students' reading achievement using the Journeys reading intervention reading program (Harcourt, 2013).

The Journeys reading intervention program uses fluency instruction to support reading skills. The program integrates direction instruction through interactive read alouds to model fluency lessons daily. Fluency plays a key role in reading comprehension. Fluency uses automaticity through word recognition to improve comprehension. Effective decoding instruction allows fluency to be learned with precision (Harcourt, 2013).

In the Journeys reading intervention program, lessons start with a unique outline with introductions. Instruction begins with the students being introduce to new vocabulary words. The new vocabulary words are integrated into the lesson each day for the length of the unit. Vocabulary words are reviewed throughout each lesson to ensure students understand the meanings of words and how to use the words in proper context. Vocabulary strategies are applied using various learning tasks such as flash cards, matching, and illustrations. Direct instruction for teaching vocabulary supports students learning word acquisition (Harcourt, 2013).

Journeys reading intervention program units are designed into five lessons. Every lesson targets word study, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The development of

reading comprehension skills is the main goal of the reading program. The programs focus on reading comprehension because it is required to becoming a proficient reader. Reading comprehension is embedded into each lesson daily. When students are able to learn fluency, students are motivated to learn comprehension skills readily (Harcourt, 2013).

Each lesson starts with students learning word study. Next, students review new vocabulary words and define their meaning using definitions and examples. Then, students are provided background knowledge about the lesson. Afterwards, students preview the text and make predictions about what the text will discuss. Then, students chorally read the text and identify vocabulary terms during reading. Finally, after reading the text students are ask comprehension questions by the instructor to check for understanding of the text. The Journey reading intervention program design is effective when taught consistently during the school year (Harcourt, 2013).

Methods

The project study evaluated the Journeys reading intervention program through an assessment for the reading achievement gap of third through fifth grade students with disabilities on the (Criterion Referenced Competency Test). After the data are received from the local elementary school, the data were analyzed by the researcher.

The study was conducted using a control group of students who were served through special education using the current reading program and treatment group that used the new reading intervention program. The data source was pre-existing data from the CRCT third through fifth Grade Reading Assessment in April of the 2013 and 2014 school years to determine students with disabilities' reading achievement using overall reading scores and

each domain scores literacy comprehension, information and media literacy, and vocabulary acquisition. Last, the data were analyzed using a Mann-Whitney U test to answer the guiding question. Through the methodology, the study provided the researcher with results in determining the effectiveness of the reading program for students with disabilities.

Participants

The project study groups consisted of 34 students with various disabilities. There were 22 male students and 12 female students. All students were African-American. The number of participants consisted of 10 students with specific learning disabilities who are served by special education in the co-taught setting (control group). There were both male students and female students. There were eight male students and two female male students. In third grade, three male students and one female student. In fourth grade, three male students and no female students. In fifth grade, two male students and one female student. The number of participants consisted of 24 students with various disabilities who are served by special education in the resource setting (treatment group). There were both male students and female students. There were fourteen male students and ten female students. In third grade, two male students and three female students. In fourth grade, three male students and one female student. In fifth grade, nine male students and six female students. The pre-existing data were retrieved from the local school district database by the testing coordinator who provided the data to the researcher for analysis.

Evaluation Goals

The goal of this program evaluation was to examine the difference of reading achievement between the students with disabilities that received the Journeys reading

intervention program and students with disabilities who received the traditional reading program, the evaluation report relied on the following research questions.

RQ1: What is the difference in overall reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the overall reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the overall reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

RQ2: What is the difference in literacy comprehension reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys intervention reading program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the literacy comprehension reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the literacy comprehension reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

RQ3: What is the difference in information and media literacy reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys reading intervention program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys reading intervention program and the group who received traditional reading program on the information and media literacy reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the information and media literacy reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

RQ4: What is the difference in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement scores for third through fifth grade students with disabilities who participated in the Journeys intervention reading program and those who did not participate?

H_o: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the group who received the Journeys intervention reading program and the group who received traditional reading program on the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition reading achievement of third through fifth grade students with disabilities.

Findings

Data were collected on 34 students in Grades 3, 4, and 5. The tables below contains a description of those students' scores who took the CRCT in 2013 and 2014. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the overall reading scores and each reading domain. The groups had a median difference of 18.50 and a mean difference of 14.83 for overall reading scores with the treatment group having a higher median and mean.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Reading Scores Used in Analysis (N = 34)

Score	Maximum score	Co-teach (n = 10)			Resource (n = 24)		
		<i>Median</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Reading	900	786.50	785.60	9.72	805.00	800.43	15.24
Literacy	16	6.00	5.50	2.07	7.00	7.30	2.39
Media	16	4.00	4.10	0.88	5.00	6.09	2.63
Vocabulary	8	3.00	3.60	1.35	4.65	5.46	0.81

Table 2

Differences Between Class Types

Score	Control (<i>n</i> = 10)		Treatment (<i>n</i> = 24)		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>Mean rank</i>	<i>Sum of ranks</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>	<i>Sum of ranks</i>		
Reading	5.50	55.00	17.00	408.00	9.00	< .01
Literacy	7.45	74.50	15.50	372.00	19.50	< .01
Media	7.40	74.00	15.54	372.96	19.00	< .01
Vocabulary	7.40	74.00	15.54	372.96	19.00	< .01

Table 2 above presents the results of the 2013 and 2014 CRCT mean rank and sum of ranks scores in each reading domain and standard deviation used in analysis. The overall reading results from 2013 and 2014 CRCT showed students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program had higher reading scores on the CRCT than the students with disabilities in the control group that received the traditional reading program. Most students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program met the state overall reading standards on the CRCT.

The literacy domain results from 2013 and 2014 CRCT showed students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program had higher reading scores on the CRCT in literacy comprehension than the students with disabilities in the control group that received the traditional reading program. Most students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program met the state reading standards on the CRCT in the literacy domain.

The media domain results from 2013 and 2014 CRCT showed students with disabilities in the resource setting that received the Journeys reading intervention program had higher reading scores on the CRCT in information and media literacy than the students with disabilities in the control group that received the traditional reading program. Most students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program met the state reading standards on the CRCT in the information and media domain.

The vocabulary domain results from 2013 and 2014 CRCT showed students with disabilities in the treatment group that received the Journeys reading intervention program had higher reading scores on the CRCT in reading skills and vocabulary acquisition than the students with disabilities in the control group that received the traditional reading program. Most students with disabilities in the treatment that received the Journeys reading intervention program met the state reading standards on the CRCT in the reading and vocabulary domain.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings indicated the treatment group meet the grade-level standards in all reading domains on the CRCT. The control group did not meet the grade-level standards on CRCT in reading. The data presented in the tables determined in most reading domains the mean scores were above average. The treatment group receiving the Journeys reading intervention program closed the reading achievement for students with disabilities. The Journeys reading intervention program provided the treatment group with effective reading skills. Direct instruction in the small group supported the treatment group with achieving

success on the CRCT in reading. The five components of the Journeys reading intervention program offered the treatment group with multiple reading strategies that accommodated the learning styles of students with disabilities. Having an array of learning strategies are beneficial to students with disabilities. The results proved that students with disabilities can gains in reading compared to general education students.

The control group receiving the traditional reading program did not make adequate progress on the CRCT. The failure of the control group was due to the ineffectiveness of the traditional reading program. The traditional reading program lack of explicit and direct instruction cause the control group to not meet grade-level standards. Also, the control group not being in a small group setting caused the reading instruction to suffer. The control group struggled in reading being in the large group setting. The findings indicated the traditional reading program did not support students with disabilities in reading.

The findings provide stakeholders with transparent evidence of the reading programs used for students with disabilities. The information obtained from the findings allowed the stakeholders to examine the Journeys reading invention program and the traditional reading program. Based on the findings from the CRCT, stakeholders can make informed judgments on reading instruction for students with disabilities.

Recommendations

The results for this study concluded that 34 students with disabilities at the local school met state standards for reading proficiency in the intermediate grades due to the use of Journeys reading intervention program that targeted phonemic awareness, phonics,

fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension using research based scripted daily lessons and weekly complete assessment component that enables teachers to monitor student progress.

Teachers can implement progress monitoring in the resource setting. Progress monitoring should be completed once a week at the end of each week. Students are given reading passages that are cold reads. In effective progress monitoring, students should receive regular reading assessments so that their progress can be monitored. Progress monitoring involves having students read text for one minute and calculate how many words they read correctly during that time. Then, students are asked to retell what they read for 1 minute and calculate how many words they retold correctly during that time. The results can be graphed, so that teachers, parents, and students can readily see progress over time. Teachers can adjust their instruction according to students' progress or lack thereof and adjust progress monitoring accordingly. Appropriate data use is exercised to determine results of progress monitoring (Christ et al., 2012). When progress monitoring assessments indicate that students are not making enough progress with effective reading instruction alone, schools can provide reading interventions to ensure that all students learn to read in early grades. When progress monitoring has shown that students are improving reading skills, a determination may be made to continue or stop using reading interventions (Oslund et al., 2012).

Effective reading interventions can help students master reading skills. Reading intervention can be the most effective through the use of systematic and explicit instruction (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). Teachers can implement effective reading interventions in both the resource setting and general education settings. Teachers can use reading

interventions are a resource for all students who struggle with reading. Effective reading interventions should be taught daily to struggling readers. Wanzek and Roberts (2012) stated that reading interventions had a positive impact when the intervention was specifically designed to the student's learning style. Also, the study suggests there was little to no effect when the reading intervention was not designed to meet the student individual learning needs. The Journeys reading intervention reading program proved to be effective reading instruction for students with disabilities.

Differentiated instruction can have an enormous impact of how all students learn to read. Differentiated provides students the exact reading curriculum but tailors the curriculum to meet their learning needs (Watts-Taffe et al., 2012). Differentiation is a best practice in reading. Teachers must differentiate reading instruction daily to ensure reading progress. Differentiated instructions must be taught with consistency and fidelity by teachers. Differentiated instruction allows students to learn reading skills using various methods. Tatum (2012) suggests that buildings relationships with students through instruction using experiences. Differentiation is effective use grouping students, re-teaching, and research-based strategies. A differentiated setting is students consistently making gains and teachers changing the methods in which students learn to read (Tatum, 2012). Differentiated instructions should be specific to each student's learning style.

Finally, all intermediate students with disabilities could benefit the Journeys reading intervention program being the findings confirm the program yields effective results in supporting reading achievement. Journeys is a comprehensive intervention system for students in grades K-5 who have difficulties in reading (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

The reading intervention system assists teachers to monitor progress and develop instructional practices based the level of rigor needed for each student, using the differentiation instruction and re-teaching offered within the curriculum (Harcourt, 2013). As a supplement to students who have not showed sufficient progress in the core reading instruction, it allows struggling readers access to direct instruction, constructive feedback, and extended time on tasks in order to master important reading skills (Harcourt, 2013). The Journeys reading intervention program's individual components are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Harcourt, 2013).

Journeys' flexible instructional model supports diverse learners, allowing teachers to modify instruction depending on the assessed needs (Harcourt, 2013). Intensive, explicit, systematic instruction ensures understanding and strengths skill acquisition. The program addressed priority reading skills for students 1 to 2 years below grade level to accelerate them to on-level reading. Journeys provide educators with a comprehensive easy-to-follow reading curriculum to successfully meet students with disabilities' learning needs (Harcourt, 2013).

Implications

The implications of the project study suggest the Journeys reading intervention program was effective for students with disabilities in meeting state grade level reading standards. The findings determined the students with disabilities that received the Journeys reading intervention program within the resource setting scored proficiency on the CRCT in the content area of reading and the traditional reading curriculum was insufficient for students with disabilities. Thus, prompting an immediate evaluation of the Journeys reading

intervention program to support students with disabilities in closing reading achievement gaps.

The program evaluation has the potential to change the reading curriculum of students with disabilities for the school district. Stakeholders can benefit by implementing the Journeys reading intervention program in all schools in the district. When the reading achievement gap of students with disabilities closes, school's ratings increases. Having all students with disabilities receive the Journey reading intervention program will improve student achievement. Stakeholders need to know that students with disabilities can learn reading skills using the Journeys reading intervention program. Stakeholders must examine the data to determine the effectiveness of the reading strategies the Journey reading intervention program uses. The alternative reading curriculum uses components that helps students with disabilities necessary reading skills such as; fluency, word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension. Stakeholders must make important decisions that best supports students with disabilities. Once, stakeholders realize the advantages of the Journeys reading intervention program the findings should be presented to the school board. The school board members can collectively vote on using the Journeys reading intervention program for the entire school district. The school district using the Journey reading intervention program will improve reading scores for students with disabilities across the district.

Conclusions

Through the comparison of test scores from previous years, the finding results are transparent. The evaluation report concluded the findings to be valid for the project study. The program evaluation revealed significant differences between the two groups on each of the domain scores. In all cases, the students that used the Journeys reading intervention program scored significantly higher. The evaluation report suggests the Journeys reading intervention reading program was effective in supporting students with disabilities to obtain reading achievement. The solution to the problem of reading achievement for students with disabilities in school districts should be centered on three factors: (a) consistent use of progress monitoring, (b) implementing effective reading interventions (c) consistent use of differentiated instruction. The information from the study provided to the school and district leaders to assist them to making informed decision is how to support students with disabilities in the area of reading. The evaluation report is disseminated to all stakeholders at the end of the year.

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