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Teacher Perceptions Regarding the Influence of Secondary Phonics Instruction on Student Reading

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2019

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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In a Southern state at a rural high school, leadership staff implemented phonics-based strategies with 9th grade English teachers to improve students' Lexile reading scores. The absence of formative data related to program implementation left stakeholders without a clear understanding of the influence of the phonics-based strategies. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on reading. Dual coding theory was used to examine teachers' perceptions of the influence of phonics-based strategies on students' motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. Data were collected using interviews with 9 purposefully selected English teachers who taught Grade 9 students and had at least 1 year of experience using the phonics-based strategies. Data were coded in NVivo and analyzed using thematic analysis. Results indicated that phonics-based strategies were perceived to benefit students' extrinsic motivation and fluency; conversely, teachers perceived the strategies had a limited effect on students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. Implementation of recommendations presented in a white paper based on these findings could result in positive social change by strengthening students' reading and promoting their academic success.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my son, Parker. Mommy took some time away from our time together to complete this degree. Many times, I hated the process, struggled, and wanted to quit. I continued on because “we,” Parker, never give up; it is not in our blood. We set goals and we achieve them even if they are not in the time frame we had hoped. You have so much to learn and grow and become very successful someday; I am sure of it. I hope to help grow your natural ability to be determined, ambitious, and always hungry for more. Before you were born, I started thinking about how I could prepare for you. You are my reason now to never stop being the best person I can be for me and for you. I love you and this is for you!

Acknowledgments

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Section 1: The Problem

Effective reading instruction assumes a vital role in the reading achievement of high school students (Tse & Nicholson, 2014). One strategy that teachers have used to develop the reading skills of students focuses on developing their decoding skills through phonics instruction (Tse & Nicholson, 2014). Phonics refers to the knowledge and awareness of the connection between written text and the corresponding spoken sounds (Doty, Hixson, Decker, Reynolds, & Drevon, 2015).

The ability to decode words is not a natural skill that children can develop on their own without explicit instruction from other people (Doty et al., 2015). Classroom instruction offers children the opportunity to develop their decoding skills by focusing on developing their phonics skills. Researchers have indicated that teaching phonics in school is valuable when the reading skills of students are being developed; however, most of the studies on the effectiveness of phonics instruction were based on samples that included young children who are just learning English or international students learning English (Doty et al., 2015). I conducted a qualitative, exploratory case study of the perceptions of teachers regarding secondary phonics curriculum and its influence on high school students' reading fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy.

The Local Problem

This study was motivated by the below grade-level reading Lexile scores of students entering the ninth grade at a large rural high school in a Southern state reported by a high school principal (personal communication, May 5, 2015). According to the high school principal, this problem persists despite the implementation of a secondary phonics

curriculum. The problem addressed in the study was the lack of formative data regarding ninth-grade phonics-based strategies implemented to increase student Lexile reading scores at a large rural high school in a Southern state. The secondary phonics curriculum was implemented in the ninth-grade English classes from school years 2013 through 2018. The school staff operates on a semester basis; therefore, the phonics curriculum program had been implemented over 10 different semesters during 2013-2018 school years.

The problem addressed in the study persists beyond the local setting. According to Ferrer et al. (2015), the achievement gap in reading is apparent among ninth-grade students in the United States. This gap started in the first grade and persisted to the ninth grade. Difficulty in reading has been identified as a predictor for low achievement in ninth graders as well as the subsequent educational transitions that high school students make, which require more advanced technical and comprehension reading skills (Ferrer et al., 2015). Limited literacy skills in high school have been associated with various negative outcomes such as course failure, high attrition, and poor performance when trying to pursue postsecondary education (Ferrer et al., 2015).

Most of the studies on the effectiveness of phonics instruction were based on samples that included young children who were learning English or international students learning English (S. Campbell, 2015). Researchers found that phonics instruction is particularly effective when implemented with younger students because it can influence proficiency in later reading skills (S. Campbell, 2015; Gupta, 2014). The findings of these studies underscored the lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of phonics

instruction, specifically among older students, such as those in the ninth grade (S. Campbell, 2015; Leko, Handy, & Roberts, 2017). When assessing the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction, the focus was often on the technical aspects of reading such as accuracy and comprehension (S. Campbell, 2015). Other scholars, however, have shown that nontechnical factors such as reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy could be used as measures to assess the effectiveness of a reading instruction program (Butz & Usher, 2015; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015; McQuillan, 2013).

The gap in practice identified in this study was the lack of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the reading achievement of ninth-grade students in the selected high school. In this qualitative exploratory case study, I addressed this gap in practice by exploring the perceptions of teachers who implemented the secondary phonics curriculum regarding its effectiveness in terms of reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. When considering the nature of the study, I determined that a quasi-experimental study in which I would be addressing the effect of the intervention, such as the secondary phonics-based strategies, on student Lexile scores would have proved unreliable because of the lack of a control group for comparison. A pretest and protest design and a covariance procedure would not have worked because there were no pretests and posttests available for the students. A qualitative exploratory case study based on the perceptions of teachers through interviews, however, would provide in-depth insights regarding the effectiveness of the program in terms of students' reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy (see Patton, 2005).

Rationale

Most of U.S. school districts are small and in rural areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), including the district setting for this study. Educators in rural areas face challenges such as limited resources, which can affect the availability of programs or pedagogical strategies that can enhance the reading achievement of students (Stockard, 2011). These challenges were reflected in the reading achievement of students as measured by Lexile scores (Administrator, personal communication, May 5, 2015). Based on the summary information provided by the principal of a large rural high school, of the 330 freshmen students tested at the beginning of their ninth-grade fall semester in 2013, 256 (78%) scored at the eighth-grade level or below in English reading comprehension. The high school leaders implemented a phonics reading curriculum to increase the Lexile reading level scores among ninth-grade students. During the fall semester of 2014, the entire incoming ninth-grade student body was tested. Of the 643 students who were tested during this time, 418 (65%) scored at the eighth-grade level or below, which prompted the district staff to continue implementation of the phonics-based strategies despite not having sufficient evidence of the program's effectiveness (Administrator, personal communication, May 5, 2015).

More conclusive and empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the reading achievement of ninth-grade students in the selected high school was necessary due to the lack of formative data surrounding the implementation of the phonics-based instruction program at the target high school. Nelson, Alexander, Williams, and Sudweeks (2014) stressed the importance of determining adolescents'

word attack and decoding skills. Nelson et al. noted that adolescents struggle with multisyllabic words, r-controlled words, and long vowel single syllable words, and recommended these areas of concentration for improving word attack skills for adolescent learners. In the current qualitative exploratory case study, the purpose was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. In a meta-analysis of phonics, reading comprehension, and fluency interventions, Suggate (2016) noted that phonemic comprehension and awareness interventions showed maintenance of the intervention and a positive effect on other reading skills; however, the fluency interventions and phonics interventions tended not to demonstrate good maintenance effects in early childhood participants. Further examination is needed related to the rigor of the intervention in terms of time spent with the student using the intervention, study design, attrition, and demographics such has gender. The maintenance of phonics-based practices and phonemic awareness is critical to the reading comprehension and progress of students, and additional research is needed.

Definition of Terms

In this section, I define several key terms that are used throughout the study.

Decoding abilities: The ability to make sense of words and to understand linguistics (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

Dual coding theory: A theory that underscores the importance of early development as foundation in the future success of children in developing cognitive and language skills (Clark & Paivio, 1991).

Lexile scores: The scores of students in an achievement test that measures their text reading capabilities (Wilkins et al., 2012).

Phonics: The relationship between symbols and sounds (Brady, 2011).

Phonics instructional strategy: The teaching of reading and spelling by focusing on the relationship between symbols and sounds (Brady, 2011).

Reading fluency: Being able to read text accurately and quickly (Gagliano et al., 2015; Shore, Sabatini, Lentini, Holtzman, & McNeil, 2015).

Reading motivation: Either intrinsic or extrinsic (Froiland & Oros, 2014). Intrinsic reading motivation indicates the extent to which students are curious about reading or feel that reading is an important and enjoyable activity. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to the extent to which students are motivated to read based on grades or other external rewards (De Naeghela, Van Keera, & Vanderlindea, 2014).

Reading self-efficacy: The beliefs and attitudes of students about their reading abilities (Butz & Usher, 2015; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The study was significant to the local problem because the results could affect the curriculum offered to students at the local school. If the results indicated that teachers had a positive perception of the effect of phonics-based instruction on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students, then the results could be used as a rationale or empirical support for integrating phonics curriculum in English classes at the research site and similar high schools to improve students' reading skills. Given the rural setting of this study, the results could also help

leaders from other rural districts make more informed decisions regarding how instructors can better support upper grade-level students who struggle with reading.

The study was also significant for school district personnel because the results could lead to more informed decisions involving curricular development. If the results of the study had indicated that teachers had no positive perceptions or only negative perceptions about the effect of phonics-based instruction on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students, then this could be interpreted as a need for other strategies to be considered by the local school staff. The focus in this study made the findings significant by highlighting the need for action to address reading achievement gaps. This study also served as an impetus to conduct more research on why the teachers perceived phonics-based strategies as needing more resources to show a greater improvement in Lexile scores.

The study was significant to university curriculum developers, instruction department leaders, and high school teachers in rural settings, including the local educational setting that served as the research site, because the findings may contribute empirical knowledge regarding the effectiveness of using phonics instruction with older students to improve their reading achievement by enhancing their reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. This expanded understanding of reading achievement, which extends beyond test scores, might contribute to improved understanding of how the implementation of secondary phonics curriculum affects high school students' reading skills, specifically, motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. The effectiveness of phonics instruction among high school students is less definitive and

appears to be mixed (Warnick & Caldarella, 2016), which could explain why teachers often do not use phonics instruction after third grade. Limited empirical evidence existed about the effectiveness of implementing secondary phonics curriculum to improve high school students' reading skills. In this study, I addressed the gap in practice and the literature regarding the limited evidence supporting the effectiveness of phonics instruction in older students such as those in high school.

Findings could effect social change by improving the reading achievement of high school students, which could result in increased postsecondary graduation rates and academic success in higher education. Researchers have found reading achievement to be associated with various positive life outcomes, including higher socioeconomic status and employment opportunities (Martens et al., 2014). The results of the study could lead to social change by equipping students in the target rural high school with the reading skills necessary to obtain better jobs and higher incomes.

Research Questions

The problem addressed in the study was the below grade-level Lexile scores on reading of students entering the ninth grade at a large rural high school in a Southern state, as well as the lack of positive results in the implementation of phonics-based strategies. The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. Specifically, I conducted interviews to examine teachers' perceptions of how secondary phonics instruction may have influenced students' reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. I relied on the perceptions of teachers who were implementing

the phonics-based strategies in their classroom instruction. Based on the problem and purpose identified, I generated the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation of ninth-grade high school students?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading fluency of ninth-grade high school students?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students?

Review of the Literature

The literature review was designed to elaborate on the problem under investigation, as well as explain why the chosen subject matter carries merit as a scholarly endeavor. First presented is the conceptual framework of Paivio's (1991) dual coding theory regarding cognition and literacy. A review of the broader problem addressing topics focused on phonics instruction follows the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the dual coding theory, which was originally developed to account for both verbal and nonverbal cognition (Paivio, 1991). The dual coding theory has evolved into a general theory about cognition and literacy. In educational settings, the dual coding theory underscores the importance of early development as foundation for the future success of children in developing cognitive and language skills (Clark & Paivio, 1991). Paivio (1991) suggested that individuals process words during reading and code them one way, and that pictures are decoded in a different

manner. The dual coding theory was developed to understand verbal and nonverbal influences on memory, but over many years it has been extended to other areas.

The dual coding theory can be subsumed in the simple view of reading model by Gough and Tunmer (1986). According to Gough and Tunmer (1986) the simple view of reading, reading comprehension is the result of being able to decode words and being able to comprehend linguistics, which means without sufficient decoding abilities, children will not be able to extract meaning from words. From this model, proficiency in reading comprehension means good decoding and listening comprehension skills. Paivio's (1991) theory of dual coding contains the basic principle that recognition and recall are improved when presenting language or reading passages using both a visual and verbal form. Paivio maintained that the dual coding theory includes both an output component in the form of speech or writing and an output function that serves to identify symbolic function with respect to words, events, or pictures.

Phonics is an important factor in the simple view of reading model because teaching phonics is needed to develop the decoding skills of students (McGeown, 2015). Moreover, phonics is one of the essential skills that children need to read, and impairment in these skills has resulted in poor reading abilities (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which is why most dyslexic children are described as having poor phonics and decoding skills (Elwér, Keenan, Olson, Byrne, & Samuelsson, 2013). The simple view of this reading model was applicable and supported the current study because of the assumption that focusing on phonics will improve a child's decoding skills (see Gough & Tunmer, 1986). The mastery of decoding skills was related to the study because decoding skills play an

important role in various aspects of reading including fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy (Ayala & O'Connor, 2013; Eshghipour & Khalili, 2016). Decoding skills are the foundation of not only comprehension, but also reading fluency (Ayala & O'Connor, 2013). When readers are fluent and can comprehend text, their reading motivation and self-efficacy can be enhanced (Eshghipour & Khalili, 2016).

In reading, a reading selection is considered a whole communication which is comprised of parts to make up the meaning for the overall reading selection. Therefore, decoding skills are important in giving meaning to a text, specifically the meaning of individual sounds that compose a text (Brady, 2011). Learners who cannot decode at least 90% of words they encounter also experience problems in deducing the appropriate meaning of the text (Ziegler, Perry, & Zorzi, 2014). A strong understanding and awareness of phonics is key to effective decoding skills in children. Grounded in the framework of the simple view of reading model, effective decoding skills in children lead to effective reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

Review of the Broader Problem

The literature search strategy included key words such as *phonics*, *phonics instruction*, *secondary phonics instruction*, *reading achievement*, *Lexile*, *reading motivation*, *reading self-efficacy*, *reading fluency*, *perceptions of teachers about phonics instruction*, and *effective instructional strategies for reading* in online databases such as EBSCOhost, Academic Search Complete/Premier, ProQuest Central, Sage Premier, and ERIC. Information gathered from these databases and the Google Scholar search engine was extracted to illuminate the research problem. In this literature review, I examine the

broader problem associated with the local problem addressed in the study through discussion of recent, peer-reviewed journal articles. Literature from diverse perspectives was included as appropriate.

First, I focus on the phonics instruction strategy and the history of phonics instruction. Then, I examine the effects of phonics instruction on beginners' reading skills. Next, the focus shifts to phonics and high school reading skills, followed by a review of literature related to the assessment of reading proficiency, including the role of reading motivation, reading self-efficacy, and reading fluency on reading achievement. In the last sections, the discussion centers on the importance of reading, the relationship between technology and reading, and the perceptions of teachers regarding the use of phonics-based instruction in teaching reading.

Phonics instructional strategy. Phonics instructional strategies include the instruction of reading and spelling in which the focus is on the relationship between sounds and symbols (Brady, 2011). Phonics is a way of teaching in which the sound is shown to be linked to a specific letter or combination of letters. In this way of teaching, decoding is necessary. To give meaning to a text, the individual sounds that compose the text should be decoded. Teachers must make learners understand these relationships by giving learners enough time and opportunity for practice (Brady, 2011). Phonics instruction is the method that provides people wanting to learn, usually children, the opportunity to explore, internalize, and use new knowledge in their lives so that they can attain a greater facility and independence to read and write (Snyder & Golightly, 2017). All forms of reading instruction have the common goals of making the students become

independent and enthusiastic readers as well as writers empowered to think critically about the texts they read (Fien et al., 2014). It is therefore critical for students to recognize frequently encountered words accurately.

Decoding is important in the process of effective reading instruction (Fien et al., 2014; Snyder & Golightly, 2017). Nonfluent readers often read slowly, usually because they hesitate and misunderstand cues, as well as give considerable time and mental effort to decode and solve words, which affects their comprehension (Fien et al., 2014). Individuals who cannot decode at least 90% of words are more likely to experience difficulties in deducing the appropriate meaning of the texts read (Fien et al., 2014; Snyder & Golightly, 2017).

Phonics instruction could contribute to the ability to read text. Based on Indrisano and Chall's (1995) framework regarding the stages of reading development, students from the first and second grade learn the alphabet to become familiar with the relationship between symbols and their corresponding sounds in Stage 1. For the second stage, second- and third-grade learners become more fluent and less mindful of the direct spelling-sound relationships. In the second grade, learners are exposed to simple patterns in terms of affixes, division of syllables, or compound words (Indrisano & Chall, 1995). Third grade is considered the transition year in which children are taught basic multisyllabic words, which become easier once knowledge exists of the different affixes (Fien et al., 2014; Snyder & Golightly, 2017).

Researchers have shown that phonics can help younger students such as those in kindergarten or first grade, in reading miscellaneous words and pseudo-words (Fien et al.,

2014; Snyder & Golightly, 2017). Teachers often do not use phonics instruction among high school students, and schools usually stop offering phonics instruction at the third-grade level (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2017). Among high school students, research on phonics instruction appears to be limited and mixed. The findings of one study indicated that phonics instruction is not effective among high school students who are struggling with reading (Coates, Gorham, & Nicholas, 2017). In another study, researchers revealed that using phonics-based instruction with high school students who have difficulties in reading can be effective (Warnick & Caldarella, 2016). Based on the results of an experimental study conducted by Warnick and Caldarella (2016), high school students with poor reading abilities who participated in 30 hours of multisensory phonics instruction performed better in reading compared to those who participated in standard reading instruction.

History of phonics instruction. The use of phonics in reading instruction went through several controversies, but most reading educators now agree that children need phonics to learn how to read (S. Campbell, Torr, & Cologon, 2014). With many school districts managing scarce resources, this important method of teaching reading is often excluded in the curriculum early. Phonics has been taught since the ancient Greek period to make written language more accessible (S. Campbell et al., 2014). The *New England Primer* was one of the first and most widely used readers in the United States, and the content revolved around alphabetic rhymes, pictures, and religious artifacts (Caponegro, 2015; Coates et al., 2017). By the 1930s, Gray's *Dick and Jane* series assisted readers in learning the whole-word method (Shimek, 2016). This method emphasized controlled

vocabulary, word recognition, and comprehension. The series later became the basis for teaching language through phonics.

Using phonics as a form of instruction was wrought with controversies for decades, with experts first favoring it and then criticizing it (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Henbest & Apel, 2017). This controversy was often observed at the center of public debates. Sometimes, the debates took on a political rather than educational undertone, and became known as the reading wars (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Henbest & Apel, 2017).

Teaching beginning readers to decode words is the key to these individuals learning how to read (Connor, 2016). According to Connor (2016), instructors should embrace what is effective as established by evidenced-based practices. In 1955, a report on reading and decoding entitled *Why Johnny Can't Read* led to controversies among those in educational circles (Bruni & Hixson, 2017; Connor, 2016). The main premise of the report was that Johnny cannot read because he did not learn phonics. The report went against the more common method of teaching reading by sight, better known as the look-say method. Under this method of learning how to read, students start reading by studying and becoming familiar with how common words appear in text, instead of associating the individual letters with their corresponding sounds. Both phonics and decoding are crucial when teaching beginners to read. Focusing on phonics at an early age is imperative for reading success (Connor, 2016). Bruni and Hixson (2017) and Connor also determined that a significant relationship existed between a reader's ability to recognize letters, identifying their representative sounds, and reading achievement.

According to Mesmer and Williams (2014), the breakthrough work of Bond and Dykstra, entitled *The First Grade Studies*, was released in 1967. The researchers addressed how reading is taught across first-grade classrooms in the United States. The results of the study indicated that phonics curriculum could be beneficial to first-grade students in terms of being able to identify words more easily (Mesmer & Williams, 2014). The beliefs and practices of teachers is a crucial factor in the learning of students (Mesmer & Williams, 2014).

Hiebert (2015) discussed how phonics curriculum was used from the late 1960s to the present. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, phonics-based strategies were so widely used that some reading experts argued that focus on phonics may have led to the overlook of comprehension. Some scholars found that students who learned how to read phonetically were making more nonword mistakes compared to students who learned to how to read using basal readers, in which the meaning of the words or stories was highlighted instead of the sounds. When readers are not able to read nonreal words, the teachers assume they do not have a proficient understanding of the connection between the alphabetic symbols and their sounds (Hiebert, 2015). In contrast, students who learned to read with an emphasis on trying to learn the meanings could still make mistakes, but not based on failure to connect symbols and sounds (Hiebert, 2015).

In the 1980s, literacy advocates argued that phonics instruction helped improve the reading achievement of children in kindergarten (Hiebert, 2015). Decoding ability and comprehension were associated with each other. Despite the prevailing belief about the benefits of phonics instruction, Hiebert (2015) argued against phonics instruction and

recommended a multidimensional approach to reading instruction. During the 1990s, a whole language approach emerged, shaped by the principle that reading and speaking are natural processes, which underscored the need to teach reading as expressive and receptive processes (Hiebert, 2015). Reading achievement of low-performing kindergarten students taught holistically improved significantly compared to those who were only exposed to phonics-oriented classrooms (Hiebert, 2015). The whole language approach was criticized, however; the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (as cited in Leinenger & Rayner, 2017) claimed that reading is a natural process, and therefore the better approach is direct instruction of phonemes and phonics. Most teachers in the United States reacted to students scoring low in reading proficiency and responded by calling for phonics to be included in the state's reading instruction. This effort led to implementing the Common Core standards to include phonological awareness, fluency, and phonics and word recognition (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Some educators, however, contended that phonics-oriented instruction and the whole language approach were not mutually exclusive. Both instructional approaches are intended to engage students in reading (Leinenger & Rayner, 2017).

According to Henbest and Apel (2017), the teaching of phonics is critical for reading beginners, but teachers or instructors must also be cautious and ensure the instruction of phonics is integrated into the reading program. Some evidence shows that phonics instruction in high school can be helpful and useful, particularly to students who have low reading abilities (Gentaz, Sprenger-Charolles, & Theurel, 2015; Warnick & Caldarella, 2016). According to Gentaz et al. (2015), positive attitudes about reading can

be achieved when there is a balance between whole language and phonics. Gentaz et al. asserted that phonics can be useful until high school (Grades 9 to 12) for students to understand more complex words that will be encountered in the subject matter of the higher grade levels. Although there is more to reading that trying to decode words, children who have high levels of decoding skills can invest their mental energy in developing comprehension, vocabulary, and general knowledge through ample reading practice so that they can think more productively regarding the texts they read (Gentaz et al., 2015).

In 1997, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development coordinated with the U.S. Secretary of Education to launch the National Reading Panel. In 2000, a report from the National Reading Panel concluded that students needed five critical skills in learning how to read, namely vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness, and phonics (Reyhner & Cockrum, 2016). The discussion on phonics was controversial because the panel only included experimental studies with control groups in their evaluation on which the report was based. The panel's conclusions were derived using a small sample of studies: 38 research studies with 66 comparison groups (Leinenger & Rayner, 2017).

Phonics instruction can significantly shape the growth of younger children concerning their reading skills and program; therefore, phonics must be an essential factor of a successful reading program (Reyhner & Cockrum, 2016). Phonics instruction is typically used in kindergarten and elementary grades, however, and not in high school (Case et al., 2014; Fien et al., 2014; Gentaz et al., 2015). Because the National Reading

Panel highlighted the importance of empirical research, legislations were influenced, which affected how schools would operate regarding reading instruction in the country. In 2001, when President Bush launched the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; P.L. 107-110), the importance of improved reading instruction was also highlighted, alongside the flexibility of parents as well as increased accountability of schools (Meyer, 2017; Owens, 2015). As a result, reading standards were developed and assessed through high-stakes testing. School ratings rely on every child knowing how to read, and when reading benchmarks are not met, supplemental services must be solicited (Meyer, 2017; Owens, 2015).

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95) was passed under the Obama administration. Under this new act, at the time of data collection, periodic standardized testing continued to be practiced, but the accountability for student achievement was transferred to individual states away from the federal government (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016). The implication of this transfer of accountability is that states have more freedom to set academic goals and the standards are disaggregated based on different student subgroups (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016). The implication of this act for the school district where the study was based is that leaders have the freedom to use secondary phonics instruction as a strategy in raising the reading achievement of high school students. In the following section I will discuss phonics and early reading skills followed by phonics and secondary reading skills.

Phonics and early reading skills. Phonics instruction is recommended to be included in early grade reading classes (Burchfield, Hua, Noyes, & Waal, 2017).

Researchers have shown that just 2 years of phonics instruction is enough for a majority of children (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Reyhner & Cockrum, 2016). Based on research, most school staff decided to include phonics instruction only up to the second grade. In some schools, phonics instruction may even be limited up to first grade. Unfortunately, most phonics instruction during these early grades overlooks the teaching of the patterns of syllables and morphemes, which are critical in the reading proficiency of upper-level students because these techniques are appropriate for more structurally complex and longer words. Lacking this training and knowledge, students struggle to read longer words. Beyond second grade, phonics instruction can become virtually non-existent. Phonics can play a critical role in raising reading outcomes of the students beyond second grade. In general, students identified with reading deficits are those having difficulty with phonological processing, utilizing sound-spelling relationships to decode words they are not yet familiar with, reading fluently, and utilizing strategies to understand the texts they are reading (Reyhner & Cockrum, 2016).

Decodability is crucial in the early reading of text because it can determine whether students will use the strategy and as such, observe marked improvements in their reading capabilities immediately, especially when it comes to accuracy (Fitzgerald et al., 2015; Martens, 2016). A need exists for multiple-criteria text, with decodability as an important component in the development of reading proficiency based on alphabetic principles. It is not ideal to focus on single criterion of decodability (Fitzgerald et al., 2015; Martens, 2016).

Five percent of English speakers still experience problems in reading. One of the ways in which poor readers are trained is to focus on the relationship between letters and sounds or phonics (Alhifthy et al., 2017; Shetty & Rai, 2014). Phonics training influenced the literacy skills of English-speakers of all ages who are reading below the expected level, without disabilities affecting their ability to learn to read (Alhifthy et al., 2017; Shetty & Rai, 2014). Based on the review of 10 studies about phonics instruction involving samples of elementary children, training in phonics was found to be valuable in improving the reading scores and improving poor reading skills. In particular, phonics training could significantly and positively affect letter-sound knowledge, word reading accuracy, and nonword reading accuracy which are all related to fluency rates.

Phonics and high school reading skills. The first sections of the review of related literature showed that systematic phonics instruction could improve the reading outcomes of young children with reading difficulties, particularly those in kindergarten and elementary levels (Ehri & Flugman, 2018). Explicit instruction can be beneficial to students because it also improves reading comprehension in addition to technical skills such as spelling and reading (Ehri & Flugman, 2018). However, a need exists to determine whether the same can work for high school students based on the perceptions of teachers, which is the focus of the proposed study.

The effectiveness of phonics instruction is not as widely researched in high school because most studies focused on younger children. However, researchers have found support for the effectiveness of phonics instruction in high school (Warnick & Caldarella, 2016). Warnick and Caldarella (2016) had found that both decoding accuracy and reading

comprehension accuracy could improve when individuals increased their speed of reading short passages by 10-12%. Despite the existence of these studies, few researchers investigated the effects of speed-reading on individuals' reading comprehension skills and decoding accuracy (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Temple et al., 2017). In addition, Ehri and Flugman (2018) examined whether this reading strategy can still work positively as the length of the passages being read is increased.

Morlini, Stella, and Scorza (2015) determined the effects of increased reading speed and text lengths on the abilities of reading-disordered individuals with regard to oral decoding and reading comprehension. Reading disorders often result from lack of synchrony between the speed of processing characteristics of auditory and visual systems when decoding, leading researchers to hypothesize that reading at faster rates could reduce the detrimental effects of this asynchrony. The researchers tested students and found that decoding accuracy and speed could be measured in either a one-minute procedure or longer standardized tests. In results of the study the researchers concluded that students can still improve their capacity for reading based on the finding that reading faster by 10% to 20% could lead to improved comprehension accuracy.

Phonics instruction has been found to be valuable among high school students who have low reading skills based on school grades and test scores (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Temple et al., 2017; Warnick & Caldarella, 2016). Warnick and Caldarella also found support for the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction among high school students who had poor reading skills. Using a pretest-posttest experimental design, the experimental group was exposed to 30 hours of phonics instruction in a period of 8

weeks. Warnick and Calderella used Cohen's (1988) formula of η^2: .01 = small effect, .06 = medium effect, .14 = large effect. The results of the experimental study indicated that adolescents who were exposed to the phonics instruction showed significant improvements in their reading skills as measured by norm-based reading tests. The gains were two times higher in the treatment group (8.0) compared to the participants in the control group gains (3.2) who only participated in standard reading instruction.

Assessment of reading proficiency. Students' learning is vital to their future success (Inoue, Georgiou, Parrila, & Kirby, 2018; McGeown, Duncan, Griffiths, & Stothard, 2015). Subsequently, teachers need to be highly qualified in some critical areas, and students need to make progress that is acceptable based on established standards. One such area is language literacy and the assessment of said literacy (Inoue et al., 2018; McGeown et al., 2015). The way that a child is assessed can sometimes allow that child to be overlooked at various stages of education (Inoue et al., 2018; McGeown et al., 2015). Many children learn to read at a very young age, but for children who do not learn those skills, education can be complex, difficult, and frustrating. Many children's problems are not recognized until they are already significantly behind their peers. At that point, it becomes much more difficult for the children to advance to where their peers are in terms of reading level. Although schools, teachers, and the majority of parents agree that teaching children to read is highly important, some children still miss their most important skill (Inoue et al., 2018; McGeown et al., 2015).

A window of opportunity exists for children who are learning to read before third grade (McKoon & Ratcliff, 2016). If a teacher does not get to the children during that

time, and the students do not learn how to read properly, it becomes difficult later to reach a level that should have been reached during the early levels. Children can and do learn to read at a later age and even adults who are illiterate can learn to read. Nevertheless, children who need to complete their schooling and be successful at obtaining an education can have a much more difficult time with education in general if they have not learned how to read properly at a very young age, which is when majority of reading comprehension learning takes place (McKoon & Ratcliff, 2016).

Reading achievement among high school students is often operationalized in terms of grades and scores in standardized testing (Campbell, 2015). According to Campbell, students' successful reading involves other factors, which are sometimes overlooked. In the following subsections, I discuss literature on other reading outcomes such as reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy.

Reading motivation. Students become frustrated and lose motivation and interest in reading when they are unable to decode words (Rogiers & Van Keer, 2016). Reading motivation can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic (Ahmadi, 2017; Froiland & Oros, 2014; Rogiers & Van Keer, 2016). Intrinsic reading motivation is the extent to which students are curious about reading or feel that reading is an important and enjoyable activity. Conversely, extrinsic motivation refers to the extent to which students are motivated to read based on grades or other external rewards (Ahmadi, 2017; Froiland & Oros, 2014; Rogiers & Van Keer, 2016).

Researchers found that phonics-based strategies did not fully work to contribute to and support intrinsic motivation, as phonics-based strategies are more focused on

target areas of reading than they are focused on being motivational and engaging (Cockroft & Atkinson, 2017; Kim et al., 2017;). For instance, Kim et al. suggested, "In most intervention programs, component skills are practiced in isolation, without applications to challenging and motivating content" (2017, p. 5). Cockroft and Atkinson (2017) explained different motivational orientations and processes may be activated by different factors: the adolescent motivation can be attributed to the teacher-student relationship as opposed to the phonics program content.

When addressing the reading motivation of students, intrinsic motivation is usually the component that teachers focus on developing (Froiland & Oros, 2014; Rogiers & Van Keer, 2016). According to Froiland and Oros, intrinsic motivation is associated with positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes from kindergarten to high school students. Intrinsic reading motivation is often facilitated by both the home and school environment, which underscores the important role of parents and teachers in the reading practices of children (Froiland & Oros, 2014).

The outcomes associated with extrinsic and intrinsic reading motivation have been mixed, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation (Froiland & Oros, 2014; Proctor, Daley, Louick, Leider, & Gardner, 2014). The general finding of these researchers' structural equation analysis was that intrinsic reading motivation is more frequently associated with positive reading outcomes such as comprehension than is extrinsic reading motivation (Ahmadi, 2017; Froiland & Oros, 2014; Rogiers & Van Keer, 2016). Using hierarchical linear regression, Froiland and Oros found that R-squared increased to .67 when also including the intrinsic motivation for reading achievement among high

school students. Conversely, Proctor et al., who conducted a blocked regression analysis, found that both intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation were not associated with improved reading comprehension among middle school students, but that self-efficacy was associated with reading comprehension. The study revealed that the three motivation constructs had the greatest correlation (Proctor et al., 2014). Self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation had a correlation of $r = .729$, $p < 0.01$. Self-efficacy and extrinsic motivation had a correlation of $r = .586$, $p < 0.01$. The last construct, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, had a correlation of $r = .727$, $p < 0.01$.

The low intrinsic motivation of some high school students has been documented (De Naeghela et al., 2014). Support from home and school is often necessary to develop the reading motivation of students (Capotosto et al., 2017; Jenkins & Demaray, 2015). In school, teachers often have to intervene to foster reading motivation in class (Wigfield, Mason-Singh, Ho, & Guthrie, 2014), but developing the reading motivation of students is a challenging task (Froiland & Oros, 2014). Some of the strategies through which reading motivation can be developed by teachers in class include providing goals and choice, activities that are related to reading, choosing interesting texts to read, and collaboration (Wigfield et al., 2014). When teachers are involved and support the reading needs of their students; the intrinsic reading motivation of students increases (De Naeghela et al., 2014).

***Reading fluency*.** Reading fluency is an important skill that needs to be developed to be effective in reading (Shore et al., 2015) Reading fluency refers to being able to read text accurately and quickly (Gagliano et al., 2015; Shore et al., 2015). The cognitive processes involved in reading fluency include word recognition accuracy, automaticity,

and prosody (Paige, Rasinski, Magpuri-Lavell, & Smith, 2014). Findings show students who learn phonics strategies of decoding words and analyzing word parts increase their reading fluency (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (ED), & What Works Clearinghouse (ED), 2018). The cognitive processes involved in reading fluency include accuracy of word recognition, automaticity, and prosody (Bastug & Demirtas, 2016; Paige, Magpuri-Lavell, Rasinski, & Rupley, 2015). According to Paige et al., focusing on developing the reading fluency of high school students can address the inadequate reading achievement among students who are entering college.

Reading fluency can be classified as either silent or oral reading fluency (Gagliano et al., 2015; Seok & DaCosta, 2014). Silent reading fluency is more relevant to older students because adults read silently (Gagliano et al., 2015). However, Seok and DaCosta noted that oral reading fluency is significantly related to silent reading fluency for both secondary and postsecondary students.

Empirical research about the relationship between reading fluency and reading achievement of students is limited (Bastug & Demirtas, 2016; Paige et al., 2015; Shore et al., 2015). According to Paige et al., the lack of empirical research on reading fluency among older students can be attributed to the misconception that reading fluency is exclusively an oral phenomenon, which has nothing to do with meaning and comprehension. Despite the limited research on the relationship between reading fluency and achievement, some researchers have shown that reading fluency plays an important role in the reading comprehension of students (Paige et al., 2015).

Reading fluency is positively related to reading comprehension and achievement (Bastug & Demirtas, 2016). Researchers found that reading fluency for both special education and mainstream students was positively associated with reading comprehension (Bastug & Demirtas, 2016; Vaughn & Wanzek, 2014). Paige et al. (2014) found that accuracy of word recognition, automaticity, and prosody were able significantly and positively to account for the level of reading comprehension of secondary students. Some researchers also found a positive relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension, but the strength of the relationship was only moderate (Lai, George Benjamin, Schwanenflugel, & Kuhn, 2014).

Reading self-efficacy. Confidence in a student diminishes when she is unable to decode words effectively (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015). The beliefs and attitudes of students about their reading abilities can influence their behaviors and achievement (Butz & Usher, 2015; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015). One of the concepts examined in relation to the beliefs of students about reading is their self-efficacy in reading (Butz & Usher, 2015; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015; McQuillan, 2013). Reading self-efficacy pertains to the level of confidence that students feel about their own reading abilities (Butz & Usher, 2015). Phonics instruction can facilitate self-efficacy because mastery of technical aspects of reading, such as phonemic awareness, can contribute to overall success in reading (Torgerson, Brooks, Gascoine, & Higgins, 2018).

Based on past research, the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading achievement is not clearly understood (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Retelsdorf, Köller, & Möller, 2014). According to Retelsdorf et al., achievement in reading determined whether

a student will have high or low confidence in reading, which underscores the idea that achievement is an antecedent of self-efficacy. High school students who have high reading achievement also have high reading self-efficacy. Lee and Jonson-Reid (2015) found that reading self-efficacy predicted reading achievement among young students.

Solheim (2011) conducted a quantitative study using correlational and hierarchical regression analysis to examine if self-efficacy predicted the reading achievement of students in terms of their reading comprehension. This researcher assessed reading comprehension using tasks that involved multiple-choice responses and tasks that involved constructing answers. After controlling the differences in the students' actual reading abilities, comprehension, and non-verbal abilities, the results of the analysis ($\beta = .20$, $p = .001$) revealed that reading self-efficacy significantly positively predicted reading comprehension. Students with a positive attitude believing that they would do well on the tests were more likely to perform better.

According to Smith, Smith, Gilmore, and Jameson (2012), the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading achievement tends to increase as students become older. Specifically, using correlational analysis, Smith et al. found that the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading achievement was low at 8 years old, but became moderate at 12 years old. The implication of the results is that reading self-efficacy tends to be more relevant and important to older students compared to younger students when it comes to reading achievement. McQuillan (2013), used an analysis of variance to determine that reading self-efficacy or confidence in ability to read tends to increase in high school as children becomes older. The overall results of the

trend analysis indicated significant linear components for both General Reading Attitude and Reading Self-Efficacy (McQuillan, 2013). The study complements Smith's et al. (2012) results hypothesizing that a student's attitude towards reading is linked to their perceived reading ability.

Butz and Usher (2015) conducted a mixed method study to examine what makes middle school students feel confident about their reading abilities by collecting responses from closed- and open-ended questionnaires regarding the source of reading self-efficacy. The results of the quantitative data analysis revealed that mastery and social persuasion were the most cited sources of reading self-efficacy. The results of the qualitative component of the study revealed that other relevant sources of self-efficacy included social comparative information, availability of help, and teacher practices (Butz & Usher, 2015).

Importance of reading. Both students who are at the low and high levels of proficiency in reading can experience difficulties in class. Researchers have found that students with low proficiency in reading can have difficulties keeping up with the rest of the students, making them feel inferior. Highly proficient students in reading became bored and restless because they believed that they already knew everything that the teacher was discussing or because they wanted to read something that was on a higher level (Kendeou, Broek, Helder, & Karlsson, 2014). If the gap exists for too long or grows too strong between poor and proficient readers in the same class, catching up becomes more difficult for struggling readers. This does not mean that these children cannot learn

to read, and even to read well, but that they will be behind their peers in reading ability and language literacy when those abilities are tested (Kendeou et al., 2014).

Phonological awareness skills need to be developed continuously and at a developmentally appropriate cognitive level for the learner to have successes (Goodrich, Lonigan, & Farver, 2014). Failure to meet Average Yearly Progress (AYP) is less important under the ESSA because other measures of student success set by individual states are used to determine accountability (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016), but ensuring that young children are proficient in reading remains crucial. Children who do not learn to read fall behind in all of their classes because they have trouble understanding and processing the material (Inoue et al., 2018).

Reading is an essential component to academic development, but many concede it is necessary for intellectual, emotional, and social development as well (Allington, 2013). Whereas reading appears to be considered an academic endeavor that has no real application aside from basic nonverbal communication and similar bits of information outside of the classroom, scholars have agreed that without regular reading as both a recreational and academic activity, disparities occur in cognitive development (Allington, 2013).

Findings by scholars consistently reflect the importance and effects of reading (or its absence) in people's lives. Furthermore, reading, as regarded by scholars, is not limited to interpreting written messages, but is extrapolated upon to reflect degrees of reading proficiency, falling under the primary concept of *reading maturity* (Phillips, Norris, Hayward, & Lovell, 2017). Thomas (2013) explained reading maturity as

understanding the message of the text, the implied meaning or subtext, and evaluating the significance of the message. Reading vital to what and there are ways that reading can be applied to yield varying degrees of outcomes. To consider the advantages of reading, a reader must not only be able to understand the reading, but also its connotations and applications (Thomas, 2013).

Just as some propose that reading is a practice that facilitates the development of critical thinking, others posit that it is thinking and learning that facilitates the mastery of critical reading (Smith et al., 2012). Phonics instruction has been criticized for being technical and reliant on the mastery of sounds and spelling patterns. However, phonics is one of the foundations of early reading, making its mastery critical for young readers (Greene & Serro, 2015).

Some Ivy League students would not be thought of as proficient readers because they do not read well (Farbman, Davis, Goldberg, & Rowland, 2015). The routine monotony of school can be overcome simply by using *tricks* that a student may ascertain along the way, with little to no necessity for any cognitive thought. Institutionalized American public education fails to educate some students to prepare for the transition from school into the workforce (Farbman et al., 2015). Farbman et al., (2015) asserted that students finish school with little knowledge that will enable them to mature and adapt to real life situations outside schools. The failure of student transition was attributed to lack of strong understanding of concepts and procedures relating to learning and the result of the lack of cognitive thought applied to the information with which students are presented. Appearing as another version of the same argument that has been found

repeatedly throughout the literature, Winget (2013) argued the pedagogical format that includes reading excludes critical thinking in favor of routine, memorization, and standardized examinations. Students' ability to critically think and analyze information is closely related to the intellectual and social functionality of individuals, and their ability to read and process information (Winget, 2013).

Cheung and Slavin (2013) defined the concept of reading as purely a means to extract meaning and understanding from a form of information or knowledge database. Technological improvements have given the teachers and students a wide spectrum of choices to extract this information. At first, all educational exchanges were primarily aural, but with time the advent of books, libraries, the media, journalism, television, the Internet, and video games, the task of the teachers has gotten easier and the accessibility of the students has increased; however, in working with special needs students, increased accessibility is only the first step. Technology integration for these students needs to include easier understanding and interpretation of the text available (Cheung & Slavin, 2013).

Teacher perceptions regarding phonics-based strategies. Some states have mandated the implementation of reading programs that are empirically supported by research to ensure that children's reading levels are adequate by the time students reach the third grade (Griffith, 2008). Scripted reading programs such as Open Court, Reading Mastery, and Success for All, which target improved phonics awareness of students, have usually been used in early education with younger students (Campbell, 2015). As

mandated by the states, the focus of phonics-based strategies is on younger children, not older children who are still struggling with reading (Dresser, 2012; Griffith, 2008).

Martinussen, Ferrari, Aitken, and Willows (2015) examined the actual and perceived phonemic knowledge and exposure to phonics instruction of 54 teacher candidates. The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that teacher candidates have low knowledge of phonemic awareness; however, actual knowledge was not related to perceived knowledge and self-efficacy in teaching. Training that involves video clips to illustrate phonemes is effective in improving the phonemic awareness of teacher candidates.

The beliefs and attitudes of teachers about teaching influence their pedagogical and instructional practices in classrooms, underscoring the importance of examining their perceptions in using a new program or curriculum (Giles & Tunks, 2014). Teachers who support the use of scripted phonics-based programs valued the direct instruction of phonics, easy implementation, and the ability to measure reading outcomes (Griffith, 2008). Novice teachers particularly appreciated the scripted nature of phonics-based reading programs, allowing them to execute the program more effectively by simply following the instructions and guidelines (Griffith, 2008).

Regarding negative perceptions about phonics-based programs, teachers have often complained that the implementation of scripted phonics-based reading programs were time consuming, which can take away instructional time for other subjects (Dresser, 2012). Another criticism of scripted phonics-based instruction is the *one-method-fits-all* approach of standardization, which teachers perceive to be unable to meet the needs of

individual students (Griffith, 2008). Teachers believe that some level of differentiation is needed to address the varying levels of reading abilities of students in classrooms (Dresser, 2012; Griffith, 2008).

Among older students who still struggle with reading, phonics-based instruction is not a common instructional strategy used by teachers to improve reading achievement, although there is some empirical evidence supporting the use of phonics-based instruction in older students who have difficulties in reading (Warnick & Caldarella, 2016). Limited understanding exists about the appropriateness of phonics-based instruction intended for older students, however, which may explain why such practice remains limited in high school settings.

Implications

The findings of this research study may inform decisions regarding the integration of secondary phonics instruction among ninth-grade students as an instructional strategy to improve reading fluency, word accuracy, reading motivation, and reading self-efficacy. Potentially, the introduction of phonics instruction paired with other evidence-based practices may enhance student reading achievement. These findings are discussed in Section 2 and in the project, a white paper (see Appendix). The white paper project was designed to present recommendations to address the problem of low Lexile reading scores in the local district. Because the findings of the study provided a common negative perspective of the use of a secondary phonics-based strategies when used as a single resource to increase student Lexile scores, I researched supplemental reading alternatives.

This review of literature, found in Section 3, and the findings of this study provided the framework for the white paper project, found in the Appendix.

Summary

The problem that I addressed in the study was the below grade-level Lexile reading scores of students entering the ninth-grade at a large rural high school in a Southern state. Educators have used phonics instruction to develop the reading skills of students by developing their decoding skills (Allington, 2013). Developing decoding skills is important in improving the reading achievement of students because the ability to decode gives meaning to a text, specifically the meaning of individual sounds that comprise a text (Brady, 2011). A strong understanding and awareness of phonics is key to effective decoding skills in children.

The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. Most of the studies on the effectiveness of phonics instruction were based on samples that included young children who were just learning English or international students learning English (Allington, 2013; Cheung & Slavin, 2012). In this study, I addressed the gap in practice by conducting a qualitative case study that focused on the perceived influence of a secondary phonics curriculum on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students. Researchers have found all three constructs to have a positive relationship with reading achievement (Butz & Usher, 2015; Smith et al., 2012).

This study was significant at the local level because the results could affect the strategies used with ninth-grade students at the local school by providing a rationale for the modification of the phonics curriculum in English classes to improve the reading skills of students. At the professional level, the study was significant because of the contribution to empirical knowledge about the effectiveness of using phonics instruction to improve the reading achievement of older students through enhanced reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. The results could also lead to social change by increasing graduation rates, which may lead to better opportunities for students in terms of employment and personal development. The next section presented is Section 2 which is the methodology.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. I used interviews to obtain the perceptions of teachers regarding secondary phonics instruction. I investigated teachers' perceptions of the influence of the phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of high school students.

In this section, I describe the methodology used in the study. I selected a qualitative case study design to address the research questions. This section includes a discussion of the rationale behind the selection of the case study research design, participants, data collection and analysis procedure, and limitations. I conclude the section with a summary of the important points about the methodology of the study.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

I used a qualitative, exploratory, case study design to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students at one large rural high school in a Southern state. In case study research, data are collected and compared to offer a perception of a problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative researchers operate under the constructivist perspective of knowledge, recognizing that knowledge is subjective and may be different for every individual (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Qualitative researchers rely on patterns and themes from data collected from participants to explain a phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

A case study research design involves the examination of a phenomenon without manipulating the environment in which the phenomenon occurs (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013). Case studies are characterized by flexibility and the detailed explanation or description of a phenomenon (Yin, 2013). A case study design was appropriate because the focus of the study was broad enough to warrant a comprehensive and flexible exploration to uncover information on a previously underresearched topic using the perspectives of key individuals.

An exploratory case study is based on the exploration of a case in which there is no clear definitive outcome (Yin, 2013). Case studies focus on exploring the perspectives or experiences of participants of the same phenomenon. In the current study, the unit of analysis was the individual responses of teachers who taught ninth-grade high school students. In an exploratory case study, the goal is to illuminate a distinct phenomenon in which preliminary research is limited (Yin, 2013). The selection of an exploratory case study was appropriate because there was limited understanding of the similarities and differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy.

The use of a qualitative case study was appropriate because I was concerned with collecting data to provide in-depth insights about the opinions or perceptions of a group of people about a phenomenon (see Corbin & Strauss, 2014). In the study, the phenomenon was the influence of a secondary phonics reading curriculum on reading proficiency. The teachers provided insight into their perceptions with the phonics curriculum. I collected data using interviews, which provided insights that would not be

possible in statistical analysis or descriptive data in quantitative studies (see Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Other qualitative research designs, such as phenomenology and grounded theory, were not appropriate because of the lack of alignment with the purpose of the study. Phenomenological research relies on a single instrument to collect data to explore the lived experience of a group of individuals who have exposure to the same event or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology was not appropriate because the study did not involve an in-depth exploration of a person's lived experiences, inner thoughts, and feelings. The grounded theory design is used to build theories from data collected over a long period of time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Grounded theory was not appropriate because the design involves generating themes to propose a set of theories involving a phenomenon.

Other research methods, such as quantitative and mixed-methods, were not appropriate because of their methodological inconsistencies with the purpose of this study. A quantitative approach reflects postpositivist thinking in which researchers focus on the confidence in research and the reliability of findings (Muijs, 2010). A quantitative approach was not appropriate because quantitative researchers use numerical data and statistics to explain phenomena (Muijs, 2010), which was not consistent with the purpose of examining teachers' perceptions. Quantitative designs, such as experimental and quasi-experimental, were not appropriate because of their reliance on testing theories and evaluating whether an intervention has a significant effect on a selected variable (see Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Mixed-methods research was not appropriate because the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is only used when the purpose warrants such practice (see Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The comprehensiveness of mixed-method research was beyond the scope of this study in which I was concerned with exploring the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students. Acquiring the necessary quantitative data would not have been possible because of privacy concerns, which made the use of a mixed-methods approach inappropriate for the study.

Participants

The target population for this study included teachers who were implementing a phonics-based curriculum in a classroom of ninth-grade students at a large rural high school in a Southern state. At the time of data collection, the district served approximately 113,000 students with 112 schools. The district included 67 elementary schools, 25 middle schools, and 16 high schools. Other nontraditional schools included a charter school, special education center, adult education center, and performance learning center. The district employed 7,280 classroom teachers. The number of teachers who had implemented phonics-based instruction in the selected rural district was 27. I personally discussed the study face-to-face with all 27 teachers. Based on that target population, the sample consisted of nine participants to reach saturation. At least three participants are recommended for case study research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

The appropriateness of nine participants as a sample size in a qualitative study was based on the concept of data saturation, the point at which the data become repetitive and no longer contribute to the study in terms of generating new information (see Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Although data saturation cannot be determined beforehand, researchers indicated that six participants is sufficient to reach data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). I would have added more participants if data saturation had not been achieved with the target sample of nine teachers. Data saturation was reached with nine participants. All nine participants were ninth-grade English teachers whom I selected because their perceptions played a central role in understanding the influence of phonics-based strategies in the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit the sample of nine teachers. Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability technique that involves the selection of participants based on a predetermined set of criteria reflecting the characteristics or background of individuals (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling is popular in qualitative studies because of the importance of selecting participants who will be able to provide rich information about a specific phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). The purposeful sampling technique was appropriate because the strategy gave me adequate control to use judgment in determining whether individuals qualified for the study based on the inclusion criteria.

Table 1

Demographics of the Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Highest degree	Years of teaching experience	How long phonics program implemented
Participant 1	23	Female	BS Education	1	1
Participant 2	56	Female	MS Special Ed	16	3
Participant 3	33	Male	EdS Technology	7	3
Participant 4	35	Female	MS Special Ed	11	3
Participant 5	38	Male	MS Education	14	3
Participant 6	41	Female	PhD Admin	18	3
Participant 7	31	Female	BS Education	3	2
Participant 8	38	Male	EdS Curriculum	12	3
Participant 9	40	Male	MS Special Ed	16	3

Criteria for Selection

I based the inclusion criteria for the study on several key characteristics that were central to the focus of the study. The first inclusion criterion was that participants were teachers instructing ninth-grade students at a large rural high school in a Southern state. The second inclusion criterion was that participants were English teachers who had implemented a phonics-based program to ninth-grade students for at least one complete school year. After discussing the criteria with each teacher over the phone, only 14 met the criteria. Teachers needed to understand the definitions of a student's reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. I explained the definitions of these constructs to the participants during recruitment and at the beginning of the interview.

Procedures for Gaining Access

After permission to collect data was granted by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval # 01-27-17-0253647), I visited the target school and coordinated with the designated administrator to recruit potential participants. I secured the permission and approval forms to conduct the study in the district from the appropriate administrators. Securing permission from the district staff to conduct the research was necessary to uphold ethical standards (see Sieber & Tolich, 2012). To gain access and invite potential participants, I e-mailed eligible teachers to invite them to participate in the study. I e-mailed the informed consent letter that included background information about the study. The e-mail also addressed the procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, benefits to the larger community, privacy, contacts and questions, and obtaining consent. To obtain consent, participants had to indicate their consent to the e-mail by replying with the words, "I consent."

Researcher-Participant Relationship

The leaders of the selected campus were cooperative partners in the research and were interested in the results of the study. I was able to establish a positive working relationship with the participants through casual conversation, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended. I made initial contact by personally inviting the eligible teachers over the phone in the target school to provide a brief explanation of what their participation would entail and the possible benefits to their school. I encouraged the participants to ask questions so that I could address any questions or concerns. I also ensured that the participants understood that all data that I collected would be

confidential, and that I would not reveal their identities in the presentation of the findings. I reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. I also explained the quality assurance process that would include the participants reviewing the draft findings of the data, and I conveyed that participants would have the opportunity to provide input and suggest revisions.

Protection of Participants' Rights

To address ethical issues, I took the following measures. First, the study proposal was reviewed by the Walden IRB to ensure that I conducted it ethically. After the IRB granted permission to proceed with data collection, I provided all potential participants with consent forms via e-mail to highlight the key components of the study, such as the purpose and the nature of the data collection. I explained the potential benefits of the study and explained that signing the consent forms was necessary to proceed with the interviews. Other important information that I included in the consent form was the procedure that I would use to protect their identities, the strategies that I would use to store data collected, the procedures I would use to destroy files after publication, and the withdrawal process. Although participants could not be assured of anonymity in this study, I assured them confidentiality regarding all information shared and data collected. I informed the participants that I would use pseudonyms to identify them in the final report of the findings.

I asked all participants to sign the forms to indicate voluntary participation and agreement with the terms stated in the informed consent. The participants reviewed the contents of the form and signed the forms if they voluntarily agreed to be part of the

study, and returned the forms within 3 days. I intend to keep all signed consent forms for 5 years in a locked cabinet and password-protected folder in a computer in my residence where only I have access. After 5 years, I will dispose of all paper documents by shredding, and I will permanently delete all electronic data from the computer's hard drive.

Data Collection

Use of a qualitative exploratory case study design was appropriate in exploring the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students. The data for the project study were collected through the use of semistructured interviews. Interviews are a valuable source of data collection because the researcher is able to regulate and structure the information that is gathered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The selection of participants was purposeful and required that each individual be able to answer the interview questions (see Palinkas et al., 2015).

Interview Data Collection

The data source for this study was semistructured interviews. A protocol was created based on the three guiding research questions and used during the interviews. Interview questions were open-ended to gain insights into the reading abilities of the students. I designed the questions for the interview to elicit the responses needed to answer the three research questions. The interview protocol contained five demographic questions intended to provide a description of the sample. The first research question, regarding the influence of the phonics-based strategies on motivation, was addressed in

protocol Questions 1-10. Data to answer the second research question, regarding the influence of the phonics-based strategies on fluency, came from protocol Questions 11-18. The remaining interview items from the protocol, Questions 19-26, provided the data to answer the third research question regarding the influence of the phonics-based strategies on self-efficacy. I determined that the sample size of nine participants for the interview was adequate based on data saturation. For the interviews, I personally coordinated with nine English teachers to explore their perceptions regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth grade high school students.

A panel of experts in the field of reading education reviewed the questions for the interviews to enhance the appropriateness of the guide. The three experts were high school English teachers with either a Master's degree or a Specialist in Education degree, and two were college professors with doctoral degrees in education. The comments were universal throughout that all were questions effectively linked to the research questions and were comprehensible as a reader. Therefore, there were not recommendations to alter the interview protocol.

Prior to the interviews, I informed the participants that the interviews would be recorded and that their approval was necessary to proceed with the study. I allotted up to 90 minutes for each interview, as this is also the length of each teacher's planning period. I discovered that this was enough time, as each interview averaged about 70 minutes. I brought two audio recorders to the interviews to have in case one did not work properly. I audio recorded all interviews to improve the accuracy of the transcription process. During

the interviews I took field notes on the protocol which allowed me to have these notes throughout the interview process. I assured the participants that the digital recordings would be stored in a secured location, which would be inaccessible to anyone other than me. The recordings did not include references to participants' names or any other personal information. I was responsible for the transcription process. Before the actual analysis of data, the interviews were transcribed. I was responsible for transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews. The transcripts contained the verbatim questions and responses of each participant during the interview. I labeled the files containing the interview transcripts by using pseudonyms. After each session I reviewed my notes and compared them to the transcription to insure the information was recorded accurately. Individual file folders were used for all nine participants and contained the transcription, location, and field notes for each participant.

Protecting the identities of participants is important in conducting ethical research (Sieber & Tolich, 2012). The system for tracking the data involved assigning pseudonyms to all participants to protect their identities. The pseudonyms for the interview data served as the identifiers during the data analysis and final presentation of results. To keep track of the real identities of the pseudonyms that I assigned for each participant, I created a private computer log indicating the source of data.

Role of the Researcher

I was responsible for all aspects of the research including recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. In the recruitment phase, I was responsible for contacting the target school and for finding eligible teachers who could be part of the study. In

qualitative research, the researcher is considered the main instrument of the study (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). As the main instrument of study, I was responsible for the data collection, which involved conducting the interviews. I was also responsible for the analysis of data and the drafting of the results as one of the sections in the doctoral study. I analyzed the collected data using the thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given that the target school had already implemented a phonics instruction program, the research site for the study only included one school. The scope of the study was confined to a single school because it was the only school that adopted secondary phonics instruction in the school district.

At the time of data collection, my professional roles at the study school included being an English teacher, serving on the resume committee, and being a part of the Response to Intervention (RTI) team. I prevented or minimized any potential coercion of participants by informing the potential participants that no penalty or negative consequence would result from refusing to be part of the study. My relationship with the participants was professional. I did not have a personal relationship with any of the participants, and I have never supervised any of the participants. Although the professional relationship of the researcher with the participants could have potentially led to bias, a conscious effort was made to set aside personal notions about the research topic. My purpose as the researcher was to find the commonalities and differences among the participants' responses in the interviews.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using the thematic analysis framework. The chosen data analysis had six phases, which included the following: (a) familiarization with the data collected from the interviews; (b) creation of initial codes that reflect the key perceptions of the teachers regarding the effectiveness of phonics-based strategies in the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students; (c) search for themes that reflect the perceptions of the sample as a group; (d) review of themes before the finalization of findings; (e) definition and naming of themes that will reflect the perceived influence of phonics-based strategies in the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students; and (f) generation of a written narrative that will provide answers to the effectiveness of phonics-based strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). I will discuss each of these data analysis phases to provide a better understanding of how I analyzed the interview data.

The first phase of thematic analysis involved organizing the data collected from interviews to prepare for the analysis. After all data were properly organized and documented Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested a researcher's main goal is to get an initial impression of the different meanings apparent from the textual data. I loaded all data into the NVivo software. NVivo software is a qualitative tool used to store and organize large quantities of qualitative data such as interviews, observation notes, and video clips (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The software assisted in the categorization of codes. To enhance my effectiveness in using the software, I read the detailed manual and

participated in the online tutorials available to subscribers of NVivo. I also completed the training for the fundamentals of NVivo for Windows.

After the data were organized for the analysis, overt patterns and themes were apparent. I accomplished this step through coding, which is the process of assigning meaning to a particular portion of text in given data set (Saldana, 2013). I read the responses of the participants from the interviews several times, looking for major themes and patterns. At the end of this stage, I had generated a list of preliminary codes based on the initial analysis of the data.

The second phase of the analysis involved the generation of initial codes based on the interesting features of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The coding process was cyclical in nature because the codes were constantly modified or renamed based on the insights and information gained as the analysis continued to progress (Saldana, 2013). The coding process involved both data reduction and data complication because I reduced or simplified large chunks of data using a few key words that represented the most interesting feature of these data (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2015). I also used coding stripes and created nodes while I read through the individual interviews and assigned meaning to different similar portions of text on an existing knowledge framework based on theories and the literature. For the study, this stage entailed assigning codes to the teachers' responses in the interviews. I inspected the text from the interviews to generate labels that embodied the essence of a particular portion or chunk of data.

The third phase in the thematic analysis process was the determination of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Themes are different from codes in that themes are able to capture more complex ideas or descriptions about a phenomenon (Saldana, 2013). The determination of themes is accomplished by collating the codes that were generated based on their relevance or connections to each other. As I determined themes, I scrutinized them further in the succeeding phases of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). I used the codes that I developed to generate themes from the teacher responses during the interviews.

The fourth phase of thematic analysis was the review of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). At this stage of the analysis, I reviewed every theme that emerged to determine whether the codes and these raw data actually supported the themes. The refinement of themes involved determining if patterns were coherent and if the themes were connected to these data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). After I finalized the review, I developed a thematic map containing all the final themes of the study. For the study, I reviewed each theme developed from the teachers' responses in the interviews to verify whether the themes were supported by these raw data. I made the appropriate changes and improvements to finalize the themes.

The fifth phase of the thematic analysis procedure was the definition and naming of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). At this stage of the analysis, I articulated the essence of each theme. Specifically, I defined the relationship between the themes and the research questions. At the end of this analysis phase, I was able to define all the relevant themes and explain the essence of each theme in a few sentences (Braun

& Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). For the study, I linked the themes that were developed from the interviews to the research questions. I used the themes to answer the research questions.

The final step of the analysis involved the generation of a report that incorporated all the final themes that were developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The final report was vivid and detailed, which I accomplished by generating a coherent narrative that used interesting extracts as support for the story that was crafted. The final report was also anchored by the research questions of the study, which meant that the narrative generated directly answered the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). For the study, I used the themes to create a composite narrative of the case.

Evidence and Credibility of the Findings

To enhance the credibility of the results, I used member checking (Morse, 2015). Member checking is the process of using the feedback of the participants to confirm the accuracy of the results presented by the researcher (Carlson, 2010). Member checking can enhance the credibility of a study between researcher and participants as feedback can be used to correct and address discrepancies as result of feedback (Morse, 2015).

After the interviews had been completed and analyzed, I performed member checking by sending each participant a summary of the preliminary results of the data analysis through email. The strategy of cross-checking data was used to help ensure validity and credibility; this occurred through member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The email included a brief request to review the individual summary of the

findings generated from the interview and reply with comments and feedback about the accuracy of the report. No corrections were made, and no discrepancies in the information were found during the member checking.

I used bracketing to diminish the potentially adverse effects of preconceptions that may have invalidated and hindered the research process. According to Creswell (2012), "In the bracketing process, the researcher acknowledges his or her previous experience, attitude and beliefs, but tries to set them aside for the duration of the study to see the object of study anew" (p. 331). I had taught the phonics-based strategies for the prior 2 years at the time of data collection. Throughout my personal experience with the phonics-based strategies, I observed student reading motivation at different levels, increased student fluency, and some student improvement in efficacy of reading. I set my biases aside to learn about others' experiences and perspectives to employ an objective data collection and analysis process.

Limitations

In terms of methodological limitations, the use of interviews can be considered a limitation because the tool is not a standardized instrument that has been validated by previous researchers. To address this limitation, I asked a panel of experts to review the interview guide to enhance credibility of the instrument. I also used audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcription process to and support credible analysis of data.

A second limitation was inherent in the research design. Because of the nature of qualitative research, a direct cause and effect relationship could not be determined because of the lack of experimental control over extraneous and confounding factors. The

identified influence of phonics-based instruction on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade students reported in this study were based on the subjective perceptions of teachers. Participants may not have had an accurate perception of their students' reading motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. I assumed that the teachers would understand their students' reading abilities based on their consistent and extensive exposure to the students and to teachers' use of the strategies in their classrooms. Finally, because I only considered ninth-grade students, the findings of this study are applicable only to the target population studied.

Data Analysis Results

The gap in practice that prompted this study was the lack of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the reading achievement of ninth-grade students in the selected high school. The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. To address the three research questions, interviews were conducted and analyzed through a thematic analysis to examine English teachers' perceptions of how secondary phonics-based strategies influenced students' reading motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework.

Through the six-step process, I developed the study results or themes which were used to respond to the three research questions of this study. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps, I first familiarized myself with these data by reading and reviewing the transcripts. During this stage, I listed the important thoughts gathered from the interviews

of the participants. The next step was the generation of codes, wherein I noted the initial ideas from the previous steps. I then collected and bracketed the codes and generated the themes of the study. In the fourth step, I reviewed and re-examined the established themes to ensure that the meanings and essences were relevant to the subject of the study. In the fifth step of the thematic analysis, I formally named and described the themes based on the participants' direct responses. I performed a systematic coding and tabulation through NVivo to determine the order of significance of the themes. The coded responses that received the greatest number of references per research question, as tabulated in NVivo, were labeled as the major (M) themes of the study. I also incorporated the underlying subthemes in order to support the ideas of the discovered minor (m) themes. The subthemes are the more detailed concepts explaining the themes. The sixth and final step was the presentation of data in narrative form, supported with tables and verbatim responses of the participants interviewed. I included inconsistencies in participant responses in the findings.

Findings

The findings are organized by the three research questions. Five themes emerged from these data to answer the three research questions and address the purpose of the study. The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading.

Research Question 1: Reading Motivation

The central research question is as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation of ninth-

grade high school students? The findings from the nine participants indicated that intrinsic motivation had little or no influence on the students because of students' lack of interest in the strategies and also the challenges of the English language itself. Participants related that students wanted to increase their grades for rewards, so this may have indicated a participant reported positive influence on extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards to improve student work and grades.

Research Question 2: Reading Fluency

The next research question was as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading fluency of ninth grade high school students? An analysis of the findings indicated that use of the phonics-based strategies was perceived to have a slight increase in students' reading fluency and were perceived to strongly influence students' reading accuracy. Based on the results of the findings I concluded reading accuracy was strongly improved as a result of the use of phonics-based strategies.

Research Question 3: Reading Self-Efficacy

The final research question was as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading self-efficacy of ninth grade high school students? Findings indicated different teachers perceived a variety of factors attributed to the students' self-efficacy. The participants did not attribute any improvements in self-efficacy to the phonics-based strategies. Participants proffered that student self-efficacy improves throughout the year as a result of increased reading time and presentation and performance-based activities in front of their peers. Participants

based their perceptions of self-efficacy on observations of student engagement. The themes by research question are arranged on Table 2.

Table 2

Major Themes by Research Question

Research question	Major themes
Reading motivation	Theme 1: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of the students Theme 2: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have a positive influence on the students' extrinsic motivation
Reading fluency	Theme 3: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have improved students' reading fluency Theme 4: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have improved students' reading accuracy
Reading self-efficacy	Theme 5: Teachers have different perspectives on how the phonics-based strategies influences students' self-efficacy

Themes from the Findings

Based on the analyzed data, a total of five themes, four subthemes, and three inconsistent responses emerged. I concluded that the phonics-based strategies moderately influence students' intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and reading fluency. In addition, the phonics reading program was perceived to improve student reading accuracy and students' extrinsic motivation.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation of ninth-grade high school students? Through the

qualitative thematic analysis of the interviews, two themes emerged to answer Research Question 1. The themes reflect a focus on motivation specific to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Each theme includes subthemes that identify the factors influencing the theme. A breakdown of the themes by research question are described in Tables 3, 4, and 5. Table 3 contains the major themes and sub-themes, which emerged from the first research question of the study.

Table 3

Breakdown of Themes Addressing RQ1

Label	Themes	Number of participants
Theme 1	Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of the students (M)	6
Subthemes 1a. and 1b.	(a)Lack of program relevancy (b)Challenges of the English language	
Theme 2	Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have positive influence on the students' extrinsic motivation (M)	6
Subthemes 2a and 2b	(a)Assignment completion to increase grades (m) (b)Maintaining of grades to gain rewards (m)	

RQ1 Theme 1: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of the students (M). The first theme of the study, which was based on responses of all nine participants, was the participants' observation

that the Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of the students. For the participants, the strategies perceived to have minimal or no effect on increasing the students' intrinsic motivation. The participants reported two specific observations on why they indicated the lack of influence on intrinsic motivation. Comprehending the pronunciation of some English words was a factor in influencing the intrinsic motivation of the students. Another theme identified was a lack of relevancy of the content of the program.

RQ1 Subtheme 1a: Lack of program relevancy (m). The first subtheme or evidence of the lack of intrinsic motivation was the observation that the students' respect and interest for the program were deficient. Participant 1 (P1) stated the strategies did not seem to motivate the students intrinsically. The participant explained, "The phonics-based strategies didn't seem to encourage students to read or feel like it was important." For P1, this was because the students lacked respect for the program. P1 then observed, "Students believed that the program was too elementary for them and didn't understand the reasoning behind what was being taught." Participant 2 (P2) had the same perception. The participant indicated that the students did not show interest in using phonics. Furthermore, the students also felt that the program was not significant; the students refused to participate and lacked enthusiasm while learning. P2 then shared, "Students had no curiosity to use phonics to be enjoyable or feel that it is important. When beginning the program, students immediately became uninterested in the phonics-based strategies because of the simplicity of the program."

Participant 3 (P3) explained the confusion regarding words was one of the main reasons why the students seemed constrained under the program. In addition, during the introduction of phonics, the participant commented, “The students had no interest in learning about vowel[s] as they feel that it was too elementary for them.” Participant 5 (P5) also believed the interest of the students in reading may already be difficult to amend during the ninth-grade. Their personal perceptions in reading should have already been established by this age. P5 then stressed, “Students have either already developed a love for reading or they have this notion that reading is just not fun.” Participant 8 (P8) echoed that the phonics-based strategies seemed to have been “too elementary” for the ninth-grade students. The teachers observed that the students were disconnected during the program and did not know the flow of the lesson or what was being discussed. P8 said, “The students appeared to be more annoyed with the elementary design even though there are things that the students need to learn.” Finally, Participant 9 (P9) discussed that most of the time, the students found the program too childish. This participant reported that the students’ motivation level remained the same; and as high school students, phonics instruction did not seem suitable and effective. P9 expressed, “Being high school students, students do not believe that phonics can improve their reading skills.”

RQ1 Subtheme 1b: Challenges of the English language (m). The second subtheme was the decrease in motivation due to the challenges of the English language. P1 stated that another factor for the lack of motivation was the confusion in the pronunciation rules of the English words. P1 shared, “At the high school level, there are so many words in the English language that are pronounced abnormally compared to

rules of phonics." Participant 4 (P4) found the program effective in increasing the students' ability in pronouncing words, which they previously did not comprehend; however, the main issue was even after the program, the students still found it difficult to pronounce certain words, saying, "They did not always get the word correct even after the program." Lastly, P5 revealed that the students found it too complicated to understand the rules of phonics, commenting that "students would not complete the phonics assignments that need to be completed in class for participation."

RQ1 Theme 2: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have positive influence on the students' extrinsic motivation (M). The second theme of the study was the perceived positive influence of the program on the students' extrinsic motivation. Supporting this theme, the participants reported an improvement in the students' motivation in completing their assignments and maintaining their grades to gain rewards. The following observations formed the subthemes under this theme. P4 explained that the students may have various motivations in completing their tasks and school requirements, stating that "if the phonics assignment was for a grade and a student did not want to get in trouble at home because of a failing grade, then students would be motivated to complete the phonics assignment." Furthermore, Participant 6 (P6) believed the students would normally work hard to improve their grades; and not with the aim of improving their overall reading ability. The participant expressed, "I think students try to do well with phonics for the sole purpose of getting immediate grades on the phonics itself rather than for improving grades through improved reading ability." P4 added that students were indeed motivated to work on their requirements to retain their privileges, explaining,

"Students are motivated by external rewards such as their phones, personal time such as not being grounded, etc."

RQ1 Subtheme 2a: Assignment completion to increase grades (m). The first subtheme was an increase in motivation observed from the students' willingness to complete their assignments to increase their grades. P2 stated that students are always driven to work hard to complete their homework, explaining that "students are motivated to complete an assignment no matter the content to increase their grade." P3 also believed that the students are always more motivated to work when they will receive incentives for their grades. In addition, P3 indicated that this motivation came naturally as students certainly wanted to maintain or increase their grades, commenting, "If it is an assignment for a grade, then the students would complete it just to help improve their grade."

RQ1 Subtheme 2b: Maintaining of grades for rewards (m). The second subtheme was the practice of working hard to maintain their grades and keep their external rewards. P2 explained that from observation, students had developed the sense of working hard to retain their external rewards such as their use of gadgets. P2 shared, "Students have become interested in reading certain stories… as well as completing assignments to get the grades they need to keep some of their external reward devices such as video games, extracurricular, and phones." Finally, P5 expressed the rewards deemed to motivate the freshmen students were their gadgets, such as laptops and smartphones, saying, "The only rewards that the ninth-graders seem to be motivated by is today's technology… [to access their] electronic devices, laptops, and cell phones."

There were no clearly discrepant cases for Theme 1, however inconsistency was found in the comments of Participant 7 (P7). This participant described how she worked hard to develop the motivation and interest of her students. Through the different phonics instruction activities, the students realized the advantages and benefits of the program. In addition, the students became competitive in terms of wanting to improve their reading skills and abilities, describing one student whose reading speed was a competition; however, more than competing with others, he was trying to beat his previous time. Data saturation was reached, however, as in qualitative research, outliers are inevitable (Poetter, 2016).

Another inconsistency was found in Theme 2 in the comments of Participant 1 (P1). P1 discussed the probable positive influence of the phonics-based strategies on the students' extrinsic motivation was also related to the age and educational level of the students. P1 shared that the ninth-grade students were not as motivated in terms of their grades as compared to the more advanced students, explaining, "The freshmen tend to not be as motivated by grades as the upperclassmen." The case discovered was the observation, by P1, that the ninth-grade students were not as grade-motivated as the higher levels. Even after data saturation was achieved, outliers show the exception to the rule in qualitative studies (Poetter, 2016).

Summary of Research Question 1

The two major themes that emerged were the: (a) Phonics-based strategies were perceived to have little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of the students and (b) Phonics-based strategies were perceived to have positive influence on the students'

extrinsic motivation. The results revealed that participants viewed secondary phonics-based strategies as having little or no influence on the students' intrinsic motivation because they believe students' respect and interest for the program were deficient and they experienced challenges with the using the English language. Participants however also observed the program to have positive influence on the students' extrinsic motivation because students wanted to increase their grades or maintain their grades for rewards. I designed Research Question 2 which focuses on perceptions of fluency and the reading program.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading fluency of ninth-grade high school students? From the analysis of data, two themes emerged. Five of the nine participants observed their students had improved reading in fluency; however, participants were unsure whether this improvement could be attributed to the phonics-based strategies. In addition, participants expressed that reading accuracy improved, but pronunciation mistakes were still observed. Table 4 contains the breakdown of all themes pertaining to the second research question of the study.

Table 4

Breakdown of Major (M) Themes Addressing RQ2

Label	Themes	Number of participants
Theme 1	Phonics-based strategies were perceived to have improved students' reading fluency (M)	7
Theme 2	Phonics-based strategies were perceived to have improved students' reading accuracy (M)	7

RQ2 Theme 1: Phonics-based strategies were perceived to have improved students' reading fluency (M). The first theme that emerged as a response to the second research question was the teachers' observation of an improvement in reading fluency. The teachers expressed that the improvement may or may not have been a result of the program. The participants reported slight developments existed but also noted that further implementation and practice should help the students with their fluency. P2 discussed this theme, saying, "Reading fluency is learned throughout a semester year course with or without the phonics-based strategies. The phonics-based strategies may or may not have helped influenced the increase in reading fluency." Meanwhile, P3 stated that the practice of reading aloud in class during the instruction sessions increases reading fluency, explaining: "Over the years, the only thing that seemed to help with reading fluency is reading more often in class."

P1 observed an improvement in the reading fluency of the students. P1 indicated, however, that there were still noticeable mistakes and difficulties that the students

encountered at times, commenting, “The students that would normally skip over words they didn’t know actually sounded them out.” P1 then added, “I am not sure if it was the phonics instruction that increased reading fluency over time or was it just a school year of reading that helped the students.” Meanwhile, P4 gave an example on why it is understandable that the students would encounter difficulties in pronouncing certain words, expressing that “learning the phonics rules and exceptions such as the schwa gets confusing to some students… so, if the student is sounding out a word, they may still get it wrong.”

RQ2 Theme 2: Phonics-based strategies are perceived to have improved students’ reading accuracy (M). The second theme that emerged as a response to the second research question was the teachers’ observation of an improvement in reading accuracy. The participants expressed that accuracy was present, but an increase in speed was not. P2 shared that the students displayed an overall fluency in reading. The participant reported that through the program, students have learned how to apply the rules accordingly, stating, “I believe that students have improved their reading fluency by reading text accurately. When students have learned the rules of phonics, they can accurately apply it [them] while reading anytime.” P4 added that the use of phonics was helpful for the ninth-grade students, but that the use of phonics slowed down the reading of the students, explaining: “The [use of the] phonics-based strategies to accurately read text was helpful for the students. [However], it did not help with how quick they were able to read. If anything, it slowed them down.” P5 believed that the program indeed helped in the students’ ability to read the text correctly. One issue reported again was the

speed; this participant explained that “the accuracy has improved whereas I have not noticed an increase in how fast the students read.” P5 observed the improvement of accuracy during a guided reading activity where the students read aloud in class.

There were no clear discrepant cases, however there were inconsistencies. Two of the nine participants were unable to observe reading fluency. The participants identified two influences on why they failed to observe the improvement in their students’ reading fluency. Participants indicated that the lack of time in the program implementation and the wrong grade or educational target level were the main factors for the absence of reading fluency.

The first evidence of the inconsistencies in participant perceptions was the reported lack of time in implementing the program. P6 admitted that it was difficult to report on the students’ reading accuracy because of the lack of time for several important activities. One activity was independent reading to practice the phonics instruction; the participant discussed a “lack of time… lack of independent reading… lack of activities that focus on using the skills practiced in phonics instruction.” Secondly, the participant’s perception was that the strategies were more appropriate for younger students. P9 emphasized that reading fluency remained the same because the students were already too old to be introduced to the concepts of reading, saying “I believe it (phonics-based strategies) have greater fluency benefits with younger kids who are learning how to read.”

Summary of Research Question 2

The two themes that emerged were that teachers believed secondary phonics instruction can lead to an increase in reading fluency and improved reading accuracy. However, teachers were unsure whether this improvement was solely due to the phonics-based strategies as they reported pronunciation mistakes were still observed. Students' whose first language is not English, English Language Learners (ELLs), struggled the most. These pronunciation mistakes which were consistently made seemed to result from the complexity of the language and were related to ELLs' difficulties incorporating English sounds into their reading which affected fluency and accuracy.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students? Upon analysis, the majority of the participants had conflicting perspectives on the influence of phonics on self-efficacy. Several participants observed increased student self-efficacy. The participants were unsure about describing the improvement as a direct result of the phonics-based program. Some of the other indicators shared by teacher participants that could have influenced student self-efficacy were the students' improved ability to read aloud in class, the presence of an environment conducive to confidence building in reading, and the development and presence of supportive and proactive teachers.

A conflicting perspective by three teachers was the lack of student self-efficacy. The teachers observed a lack of student participation and interest, as well as a lack of confidence in students' responses. Teachers perceived these student behaviors to

represent a lack of self-efficacy. In addition, the participants reported that lack of time to implement the program and pursuing an educational goal which was not of interest to the students may have influenced their perceptions of students' lack of self-efficacy. Table 5 contains the breakdown of the single theme emerging from this research question.

Table 5

Theme Emerging from RQ3

Label	Themes	Number of participants
Theme 1	Teachers have different perspectives on how the Phonics-based strategies influenced students' self-efficacy (M)	6

The only theme that emerged to answer Research Question 3 was that teachers' perspectives on student self-efficacy are based on observed student engagement behaviors. The participants perceived that students' low participation and interest during class signified lack of student self-efficacy. P2 reported, "After a phonics lesson, students would sometimes shut down and not participate in the next lesson in the class." P8 echoed that even after the phonics lessons, students failed to show that they had gained confidence from the new lessons and reading rules learned. For P8, "After phonics instruction, the students did not appear to have self-confidence during the next lesson." P2 observed that the students' responses lacked confidence and certainty even after the lessons. P2 explained the theme from experience, describing that "no matter what the

content of the phonics instruction was, students' responses after instruction did not show any improved self-confidence."

Other participants noted an increase in self-efficacy in their students but also acknowledged that other factors could be affecting their observation. P1 admitted that reading self-efficacy usually increases after spending one full academic year with the students. By having the students give presentations and perform various activities collaboratively or in pairs in front of the class, P1 perceived an improved sense of student self-efficacy; however, P1 also identified that it is difficult to say whether the improved student self-efficacy can be attributed to the phonics-based strategies, explaining that "because the program makes you speak in class, students could have strengthened self-efficacy by being asked to speak in class often." P4 echoed this by saying, "I can't say whether it was the phonics-based strategies specifically or our regular course work, but I believe any time [*students are*] practicing reading it helps improve a student's confidence." Meanwhile, P5 explained that throughout the year, students would normally improve and increase their confidence, commenting: "Throughout the year, students improve in reading confidence with and without the phonic reading program."

P7 emphasized that the increase in self-efficacy can also be attributed to the conducive environment that teachers create in their different classrooms. For P7, it was also vital to show support and careful correction of the students' mistakes, saying "the environment of the class lends a way to being more confident." P8 echoed that indeed, throughout the year, the students' confidence normally increases; however, the same dilemma was highlighted with the issue of identifying the source of increased reading

self-efficacy. P8 commented, “The student’s confidence throughout the semester always increases. I cannot determine whether the phonics-based strategies contribute to the increase or not.” While participants’ perspectives varied on student self-efficacy and the phonics-based strategies, responses were based on the participants observed student engagement and participation behaviors. The participants also noted student self-efficacy tended to improve throughout the year as students read more and were required to participate in activities in front of the class related to reading instructional activities. The participants presented several different opinions on self-efficacy and noted an overall improvement in student self-efficacy, however participants noted that the use of phonics-based strategies could not be directly attributed to an improvement in self-efficacy.

Data saturation was achieved, yet an outlier still existed. The participants shared several reasons why they believed that there was a lack of self-efficacy development, reporting a lack of participation and interest and a lack of confidence of the students when responding to the teachers. Meanwhile, negative program features such as the lack of time to implement the program and a wrong educational level were indicated as well. Overall, P9 commented that there were no visible effects in the self-efficacy of the students, saying that “Once the semester was over, there was no measurable/visible gains in students’ self-efficacy.”

Summary of Research Question 3

One single theme emerged from the responses that reflected differing perspectives of the effectiveness of the phonics-based strategies on the students’ self-efficacy. Participants noted that there were different factors, which they perceived as related to the

improvement in self-efficacy such as presenting in front of classmates and the natural occurrence of gaining a sense of self-efficacy which was observed in students each year the longer they were enrolled in the English classes that used the phonics-based strategies and other teaching methods to support reading improvement. Students who performed successfully in class and who were observed by participants to have improved self-efficacy could be a result of the teachers' implementation of ELA using the general education curriculum.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. The guiding research questions were centered on the conceptual framework for this study, Paivio's (1991) dual coding theory, which refers to the notion that reading is enhanced when both visual and verbal representations of words are provided. Paivio claims that the dual coding theory uses both visual and verbal information to process information. The use of a qualitative exploratory case study research design was appropriate because the study was concerned with the perspectives of multiple participants on a phenomenon that had limited preliminary research findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Yin, 2013). The target population for this study included English teacher participants who had at least one year of experience implementing phonics-based strategies in a classroom of ninth-grade students at a large rural high school in a Southern state. Based on that target population, the sample consisted of nine participants (Guest et al., 2006).

The results were derived from the perceptions of teachers who were implementing the phonics-based strategies in their classroom instruction. A total of five themes, four subthemes, and three inconsistent responses emerged from the data analyzed. Based on Research Question 1, I concluded that teachers perceived the phonics-based strategies under study had little or no influence on students' intrinsic motivation. The teachers claimed that the phonics-based strategies did not increase students' intrinsic motivation levels. The teacher participants explained that they perceived students' intrinsic motivation as being possibly related to the phonics-based program not being perceived as relevant by students and to not supporting their overall reading needs. Teacher participants noted that students had difficulty comprehending and pronouncing certain English words used in the phonics-based program, and believed that the frustration which some students experienced, when exposed to the phonics-based strategies, may have influenced students' intrinsic motivation related to participation in the strategies and overall phonics-based program. However, the phonics-based strategies were found to have a possible positive influence on students' extrinsic motivation as perceived by teacher participants. These positive participant responses related to extrinsic motivation were based on the participants' perceptions related to students' observed behaviors when participating in the strategies or program. The teachers found that their students were motivated to complete their assignments within the phonics-based program, obtain embedded program rewards, and improve their reading grades.

Based on my second research question on the phonics-based strategies and students' reading fluency, there were two themes that emerged. The teachers perceived an

improvement in reading fluency. The teachers also reported that the phonics-based strategies improved the students' reading accuracy.

Finally, I determined based on the third research question related to the phonics-based strategies and student self-efficacy that there was not a clear consensus regarding the influence of the phonics-based strategies on student self-efficacy. Participants based their perceptions on student behavioral observations related to engagement and participation. Chou, Cheng, & Cheng (2016), determined that conclusions can be drawn on self-efficacy based on observations of activities that heighten the students' interests such as their own chosen independent reading book or project. Some teachers experienced their students not showing interest or participating in class. In contrast, some teachers noted an increase in the self-efficacy of the students; however, they did not definitively describe their perceptions regarding reading and student self-efficacy as being related to the phonics-based strategies. However, participants noted that student self-efficacy improved throughout the year and it was observed that this is a natural phenomenon. Some participants attributed this improved self-efficacy to increased reading time and presentations and collaborative activities demonstrated to their peers or in front of the class. These observations were based on individually selected reading books or activities where students had a choice in the selection.

The findings presented were aligned with most of the literature on phonics (Houtveen, van de Grift, & Brokamp, 2014; Wigfield et al., 2014; Wolters, Barnes, Kulesz, York, & Francis, 2017), as the phonics-based strategies under study were perceived to contribute positively to student fluency, accuracy and external motivation.

However, the phonics-based strategies were perceived to have little influence on students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. Due to the findings which emerged from the data, I determined that additional information was needed on other reading strategies used to support improved reading skills for secondary students. I searched for alternative reading strategies, and evidence-based practices (EBPs) to add to the use of the secondary phonics-based strategies to address the problem of low Lexile scores among ninth-grade students. The supplemental reading strategies, such as Balanced Literacy and implementation of EBPs will be combined with the existing phonics-based program to strengthen students' reading skills. The target campus' ninth grade English Language Arts/Reading PLC will implement the recommendations, if accepted by stakeholders, as outlined in the white paper. The results of the study and research on EBPs and alternative reading approaches such as Balanced Literacy, informed the recommendations included in the white paper project (see Appendix), discussed in detail in Section 3.

Section 3: The Project

The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. I implemented a case study research design and interview methodology to explore the perceptions of nine teachers regarding the effectiveness of phonics-based strategies for high school reading. In Section 3, I provide a description of the project informed by the study findings, which were described in the white paper. The findings were consistent with literature on phonics (Houtveen et al., 2014; Wigfield et al., 2014; Wolters et al., 2017). Teachers perceived the phonics-based strategies to have a slight influence on students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy; however, the strategies under study were perceived to positively influence student fluency, accuracy, and external motivation. I concluded that further research was needed on the use of phonics-based strategies. I also recognized the need for other reading strategies and EBPs to address student reading Lexile scores. Emerging from the findings, the overarching recommendation was to implement balanced literacy (BL), such as EBPs blended with the phonics-based strategies to further support student reading instruction and teacher skill development. Based on the findings, the white paper became the preferred deliverable to present recommendations to address the reading problem in the target district.

The white paper included a brief summary of the study, findings, and review of the literature to provide a context for the stakeholders and to establish a clear connection to the recommendations. This white paper will inform district stakeholders regarding the status of phonics-strategies implementation and other additional recommendations that

could be used as a BL approach to supporting reading improvement. A BL approach would include not only phonics elements but also other elements of reading and writing. In this section I discuss the project goals and provide a rationale for choosing a white paper as the project. In addition, I present literature supporting the findings and recommendations of the project. The section concludes with a detailed description of the white paper project, found in the Appendix.

Goals of the Project

A white paper is an effective strategy to share findings, conclusions, and recommendations established from the results of a study (Engeldinger, 2016). The purpose of the white paper project (see Appendix) was to inform stakeholders about alternative reading strategies regarding the identified reading problem, review of literature, and findings from the project study. The secondary purpose was to create awareness of resources tailored for implementation by the ninth-grade Literacy PLC at the target high school. Project goals were as follows:

Goal 1: Propose a research-based model for supporting the literacy initiative of the ninth-grade Literacy PLCs.

Goal 2: Use data from the presentation of the white paper to facilitate a comprehensive, ongoing annual evaluation of ninth-grade Literacy PLCs at the target site based on the implementation of EBP strategies.

Rationale

I conducted a review of the research literature and a case study in the local district to determine the influence of the secondary phonics-based strategies in use in the district

on student reading motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. Previous researchers found these three constructs to influence reading success (Butz & Usher, 2015; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2015; McQuillan, 2013). The analysis of data in the current study indicated that the secondary phonics-based strategies were perceived to contribute positively to student fluency, accuracy, and external motivation. However, phonics-based strategies were perceived to have little influence on students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. The teachers perceived additional supports were needed for their students' reading success. These findings suggested an alternative to the use of a singular approach, such as the phonics-based reading strategies, to strengthen reading instruction. I determined that a white paper project would be the most appropriate approach to convey findings and recommendations to stakeholders.

According to the Young Adult Library Services Association (2008), the white paper is an appropriate genre for a professional setting because it permits a custom-designed presentation of ideas to a specific audience for a certain purpose. Stelzner (2013) noted that the white paper allows for suitable recommendations to an audience of stakeholders. In this context, I will use the white paper to support best practices in decision-making and problem-solving.

In the white paper I offer a discussion of the rationale for the limitations of phonics-based strategies singular approach because the findings of the study indicated this is limited in effectiveness for improving student motivation, student self-efficacy, or reading fluency. I offer a discussion of evidence-based reading support strategies that have been found to be effective for improving student motivation, student self-efficacy,

or reading fluency. I also explain several evidence-based alternatives to phonics-based strategies for improving student motivation, student self-efficacy, and reading fluency. I provide recommendations for consideration in the white paper, which include the use of EBPs, balanced literacy, and the phonics-based reading program as supplemental reading program supports for incoming and continuing high school students.

Review of the Literature

The literature review includes the genre of the project, the white paper, followed by a review of peer-reviewed research related to the content of the project. The genre portion focuses on the white paper, including the history of the genre and uses, as well use of white papers in the field of education. The content portion of the review provides the research foundation for the recommendations offered in the white paper. These recommendations are made as potential solutions to the problem of low Lexile reading scores among ninth graders, which was the impetus for the district and target high school leaders' implementation of the secondary phonics-based strategies investigated in this study.

The literature search strategy used involved inputting key words such as *white paper*, *white paper benefits*, *white paper history*, *white paper in education*, *white paper uses*, *evidence-based practices*, *blended reading programs*, *professional development*, and *Balanced-Literacy* into online databases such as EBSCOhost, Academic Search Complete/Premier, ProQuest Central, Sage Premier, and ERIC. I also used the Google Scholar search engine.

White Paper Genre

White papers are used in business and other professional settings. A white paper web search for fields such as technical, civil engineering, and telecommunications can yield millions of results (Malone & Wright, 2018; Naidoo & Campbell, 2014). Stakeholders of organizations create white papers to share their business processes. Most large companies allot resources for writing and completing white papers, which scholars have found to provide valuable learning benefits to the audience of such papers (Engeldinger, 2016).

Researchers have described white papers as marketing documents. They are considered so because they are developed to make certain people relate to and understand a certain topic; moreover, they are written to resonate with a target audience (Engeldinger, 2016; Willerton, 2012). Technology companies make use of white papers to market their products and services (Malone & Wright, 2018). Malone and Wright (2018) asserted that white papers have been created for technology briefings, business case details, competitive analysis presentations, industry trend reports, application digests, planning guides, strategy reviews, standards analysis, and market research reports. As a marketing instrument, white papers are considered sales documents that use the soft-sell approach. Effective white papers emphasize the topic being discussed, convey the intended information to the intended audience with a strong ethos, and offer useful information that guides readers to comprehend a complex topic or decision. As a result, a hard-sell approach would not be effective when applied in white papers (Engeldinger, 2016).

White papers in education. White papers in the field of education first appeared in the mid-1900s. The first white paper emerged around 1922, written by Churchill in relation to Palestine conflicts; however, a white paper written in the field of education did not emerge until 1943 (Ku, 2018). The first education white paper was penned in England and was entitled *Educational Reconstruction*, which was an optimistic title given that Britain was deeply embroiled in a massive war at the time of the paper's writing. This white paper served an important function: It acted as the precursor to the 1944 Education Act, which was instrumental in introducing the state grammar schools in the United Kingdom. White papers have influenced stakeholders through informational content, which has resulted in problems becoming opportunities. Because of this influence, the white paper is an effective strategy to inform educational stakeholders regarding problems and solutions (Ku, 2018).

Since 2012, several white papers in the field of education have addressed prominent academic issues. Oxman and Wong (2014) wrote about adaptive learning systems and explained that this model would become standard in the field of U.S. education. Parsi and Darling-Hammond (2015) authored a white paper about performance assessments, in which they described how state policy could advance assessments as a crucial tool beyond 21st century learning. Twenty-first century learning refers to the acquisition of skills necessary for the needs of universities, the modern workplace, and civic organizations; these skills include problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and collaboration (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). The purpose of this white paper was to offer state boards of education a better sense of what

performance assessments were, including the most crucial issues and problems associated with implementation (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Parsi and Darling-Hammond concluded the white paper with questions regarding the barriers to and opportunities for effectively implementing performance assessments.

Scholars have published several white papers on literacy and reading. Myers and Kopriva (2015) wrote a white paper about the possible hindrances faced by English language learners (ELLs) in conveying their content knowledge in periods of assessment compared to non-ELLs. Myers and Kopriva described a systematic and effective strategy to match certain accommodations with specific ELL subgroups called the selection taxonomy for English language learner accommodations. This paper, like many educational white papers, serves as an authoritative report about an issue or a proposal.

Gap in white papers on reading solutions. White papers written on phonics instruction, the BL approach, or other reading approaches are not abundant in the literature. The first relevant white paper about phonics focused on the Phonics First program and was published by Davidson in 2007. In this white paper, Davidson covered different topics such as the definition of phonics and the roles played by phonemic awareness, decoding, and syllabication in individual student reading success in pre-K through the second grade. The findings revealed that Phonics First was a strong and systematic approach to learning phonics. Although this white paper on phonics by Davidson contained important and valuable content, the fact that only one paper addressed the topic of phonics signified that further research is necessary. The project for the current study, a white paper providing alternative reading approaches to the phonics

instruction in solving the problem of low Lexile reading scores among ninth-grade students in a local district, makes an original contribution to the field. The white paper genre is appropriate for this report of recommendations based on the findings of the project study because it provides a tool to share those findings with school district governance and administrative personnel.

Content of the White Paper

This white paper was designed to address a local problem of low Lexile reading scores among ninth-grade students in a local district. The purpose of the paper was to recommend solutions to this problem based on a review of research available in the professional literature in combination with research conducted in the local district. A case study was conducted in the local district to determine the influence of the secondary phonics-based strategies in use in the district on student reading motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy, three constructs that previous researchers found influenced reading success. The first section of the paper provides an overview of the study conducted in the local district, including the methodology and findings. This section includes the findings that phonics-based strategies under study had limited effects on the students' intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and reading fluency. The second section of the white paper includes a discussion of the findings and potential solutions. Based on literature, I discuss why phonics-based strategies alone were not perceived by teachers as effective before describing the possible solutions to students' low levels of intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and reading fluency.

Balanced literacy (BL). BL centers on EBPs and phonics and is intended to use the most powerful elements of each (Policastro, 2018). A BL approach comprises the following components: reading workshop, guided reading, read aloud, shared reading, shared writing, interactive writing, word study, and writing workshop. Shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading focus on exact comprehension instruction, scaffolding, and using personal interest to apply reading strategies (Policastro, 2018). Additional components of BL include shared writing, interactive writing, and writing workshop focusing on teacher-led instruction with time for students to write and share responses. Using multiple elements of literacy instruction has proven to increase reading achievement (Policastro, 2018).

BL requires educators to consistently make decisions about each student that combine best practice instruction with many opportunities to apply what they learn in literary activities (Policastro & McTague, 2015). This philosophical approach means that there is not one correct way to teach reading skills and comprehension but rather a balanced approach. BL strategies are proven to reach students who learn best through interaction, hands-on, or visual. Knowing that all students do not learn this way, BL strategies also have a phonics approach incorporated that instructors use to teach the letter and sound recognition for the auditory learner (Policastro & McTague, 2015).

Evidence-based practices (EBPs). EBPs are programs or a group of instructional practices that have been validated by researchers to demonstrate adequate gains in achievement (Test, Kemp-Inman, Diegelmann, Hitt, & Bethune, 2015). A solution of using EBPs to strengthen the already implemented phonics strategies is recommended.

Peer-reviewed information discussing the prospective ways that BL and the phonics approach can be used to improve students' motivation, self-efficacy and reading fluency will be presented.

The ESEA and NCLB laws require that educators use academic practices and programs that are grounded in research and are scientifically based. Use of EBPs has been proven to improve academic success and positive student outcomes. Types of balanced literacy EBPs that can be integrated with phonics include but are not limited to mnemonic strategies, peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS), and collaborative strategic reading (CSR).

Mnemonic strategies. As research has proven, one of the best ways to retain and recall information is to teach students mnemonic strategies, or memory-enhancing strategies. There are numerous mnemonic strategies, but the keyword method has been proven to be the most effective (Fasih, Izadpanah, & Shahnavaz, 2018). The keyword method can be used in different content areas. Students make an association between a keyword, related sentence and an image which then enables the student to recall information. This strategy consists of three steps: recoding, relating, and retrieving.

Peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS). PALS is a reading strategy for high school students that aids in supplementing the reading curriculum for students who struggle in reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Thorius, & Santamaría Graff, 2018). Teachers pair up a higher performing student with a lower performing one to work together on reading activities such as reading aloud, listening to their partner read, and providing peer reflection to the different activities. Teachers instruct students to use

different learning strategies such as identifying the main idea and foreshadowing what will happen in the passage. PALS allows students with and without learning difficulties to be ardently involved in peer-facilitated lessons.

Collaborative strategic reading (CSR). CSR combines cooperative learning, vocabulary development, questioning techniques, and the opportunity for students to practice new skills (Mendieta et al., 2015). CSR was originally designed for expository text, but has been adapted to be used with other texts as well. After the students have learned all four components of CSR through whole class instruction, the students will then use the learning strategy in small groups. The overall goal of CSR is to improve reading comprehension strategically to maximize student engagement.

Other strategies for increasing motivation and self-efficacy. According to Wolters et al. (2017), motivation and self-efficacy are closely linked for the adolescent reading student. Thus, models of reading motivation which include competence-related constructs support phonics alternatives (Wolters et al., 2017). Strategies through which reading motivation can be developed by teachers include providing students choice of activities that are related to reading, interesting texts to read, and collaboration opportunities (Wehmeyer, Shogren, Toste, & Mahal, 2017). When teachers are actively involved in the reading efforts of their students, the intrinsic reading motivation of students increases, leading to increased self-efficacy (McArthur, Castles, Kohnen, & Banales, 2016). For example, multisensory phonics, combined with specific activities for exploring and discovering English language history, word origins, word patterns, and word meanings have an influence on intrinsic motivation (Henbest & Apel, 2017; Solari,

Denton, Petscher, & Haring, 2018). Such an alternative promotes students' understanding of patterns in words from a particular region or continent and assists in spelling (through word patterns), decoding, and accurate word recognition.

Strategies for improving fluency. Reading fluency is supported through strategies such as independent reading and repeated reading (Solomon, Poncy, Caravello, & Schweiger, 2018; Stevens, Walker, & Vaughn, 2017). Some researchers have found independent practice (silent reading) to improve fluency, comprehension, and reading achievement in general (Houtveen et al., 2014). Through the years, fluency interventions have emerged. For instance, educators have adopted Curriculum-Based Measurements for Reading (CBMs) (Greenwood, Tapia, Abbott, & Walton, 2003; Solis, El Zein, Vaughn, McCulley, & Falcomata, 2016). Scholars have shown that CBMs are an effective and efficient method of verifying the development and progress of reading, and reading fluency for students (Greenwood et al., 2003). CBMs also contributed to increasing the reading levels of students with learning differences (Solis et al., 2016).

Professional development. To implement a BL strategy paired with phonics-based instruction, professional development is recommended. Professional development for educators helps them obtain the knowledge and skills they need to meet the needs of students' learning challenges (Bernhardt, 2009). Professional development engages teachers in their own learning and gives them strategies to use in the classroom which enhances the student learning process. The fidelity of the implementation of the professional development relies on the teacher adoption and delivery (Woolley, Rose, Mercado, & Orthner, 2013). New initiatives are best implemented through teams, such as

PLCs (Mazzotti, Rowe, Simonsen, Boaz, & VanAvery, 2018). The initial implementation of supplemental reading strategies will require a stakeholder team, such as a PLC, for decision making, evaluation of the initiative, and open dialogue in the PLC related to the change in the instructional approach for reading of low lexile readers in ninth grade at the target high school. Changes are also best implemented with in professional development, related to the proposed program changes or institution of new initiatives (Mazzotti et al., 2018). Professional learning is a constant ongoing process rather than just a one-time event, which is why continued professional development is required (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Silva, 2015). The Literacy PLC at the target site would be the proper avenue through which to implement this reading initiative.

The stakeholder team and the campus Literacy PLC, or taskforce, at the local level can provide understanding and continued research of EBPs. PLC environments support learning through shared roles, reflection of practice, continued research, and mentoring that strengthens growth in individuals (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2013; Klinge, 2015). Professional development that uses peer interaction and a teacher-to-teacher model shows that the teacher knows the knowledge and the learner and optimizes for greater effectiveness in the learning process. This model is known as "turnaround training" in which the teacher learns the knowledge and expertise and then imparts the knowledge gained upon one's peers (Hansen-Thomas, Casey, & Grosso, 2013).

Fidelity of implementation (FOI). FOI is the implementation of EBPs as intended by the designers or researchers (Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller, 2013). There are

three different elements of FOI: adherence, exposure/duration, and quality of delivery (Gerstner & Finney, 2015). Adherence means that an instructor followed the procedure of the EBP as it was intended and implemented all components in the correct order. The exposure/duration is the recommended length of the instructional session (e.g. 30 minutes), duration of the EBP (e.g. 16 weeks), and frequency (e.g. once a week). The quality of delivery refers to conveying the EBP using good teacher practices such as enthusiasm, managing transitions, and providing time for student feedback and questions (The Iris Center, 2014). If an EBP is implemented with fidelity, it increases the likelihood of the intended outcome for the students. It is imperative that teachers identify and value the multitude of resources available to increase literacy in the classroom. It is necessary for teachers to receive appropriate reading professional development and implement the selected strategies with fidelity. Using these frameworks of EBPs and FOI will shape the development of the white paper project.

Summary of Literature Review

In this review of literature, I noted that though white papers are increasingly used and completed in the business and other professional settings, few have been published in the field of education (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). The purpose of a white paper varies depending on its field. In 2012, white papers began to be published in the field of education to address academic issues (Oxman & Wong, 2014; Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). The topics covered included adaptive learning and state assessments. Some white papers have also been written about 21st century learning skills, referring to

those skills needed by the workplace, such as problem solving, interpersonal skills, and collaboration (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Recent white papers have been published about literacy and reading, especially among English language learners (Myers & Kopriva, 2015); however, those specifically discussing phonics are rare (Davidson, 2007). Considering the problems and issues associated with learning phonics, a new white paper about this topic is timely and appropriate.

After analyzing the findings of the study, I concluded that the phonics-based strategies alone were not as successful or effective as intended. Teachers felt something else was needed to help the strategies currently being implemented. Researchers have found that reading motivation (Wehmeyer et al., 2017; Wolters et al., 2017), fluency (Houtveen et al., 2014), and self-efficacy (Wigfield et al., 2014) can individually affect students' reading scores; therefore, an effective program would be one that can address and improve these three factors. When reviewing the literature for alternative approaches, BL emerged as the recommendation.

Professional development is needed for the implementation of phonics-based instruction as a component of BL. Professional development is a proven successful strategy to improve teacher skills and knowledge thereby potentially strengthening instruction which could result in an improvement in students skills. (Balan et al., 2011; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Silva, 2015). A stakeholder team, or task force (PLC), should be formed to help with decision making in the professional development process. The *turnaround training* model helps increase effectiveness of professional development

because the teacher knows the student and the content (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2013). These recommendations will be discussed in the white paper along with the proposed solutions.

Project Description

The district and its leaders are aware of the literacy problem in the district. The leaders are also aware of my research and my intent to be able to share its findings. After the approval of my dissertation I will request a meeting with the principal initially before going to the district office. The target site principal has been supportive of the research and phonics-strategies from the beginning of implementation. The goal of the white paper is to provide findings and potential solutions to the identified problem of low Lexile reading scores. In the paper, I demonstrate how implementation of BL strategies coupled with the already implemented phonics strategies may address the solution to the problem of low Lexile scores for incoming and continuing high school students. The white paper is designed to provide information about EBPs that can be used at the target site, wherein the BL approach is the basis for the recommendations. I will recommend that the BL approach of the blended phonics-based strategy instruction be implemented and monitored by the target campus Literacy PLC with the added recommendation for the use of EBPs determined in a collaborative manner by the implementing PLC. The Literacy PLC team will be responsible for the continued research of EBPs and the implementation of the phonics and BL strategies at the target site.

Once I present to the principal and assistant principal in charge of the literacy initiative, I will use their feedback to make any refinements in the white paper and

include a request to present the white paper to the school board. This project will provide more comprehensive information about the strategies that can be used at the target site. It demonstrates that the BL solutions can lead to higher reading motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. According to Schumm and Arguelles (2017), such programs have been effectively provided when they are compatible with the basal reading programs being used. Alternative initiatives should be designed based on student need (Griffith, 2008). Hence, the supplemental reading strategies recommended in the white paper should be implemented based on students' reading needs. These supplemental reading recommendations will strengthen the approach at the target campus as BL focuses on motivating and engaging the students, which can empower students to read or learn how to read, while phonics focuses on their fluency only. Additionally, EBP's are proven research-based strategies, which have been documented to support the strengthening of students' skills. Thus, the combination of these supplemental services will afford the students a more well-rounded reading program to support their reading needs by providing teachers with additional strategies to the singular use of phonics-based strategies to improve student low Lexile reading levels.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

Once the white paper is presented, I am willing to help with the necessary recommendations if the district staff would want further assistance. The next step would be the development of a BL approach to improve reading fluency of ninth-grade students, with a specific focus on their motivation and self-efficacy as well. Resources for implementing BL reading solutions will involve teachers, paraprofessionals, and

technologies and tools that provide evidence-based support and intervention. Because budget and resources are limited, a need exists for a campus taskforce, and professional development efforts to be integrated within the existing processes and protocols that the target site staff use for implementation of professional development connected to district staff concerns. Requests for summer stipends will be initiated so that the professional development can occur during the summer or the spring after approval. The request is to ensure that the school year begins with the implementation of the program. The use of the target site PLC, or task forces will provide leadership to areas in which support is needed for student success.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

After the white paper is distributed, it does not mean that the solutions will be implemented by the school district staff for several reasons, including the resistance of school officials, budgetary concerns, and inadequate resources. A curriculum decision such as this, requires consideration by district administrators and cooperation of campus administration, in addition to financial resources dedicated to materials and training of teachers. I am recommending the PLC team train and implement the strategies and solutions provided. The lack of training resources and the mandatory professional development days for teachers each semester can also be a barrier, but use of the weekly PLC meetings already in place can aid in the time and resources needed.

To improve the likelihood of the recommendations being implemented I will rely on the data and existing resources. The stakeholders in the process will be the local campus faculty who are involved in a ninth grade Literacy PLC. The PLC team meets

once a week for up to 90 minutes at a time. The PLC team can use the existing time to implement plans and assess the phonics-supplemented BL reading strategies. The PLC should study student data that reflect 65% of ninth-grade students are below their grade level in reading. Based on the findings and recommendations, the Literacy PLC will have options to alternative solutions using EBPs and a BL approach.

The findings from the study indicated that the teachers believed that an additional resource was needed to enhance the students' Lexile levels. Using a blended approach of the phonics-supplemented BL approach with the EBPs is more likely to be accepted and proven to work for the 65% of students who are not being reached by implementing the phonics program by itself. Teachers may be more apt to accept the recommendations and implement the strategies as the findings were compiled from participant responses on the ninth-grade Literacy PLC team.

Project Implementation and Timetable

I plan to deliver the white paper, as a response to the analysis of these data, to the appropriate stakeholders and target site immediately upon completion of the doctoral study. Distribution will begin with efforts to connect and meet with the target site principal. These steps should be completed within a month of approval of the final study. If the white paper is accepted the presentation planning could take up to 4 weeks. Teachers' professional development programs can be created with a focus on how to implement the BL approach in teaching reading and at the same time instill awareness of reading fluency development in their students through the use of phonics-based strategies. The campus PLCs will reinforce the recommended project. This professional

development program for the recommendations of the blended program will be the responsibility of the campus ninth-grade Literacy PLC and any other campus or district designees recommended. The planning of the PD will take approximately one month and the implementation should be sustained for a minimum of 8 weeks before any evaluation. The literacy PLC will review and share the experiences of the implementation of the blended program and minutes will be taken. If the principal or district staff support the off-contract development of the PD during the summer then the timeline for implementation could be accelerated. These strategies will be described in the white paper as having the capacity to improve both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and student reading self-efficacy.

Roles and Responsibilities

Implementing any of the recommendations in the white paper, including the blended BL and phonics-based strategies to improve reading motivation, self-efficacy and fluency will include the assignment of roles and responsibilities at the campus site. In particular, the solutions cannot be implemented without the ninth-grade Literacy PLC team, thoughtful resource allocation, and ongoing professional development. The roles and responsibilities are explained more in detail below:

It will be proposed that the principal plan a collaborative meeting with the ninth-grade Literacy PLC for the target campus to discuss the recommendations and adoption for the 2018-2019 academic year. The PLC could designate individuals for researching EBPs, analyzing student reading data, draft lesson model plans, and individuals that meet to plan, develop and integrate a contiguous blended phonics and BL reading approach

with agreed-upon intervention strategies; alternatively, all individuals or teacher pairs could take on all activities with designated, agreed upon timelines for the deliverable to be shared with the PLC.

Project Evaluation Plan

I will conduct a formative evaluation by way of an evaluation questionnaire given to all the stakeholders: district administrators, campus administrators, and teachers. I will use formative assessment to gather their perceptions on how beneficial the white paper can be for teachers and administrators. Their responses will inform me with feedback about the proposed project and areas where improvements or changes are needed. In addition, this formative evaluation of the white paper recommendations may provide additions or changes in the implementation of the supplements to the reading program which include BL, EBPs, and maintenance of the phonics-based strategies.

The secondary goal of the white paper's evaluation is to include the campus PLC by requesting that the PLC team conduct formative peer observations to assess the FOI of the BL approach and EBPs strategies. The evaluation of the strategies executed should be consistent and ongoing (Collier-Meek, Fallon, Sanetti, & Maggin, 2013). The PLC team will develop an observational checklist of components to evaluate the fidelity of implementation of the blended program and EBPs. The PLC team should monitor the progress of each student by using the student progress evaluation chart (The IRIS Center, 2014). The five steps of evaluation should be implemented in order to monitor student progress: (a) collect baseline data; (b) identify the goal; (c) create a graph; (d) administer and score probes; and (e) graph scores. The baseline score will be compared to midyear

scores and end of year scores. Assessment can be weekly or biweekly depending on the consensus of the PLC team. The PLC team will use the Agenda for PLC Taskforce to record and evaluate their data and reassess student progress. Peers will evaluate peers and the administrators will also be asked to observe and complete formal evaluations as well.

After the intervention has been implemented for an entire semester, the ninth-grade PLC team will evaluate the effects of the blended strategies and selected CBMs. The strategies will be implemented and assessed for influence on the five key variables of interest: reading improvement, reading motivation, self-efficacy, reading fluency and fidelity of implementation. The evaluation based on the beginning, middle, and end of year results will include dialogue which is on-going in the PLCs. The FOI of the BL and phonics-based strategies will also be monitored. Student reading scores and CBM data will be reviewed for changes in fluency, accuracy and comprehension. The PLC team will design an evaluation tool for motivation and for self-efficacy with input from the campus administrative team and the assessment division of the district or other appropriate expert personnel identified.

The primary stakeholders in this program are the campus teachers, administrative personnel and the teachers. If district personnel are designated or invited to be a part of the Literacy PLC then they would be stakeholders as well. These strategies which will include the implementation of the blended approach through the implementation of BL, EBPs, and maintenance of the phonics-based strategies. The evaluation data generated by the PLC team will provide the stakeholders with information to guide

refinement of the reading initiative implementation including the fidelity of the implementation components of the reading initiative such as BL and EBPs.

Project Implications

This project will be important to district stakeholders. If reading scores and skills are improved at the target site, the results may be improved academic success at the high school, increased graduation rates, and strengthened opportunities for university attendance. Reading achievement has been found to be associated with various positive life outcomes, including higher socio-economic status and employment opportunities. If results are not positive with respect to all aspects of the BL strategies being implemented there will be data which will inform stakeholders about what not to do and how to alter existing practices. The results of the study may affect social change by equipping students in other rural districts with the reading skills necessary to succeed in their future endeavors, which can include better jobs and higher incomes.

Implementation of this reading initiative with fidelity could result in strengthening the reading skills of students and improving the skills of knowledge of teachers providing instruction to the target ninth grade student population. As a result, social change could occur because of this endeavor by strengthening target high school students' low Lexile level scores and improving the students' Lexile performance in reading. If the end of semester reflection demonstrates a perceived positive influence on the students' reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy, self-efficacy and motivation, then the evaluation and FOI can be used to strengthen other students' reading needs at the target site. The FOI results may yield critical data to support teachers' implementation of strategies with

improved fidelity which in turn may influence the delivery of the program as designed thereby possibly strengthening the students' reading skills. Teachers' exposure to FOI is critical to obtaining the desired results of executed instruction. Additionally, the fidelity data would also provide the district stakeholders, and PLC members with insights on the calibration process of a new practice(s) which is an important consideration for implementation of new initiatives and for future interventions. The calibration and fidelity of implementation process would also have implications for professional development and monitoring by stakeholders of new endeavors implemented to improve reading instruction for students.

Summary

In Section 3, the project goals and rationale for choosing a white paper to present the project were discussed. Additionally, I presented literature related to the five themes derived from the analysis of the interview data. Based on the review conducted, I presented the value of white papers in inspiring much-needed change, including in the field of education. I was able to show that although white papers are increasingly used and completed in business and other professional settings, few have been published in the field of education (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). White papers written in the education field focus on adaptive learning and state assessments, 21st century learning skills, problem solving, interpersonal skills, and collaboration (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Those written about literacy and reading, especially among English language learners remain limited (Myers & Kopriva, 2015) particularly those discussing phonics (Davidson, 2007).

In this section, I also discussed how the white paper will be presented to the stakeholders and the plan to be adhered to if the white paper is accepted as a literacy initiative. If the white paper is not accepted the current Literacy PLC may be able to use the resources provided as guide for additional instructional strategies. An evaluation questionnaire could be used to determine what the stakeholders think of the white paper recommendations to implement a BL approach in aiding students with low Lexile scores. BL includes using a range of elements of literacy to instruct students that increases their reading achievement (Policastro, 2018). The recommendations are to first appoint the ninth-grade PLC Literature team as a reading taskforce to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of all recommendations included in the white paper. The PLC would need to adopt a blended reading approach of BL that is embedded with the campus' phonics strategies. Once the EBPs are identified and implemented by the PLC the strategies need to be evaluated for FOI. Continued student data analysis should be used to individualize and strengthen EBPs. The PLC should use best practices for team goals, use of agendas, taking minutes, agreement of team accountability and growth.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Reading is a crucial factor in academic development, and scholars have agreed that reading is necessary for social, intellectual, and emotional development (Allington, 2013). The problem that I addressed in this study was that the Lexile reading scores of students entering the ninth grade at a large rural high school in a Southern state were below grade level. According to the school's principal, this problem persists despite the implementation of a secondary phonics curriculum (personal communication, May 5, 2015). In consideration of whether the phonics instruction for reading at the school is effective, I conducted an exploration of the perceptions of teachers using the program. I accomplished this by performing a review of the literature using a conceptual framework rooted in dual coding theory and based on the view of reading model (Paivio, 1991) and by following a case study design and interview methodology to explore the perceptions of nine teachers regarding the effectiveness of phonics for high school reading. The study focused on the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of the phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students.

Researchers have determined that developing decoding skills and phonemic awareness is important in improving the reading achievement of students (S. Campbell, 2015; Dresser, 2012; Gupta, 2014). Most scholars, however, have focused on phonics instruction for early learning (Schöber, Schütte, Köller, McElvany, & Gebauer, 2018). In the current study, I focused on high school teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of phonics instruction and the extent to which it influences reading motivation, reading

fluency, and reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students. All three constructs have been found to have a positive influence on reading achievement. In terms of motivation, researchers have found that intrinsic reading motivation is more frequently associated with positive reading outcomes such as comprehension than extrinsic reading motivation (Schaffner & Schiefele, 2013). Researchers have also found intrinsic motivation be a high school student-specific predictor of reading achievement. In terms of reading fluency, although there is limited literature to support its relationship to reading comprehension (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2017), there is some evidence that reading fluency plays an important role in the reading comprehension of high school students. In terms of reading self-efficacy, scholars have revealed that students' beliefs about and attitudes toward reading can influence learning behaviors and achievement (Wolters et al., 2017).

Researchers have highlighted these constructs in relation to phonics reading instruction. Researchers have not found motivation to be influenced by phonics instruction, but instead by teacher and teaching strategies and by approaches such as concept-oriented reading instruction (I-Fan, 2017). Phonics instruction facilitates self-efficacy based on the findings that mastery of technical aspects of reading such as phonemic awareness can contribute to overall success in reading (Wolters et al., 2017). Although some researchers have found reading fluency to be significantly affected by phonics instruction for very young children (Swain et al., 2017), reading fluency is not typically attributed to phonics instruction but to other instructional strategies such as repeated reading (Ardoin, Binder, Foster, & Zawoyski, 2016; Therrien, 2004).

The evaluation of phonics-based strategies at the local site revealed that they had little or no influence on the intrinsic motivation of high school students. This was based on the observations by the teachers that there was a lack of respect and interest in the program on the part of the students and a belief by the teachers that the program lacked relevancy. McQuillan (2013) indicated there were other factors affecting the lack of intrinsic motivation for the phonics treatment which include the complexity of the English language and the arbitrary rules of English; by the time students are in high school, they are not accommodated by phonics instruction rules that learners would apply when first learning to read. In the this study, participants reported a potential for extrinsic motivation in relation to the secondary phonics instruction program. This result was attributed to students being motivated to finish assignments to increase their grades and to maintain their grades to gain rewards.

Reading fluency, which was reported as having increased over the semester, was found to be influenced by the secondary phonics instruction program, but the teachers being interviewed admitted there were too many other factors to determine whether the phonics-based strategies was to be credited. In addition, although fluency improved, pronunciation accuracy still waned. This was consistent with the understanding among researchers that fluency comprises not only speed, but also accuracy (Schall et al., 2016).

Likewise, although student self-efficacy was reported to have improved for some and not for others, the teachers could not attribute the improvement to the secondary phonics instruction improvement. Several factors, such as whether reading aloud in front of a class was intimidating, whether teachers were proactive and supportive, and whether

the environment was conducive to self-efficacy, were equally important considerations. The white paper project (see Appendix) addresses the results of the study on the lack of effectiveness of a phonics-based strategies implemented in ninth-grade classrooms to increase student Lexile reading scores at a large rural high school in a Southern state.

Project Strengths and Limitations

In the study I addressed the secondary phonics-based strategies at one site in a rural district. From analysis of interview data, different themes emerged, which led to this white paper project. A strength of the white paper is the recommendations derived from the results of the study that the secondary phonics-based strategies instruction program had minimal influence on increasing reading motivation, reading fluency, or reading self-efficacy among ninth-grade students. In the white paper, I interpret the findings using the dual coding theory to provide recommendations. If students are unable to decode words and extract meaning, then their reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy decreases. This decrease in reading skills may influence how other phonics-based strategies can be formed. In light of the findings, the recommendations made in the white paper have some strengths as alternatives to phonics-only reading programs; for example, BL instruction can include the use of phonics-based strategies where such programs have been found effective. BL solutions focus on being motivational and engaging, and phonics focuses on correlating sounds with letters. According to Kieffer Petscher, Proctor, and Silverman (2016), motivation and engagement can empower students in reading while phonics improves their fluency, and mixing BL and phonics instruction for reading can lead to enhanced self-efficacy.

BL instruction involves students receiving the best of all elements. With BL instruction, reading and pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary building, and other phonics elements are implemented. In addition, BL programs, like phonics-based strategies, should not be used in isolation as a solitary solution to improving reading fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy; however, a BL approach that integrates phonics-based instruction will be effective.

Several reflections can also be made on the use of the white paper in shedding light about the BL approach. Researchers have noted that a white paper is appropriate for providing effective data on the BL approach, something that has not been attempted in improving students' Lexile scores. A white paper is an authoritative report that can inform the target audience about a complex issue (Stelzner, 2013). In the current project, the white paper addressed the lack of data on how effective a BL approach is on improving students' reading. White papers have been written to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision on a complex matter. However, white papers can be used to report the background, elements, and possible consequences of a proposed solution without actual data from the researcher supporting the effectiveness of an intervention. The white paper can provide information about a particular issue so that readers can make informed decisions. At the same time, white papers can provide evidence of the researcher's or author's expertise on the subject by pointing to problems from the readers' perspective. However, the white paper genre is usually treated as a writing project and not a structured initiative. White papers enable leaders to open doors to discover solutions to problems; however, actual implementation of solutions and actual

evaluation of solutions' effects cannot be accomplished through a white paper (Stelzner, 2013).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In this case study white paper, the district could choose to eliminate the phonics-based instruction completely. The district could look to use other research-based programs with proven success. A few programs the district could have researched and implemented are Achieve3000, Read 180 Universal, or Hampton-Brown: The Edge.

Achieve3000. This program is the patented, cloud-based solution that delivers daily instruction for nonfiction reading and reading that is designed for each student's Lexile reading level. First, students take a test to discover their baseline reading level. The students then receive nonfiction texts based on their baseline scores. The students then complete regular assessments that are aligned to the specific grade-level standards, which will measure their ability to understand informational text. As the students advance to 40 activities for the semester, reading strengths are evaluated and the rigor of the text increases when progress is detected (Urdegar & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2014).

Read 180 Universal. Using the latest research on how the brain learns to read, Read 180 maps multiple areas of the brain to highlight word recognition and interweaving of language, and connects the social-emotional state and the executive-function skills. Read 180 allows students to build on existing knowledge that is necessary for reading success. Read 180 Universal was designed to reflect a student's mind-set,

motivation, and engagement, which are crucial for struggling readers (What Works Clearinghouse & Mathematica Policy Research, 2016).

Hampton-Brown: The Edge. The Edge uses *National Geographic* content and authentic multicultural literature for reading throughout the program. The lesson includes relevant and motivating content for the student. Systematic and focused teaching materials are used to prepare students for career and college success (Moore, Short, Smith, & Tatum, 2014).

The importance of adolescent literacy is a topic of interest to local as well as national educators. Educators need to be informed on which practices and programs have research evidence to support the programs. These alternative approaches could have been recommended instead of the BL supplemental phonics-strategies approach.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Scholarship, which was crucial for completing this project, involves several important components. First, I paid rigorous attention to finding sources that were contemporary, relevant, and easily integrated. This required that I carefully analyze recent literature from different disciplines and find points of convergence relevant to this project (see Evans, Waring, & Christodoulou, 2017). Second, this required me to take into consideration the perceptions, theories, and empirical evidence from different positions regarding teaching reading, enabling me to search for solutions to the real-world problem and to seek new knowledge to develop a solution. Third, in the search for innovation, I discovered that new issues could arise, including issues of implementation

and concerns for best practices in an environment where proponents of such positions (e.g., phonics versus BL teaching) can disagree. I found that for scholarship to sustain academia, my colleagues and I must engage in scholarship throughout our careers.

Project Development

I learned that project development requires attention to colleagues' opinions and contributions, strong critical thinking skills, and stringent evaluation methods. As a researcher, I learned that the process of refining research comes with patience. I know many different ways research can be conducted and displayed in not only qualitative but also quantitative research. I found a multitude of resources as an educator that I could implement in my classroom to increase student achievement. I was able to access free online learning platforms and professional development programs that I referenced in the white paper. After many hours of watching videos and reading resources in professional development that I used to create my paper, I became knowledgeable about implementing my instruction with fidelity. Everything I have learned has given me greater insight on being an effective teacher.

Leadership and Change

Throughout this doctoral project study, I have come to realize that change requires continued pursuit of scholarship, practice, teaching, and leadership. This project has taught me a vast array of information. Now, as an experienced researcher, I know more about what stakeholders are looking for in terms of data analysis. I could have outlined the project a lot easier from what I have learned throughout this process. I would have used the PLCs as my main focus from the beginning instead of waiting until the end

of my writing process to add the team in the paper. As problems arise in research, investigation, experimentation, critical analysis, and evaluation must ensue. As problems emerge from proposed solutions, such as the problems associated with the phonics solution to low reading performance, new solutions will require thorough investigation, research, and analysis. As new problems arise out of new solutions, additional investigation, analysis, and evaluation should be done with equal rigor. As a teacher and leader of change, I will bring the skills required not only for scholarship and teaching but for management. In this regard, I intend to bring an attitude and leadership style that is student centered and people centered, a style that facilitates problem-solution change by supporting the education professionals in focused teamwork, creative innovation, and effective transformation.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

In pursuit of scholarship, I began with a search for the online university that would offer the greatest challenges for becoming a scholar in the field of education. Once my doctoral work at Walden University ensued, I developed relevant research questions, established a rigorous methodology that was appropriate to a study of phonics-based strategies, and conducted a review of the literature on effective reading instruction. One of the most valuable experiences was discovering that evidence exists for two major alternatives to reading instruction: the BL approach and the traditional phonics instruction approach. Learning to analyze and synthesize both the findings of the study and the findings of the theoretical and research literature proved to be the most enriching process for the pursuit of real-world solutions to legitimate reading instruction issues.

This process helped me to legitimize innovations for reforming phonics reading instruction by integrating it into a more encompassing BL approach.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a teacher of students at the high school level, I have devoted myself to practice that ensures inclusive learning, authentic and engaging instruction, and standards-based alignment. The long-ago established goal has been to especially ensure that learners who are at risk for dropping out or failing get the intervention strategies and tools that they need to succeed. This is especially the case for reading students who need the tools, technologies, and classroom supports that have been evidenced to align with standards but also to be effective for today's learners on both intellectual and emotional terms. Beyond emphasizing literacy and reading fluency, researchers have placed a special focus upon the motivation and self-efficacy of adolescent learners. This focus led me into the theory and practice that promotes constructive and collaborative learning, which supports intrinsic motivation and facilitates self-esteem through teaching and learning strategies of empowerment.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

When I started teaching, a mentor suggested that educators come to her not only with the problem, but with the potential solutions to the problem. Doctoral work through Walden University and continued scholarship has helped me to aim for and accomplish this. In researching the school that served as the research site and the previous literature on effective reading instruction, I evolved into a project developer by default because the requirements for traditional doctoral work had been amplified by the requirements of a

project study. I came to complete a case study, a review of the literature, and recommendations for future solutions that led to further, meta-investigation into solutions for the implementation of those initial recommendations. This additional, augmented work accelerated practice so that real-world solutions moved from a basic theory to ideas rooted in evidence. In this respect, I have moved from considering the value added of a reading instruction alternative to seeing the solution to phonics instruction as one that can improve human capital and achieve social change.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The results of this study are significant at several levels. They are important locally, regarding the implications for short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term reading learning outcomes, which affect school-wide programming and intervention, teachers and curriculum development, and the reading classroom and its students. At the local level, district policy may be influenced to supplement the phonics instructional approach to teaching and learning reading comprehension, decoding, fluency, and other elements. At the professional level, it has implications about the effectiveness of using phonics instruction to improve the reading achievement of students beyond first grade through enhanced reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy for the target site and other high schools with similar demographics or profiles. This might also warrant support from teachers, the environment, and other efforts in combination. At the greater, more global level, the findings and evaluation of phonics reading instruction programs for adolescents and adults lead to a different way of improving reading

comprehension, fluency, and self-efficacy; in turn, this increases students' chances for graduation, career development, and improved well-being for an enriched life.

In these regards, I intended for this study to contribute to social change. Social change could occur as a result of this project study by potentially improving the achievement of high school students, which could result in not only increased graduation rates, but also academic success in higher education. Reading achievement has been found to be associated with various positive life outcomes, including higher socio-economic status and employment opportunities. In this respect, the project results could lead to social change by equipping students in rural districts with the reading skills necessary to succeed in their future endeavors, which can include better jobs and higher incomes.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

In the move from intellectually considering the value of a reading instruction alternative to phonics instruction to putting into practice such an alternative, the efforts toward improving the Lexile reading scores of high school students have found exceeding merit toward improving human capital at one level and achieving social change at the next level. Effective reading instruction can contribute to students' motivation toward literacy, as well as their self-worth. In turn, student self-worth and improved reading fluency extend beyond the classroom to improved opportunity. I developed this white paper project with these intended outcomes.

Potential for Social Change

When opportunities improve, students' intellectual, social, and even economic well-being improves; in turn, this contributes to elevating the social condition, bringing benefit to the immediate community and to the greater society. An improved reading instruction intervention can help adolescents to gain literacy and achieve what Greenleaf, Litman, and Marple (2018) referred to as strategic literacy. With strategic literacy, individuals can read, critically think about, interpret, analyze, and troubleshoot real-world problems—from overcoming marginalization to protecting themselves from invasive manipulation. Individuals can find and keep employment, gain titles, and interact within social institutions that might otherwise lock them out. Development of literacy, given alternatives such as this project's alternative to phonics reading intervention, indirectly supports human capital as it supports economic, physical, social, and psychological health and well-being for the student, the parents, the community, and society as a whole.

Recommendations for Practice

The result of this project has implications for short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term reading learning outcomes which affect school-wide programming and intervention, teachers and curriculum development, and the reading classroom and its students. At the local level, district policy may be influenced to maintain or to suspend the phonics instructional approach to teaching and learning reading comprehension, decoding, fluency, and other elements. The results and analysis of findings may affect the future curriculum offered to ninth-grade students at the local school, through my rationale for the continuation or discontinuation of using phonics curriculum in English classes to

improve the reading skills of students. At the professional level, the findings of this study contributed to empirical knowledge about the effectiveness of using phonics instruction to improve the reading achievement of older students through enhanced reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. At the greater, more global level, the findings and evaluation can also lead to increasing graduation rates, thus contributing to the social change mentioned earlier. The results of this project might also support efforts in other districts with similar demographics and profiles to improve reading skills for at-risk students.

Directions for Future Research

Future researchers might focus on the digital age technologies that are emerging. This would require additional investigation and experimentation, but it is promising for students of today, who are known as digital natives (Prensky, 2010; Thompson, 2013). Using digital technologies has been shown to increase reading motivation and help with reading instruction and the presentation of information (Yang, Kuo, Ji, & McTigue, 2018). Another approach that future researchers can look into is to consider the Lexile scores of the achieving reading students or the advanced reading students and to investigate the history of reading education these students have received. A third approach could be to involve the perceptions of students themselves. This would highlight constructivist, student-centered pedagogy intended behind the study and the project together. Such alternative approaches would reinforce the positions regarding phonics versus BL and might better support the suggestions for taking the most effective

components of each dimension for improving reading fluency, reading motivation, and reading self-efficacy.

Conclusion

The findings from the case study and the body of literature point to the likelihood that phonics instruction can provide a basis for the learning of several constructs, such as phonemic awareness and comprehension, and systematic phonics instruction has been found to help children learn to read. This method of instruction is developed to help high school students in reading motivation, developing reading fluency, and building reading self-efficacy. For educators in rural southern states such as the one that was the subject of this study, and for educators of high school students anywhere, when the problem is poor Lexile scores, the solutions may be to look elsewhere—to alternatives or integration of alternatives—for reading intervention. I developed this project to offer some such solutions. In a study similar to the present investigation, Giles and Tunks (2014) suggested that using various and appropriate approaches, as opposed to singular strategies rooted in a singular theory, might better serve students' reading development and achievement. This perspective is shared by other scholars, who have added that a blended approach using BL and multiple and integrated strategies might better provide the structure, the systematic and step-by-step skill work, and the concept-oriented instruction that are necessary in such programs. These alternatives to phonics instruction might better contribute to best practices reading instruction and high school students' reading improvement and achievement.

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Appendix: The Project

Phonics-based Strategies Alternatives:

Evidence-based Options for Improvement of Reading Student Motivation, Fluency, and Self-efficacy

A White Paper by Alani Ramos

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This white paper was designed to address solutions to the low Lexile score regarding a ninth-grade phonics-based strategies implemented at a large rural high school in a Southern state. The purpose of the paper is to recommend solutions to this problem, based on a review of research available in the professional literature in combination with the findings derived from this project study completed at the target high school campus in the local district. A case study was conducted in the local district to determine the perceived influence of the secondary phonics-based strategies in use in the district on student reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. These are three constructs which researchers found influenced reading success (Wolters, Barnes, Kulesz, York, & Francis, 2017).

The first section of the paper will provide the background and findings of the research study conducted in the local district. The second section of the white paper will provide recommendations based on findings from the local study. The overarching recommendations for addressing the findings includes the use of specific instructional strategies to support learning in the classroom and a suggested framework for implementation which is to : (a) appoint the ninth-grade Professional Learning Community Literature (PLC) team as a reading taskforce to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of all recommendations included in the white paper, (b) adopt a blended reading approach of balanced literacy (BL) and embed the BL with the with the campus' phonics strategies presently used, (c) explore, adopt, implement, and evaluate the

effectiveness of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) for reading identified by the PLC, (d) evaluate model lesson designs shared in PLC meetings, and teachers' perceived support of student progress, (e) engage in student data analysis to individualize and strengthen EBPs based on data and connection to model lesson plans including a personal and group debriefing in PLC meetings, and (f) use best practices for PLCs such as collaboratively developed team goals, using agendas for PLC meeting, taking PLC minutes during meetings, establishing norms for agreement of team accountability and how the PLC will work as a team and dialogue about the strategies used, lesson plans developed and use of EBPs.

Background and Findings of Research Study

State and federal standards require reading fluency at the ninth-grade level. For example, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative anchor standards and grade-specific standards for reading require a mastery of analysis of key ideas and details in a text. The purpose driving these standards is that reading standards, along with speaking, writing, and listening standards, are researched and evidence-based standards that contribute to knowledge and skills acquisition for students who, by the end of high school, will be college and/or career ready. In contrast, limited literacy skills in high school have been associated with negative outcomes, including course failure, high attrition rates, and poor performance when trying to pursue post-secondary education (Lanning & Mallek, 2017; Lombardi & Behrman, 2016).

Reading fluency, reading motivation, and reading self-efficacy, have been used as indicators measured in the assessment of the effectiveness of reading instruction

programs (Lee & Yoon, 2017; Schaffner & Schiefele, 2013). Dual coding theory, a general theory about cognition and literacy, supports the belief that reading programs might improve reading scores (Clark & Paivio, 1991). Following a review of the literature, I conducted a case study of phonics-based strategies used in one high school in a Southern state, to measure reading fluency, reading motivation, and reading self-efficacy in ninth-grade students who were experiencing low Lexile scores in reading. In this study I investigated whether phonics-based strategies effectively influenced reading motivation, reading self-efficacy, and reading fluency. Essential components of reading instruction include fluency and accuracy which relate to phonemic awareness (ability to identify and use units of sound) and phonics and vocabulary and comprehension (Alves Godoy, Vieira Pinheiro, & Citoler, 2017).

The purpose of the study was to obtain formative information from teachers to discern the perceived influence of the phonics-based strategies on improving reading. Specifically, I used teacher interviews to examine how teachers perceived secondary phonics instruction may influenced students' reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. This study relied on the perceptions of ninth-grade English teachers who were implementing the phonics-based program in their classroom instruction. The following research questions which the local study addressed were:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading motivation of ninth-grade high school students?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading fluency of ninth-grade high school students?

3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of phonics-based strategies on the reading self-efficacy of ninth-grade high school students?

I analyzed collected data using the thematic analysis framework, which has six phases: (a) data familiarization, (b) generation of preliminary codes, (c) examination of themes, (d) review of themes, (e) definition of themes, and (f) report generation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Through this process, five themes were generated that encapsulated the relevant answers to the research questions of the study. Themes based on findings were the phonics-based strategies had: (a) limited influence on students' intrinsic motivation, (b) positive influence on students' extrinsic motivation, (c) a slight improvement in reading fluency, (d) improvement in reading accuracy, and (e) conflicting perspectives on the students' self-efficacy. The rationale for the recommendations is based upon the findings of the participants' uncertainty of the students' improvements as a direct result of the phonics-based program. The review of literature suggests that phonics can help improve students' Lexile scores but other strategies need to be included. Teachers explained the students' intrinsic motivation levels as the consequence of the program not having enough relevance and the students' continued difficulty in comprehending the pronunciation of certain English words as key observations and concerns. However, the phonics-based strategies were reported by the teachers to have a possible positive influence on extrinsic motivation. The teachers found their students were motivated to complete their assignments, get rewards, and, as such, improve their grades.

An analysis of the findings and review of the literature for improving reading skills of adolescent students revealed that additional reading resources may be beneficial to these learners and could be used with the phonics-based strategies already being used and together may enhance the overall reading instruction and learning for students. After a thorough review of the literature, BL is recommended because it not only prevails in research compared to other strategies but includes a phonics component. These approaches should enhance the development of knowledge and skills to support teachers in the implementation of alternative strategies to educate teachers and result in improved Lexile scores among ninth-grade students. Balanced Literacy (BL) centers on EBPs and phonics and it is intended to use the most powerful elements of foundations needed for reading (Policastro, 2018). Phonics is embedded into the literacy instruction of BL. Teachers can use the existing phonics program to enhance the BL instruction.

Findings concluded the program improved the students' reading fluency. The phonics-based strategies were perceived by teachers to improve the students' reading accuracy according to Research Question 2 findings. Results also showed some discrepancies in teachers' responses about the influence of the phonics-based strategies on self-efficacy. Some teachers experienced their students not showing interest or participating in class. In contrast, some teachers noted an increase in the self-efficacy of the students; however, they could not definitively state that the improvement was truly because of the program. Because of these findings, this white paper will address alternative approaches to the singular use secondary phonics-based strategies at the target

site. To acquire knowledge and skills professional development is needed in order to meet the needs of students' learning challenges (Bernhardt, 2009).

Recommendations Based on Local Research

This section of the white paper will provide recommendation offering some research-based reading support strategies found to have significant effectiveness for improving student motivation, student self-efficacy, or reading fluency. The problem showed that although 35% of the students continued to read at or above grade level, the majority of the students or 65% needed an additional strategy to help improve their literacy scores. The recommendation is driven by these results of the study, which a balanced approach reading program that mixes BL and phonics instruction for reading is recommended (Snyder & Golightly, 2017; Calais, 2011). This is a balanced literacy approach, which is a method of instruction that uses a variety of different strategies to engage and enhance student learning (Policastro, 2018).

A BL approach is comprised of the following components: guided reading, shared reading, read aloud, shared writing, interactive writing, reading workshop, word study and writing workshop. Shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading focus on exact comprehension instruction, scaffolding, and using personal interest to apply reading strategies. Shared writing, interactive writing, and writing workshop focuses on teacher led instruction with time for students to write and share responses. Using multiple elements of literacy instruction is proven to increase reading achievement (Policastro, 2018).

BL and phonics instruction will be paired as the foundation to teach reading and EBP's will be integrated into the BL instruction as researched and selected by the PLC taskforce. Researchers argue for a balanced approach, mixing BL and phonics instruction for reading (Policastro, 2018; Snyder & Golightly, 2017). This approach embeds the existing phonics into the components of balanced literacy (Honig et al., 2008). Within the component of BL independent reading it allows students to self-select and read a novel of their choice. Students' self-selection of independent reading has been shown to strengthen reading comprehension, fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy (Flink, 2017). When teachers are involved, demonstrate effort, and develop a positive teacher student relationships reading of their students; the intrinsic reading motivation of students increases along with self-efficacy (De Naeghel et al., 2014).

Researchers have suggested that positive relationships between teachers and their students is the most important tool in learning (LaPoma & Kantor, 2013).These strategies include providing goals and choice activities that are related to reading, choosing interesting texts to read, and collaboration (Wehmeyer, Shogren, Toste, & Mahal, 2017; Wigfield, Mason-Singh, Ho, & Guthrie, 2014). The BL component of shared reading encourages the students to model the behavior set by the teacher in reading strategies such as fluency; the teacher will model correct reading speed, accuracy, and intonation so that students can replicate the behavior. The BL component of read aloud helps support students' listening comprehension skills and also reinforces behaviors that students would use if they are reading independently. According to some authorities (Wolters et al., 2017), motivation and self-efficacy for the adolescent reading student are closely linked.

Thus, models of reading motivation, which include competence related constructs (Wolters et al., 2017), support phonics alternatives. Self-selection strategies can be implemented in both the guided reading and independent reading components of BL.

The phonetic component of BL includes the use of multisensory phonics, combined with specific activities for exploring and discovering English language history, word origins, word patterns, and word meanings (Henbest & Apel, 2017; Solari, Denton, Petscher, & Haring, 2018) might have a greater influence on intrinsic motivation as it includes the process of using material which may be more interesting to them. Students' use of BL strategies it helps them to understand patterns in words, assists them while working on spelling (through word patterns) and decoding, and helps students with accurate word recognition (Solari, Denton, Petscher, & Haring, 2018). BL for high school students involves numerous components, which includes phonics in the word study.

Recommendations for Implementation in the Local District

When teachers are grouped by grade level and course specific, they can be formed into a PLC. PLCs are a collaborative team that works together to achieve a common goal where each individual member is held accountable (Brown, Horn, & King, 2018). The team is responsible for developing a common unit of instruction, assessments to monitor student learning, and establish the standards they will use to evaluate the quality of student work. Creating the vision of one team and one goal creates student success continues to make PLCs effective.

PLCs are widely known for their effectiveness yet sometimes are mistaken as another meeting that teachers have to attend. In reality PLCs are created for innovative

use and continuous processes that are characterized by educator shared inquiry, problem solving, and collaboration in order to increase student achievement (DuFour & Reeves, 2016). Resistance to change always occurs in organizations, especially with those who need to see an impact before they will implement the positive change themselves (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014). However, the alternative should work provided the following recommendations are considered by all stakeholders involved:

Recommendation One, to Appoint and Adopt. Appoint the ninth-grade PLC Literature team as a reading taskforce to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of all recommendations included in the white paper. The PLC will implement BL and the Phonics program presently used at the target site. Since BL includes a phonic component, then the program already being used will serve as the embedded phonics component of BL. Collaborative structures in an educational environment prove to promote district-wide change to increase student achievement (Naicker & Mestry, 2015). The people involved should include a campus administrator (one who oversees the English department), a ninth-grade lead English teacher, and the PLC team. This collaboration is to incur enough data to achieve saturation should this become an additional study. District-level administrators will need to allocate needed financial resources that will support professional development for balanced literacy to integrate the phonics-based reading strategies and implementing the BL reading approach. The financial portion will use funds already allocated to the ninth-grade PLC team for professional development.

A systemic professional development program design is the recommendation to implement in the local district at the targeted site. Professional development creates a

change that promotes student achievement (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). To meet students' needs and learning challenges, educators need professional development to acquire the skills and knowledge to be successful in the classroom (Bernhardt, 2009). Implementing an evidence-based practice (EBP), such as the phonics supplemented BL approach, requires a stakeholder team for decision making, thus local PLC, or campus taskforce will serve this function (Mazzotti, Rowe, Simonsen, Boaz, & VanAvery, 2018). The PLC will develop training for the BL component and EBPs they collaboratively decide to implement. Professional learning is not a single occurrence but a constant ongoing process, which is why continued professional development is required (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Silva, 2015).

The ninth-grade PLC at the local level is responsible for providing understanding and development of the EBPs to be used in instruction. Created learning environments share roles, reflect on practice, continue research, and mentor together to strengthen growth in individuals (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2013; Klinge, 2015). Professional development, which uses peer interaction and a teacher-to-teacher model, demonstrates that the teacher understands how to implement the knowledge and skills resulting in the teacher optimizing the learning process for the students. This model is known as *turnaround training* in which the teacher learns the knowledge and expertise and then imparts the knowledge and skills obtained to his or her own peers (Hansen-Thomas, Casey, & Grosso, 2013). Professional development not only has an influence on teachers in terms of supporting the development of knowledge and skills, but may have the outcome to improve the achievement for students through elevating teachers'

knowledge and skills of teaching reading. Professional development could offer an avenue to increase student achievement in reading fluency, reading motivation, and reading self-efficacy (Main, Pendergast, & Virtue, 2015; Owen, 2015).

Recommendation Two, Supplemental Use of Evidence Based Practices (EBPs). Evidence Base Practices (EBPs) are programs or a group of instructional practices that have been researched to show proven adequate gains in achievement (Test, Kemp-Inman, Diegelmann, Hitt, & Bethune, 2015). Implementation of the evidence-based strategies including the phonics supplemented BL approach is recommended based on the findings of this study to increase reading comprehension and overall Lexile scores. This BL approach, will use BL and phonics and PLC Taskforce selected EBPs to use in reading instruction. New models or approaches should provide a framework for the organization to validate the benefits of the study and promote change (Drummond, 2017). The results of the approach could support student learning and provide the central and campus staff with information related to refinements to the implementation of the recommendations by the PLC taskforce.

The PLC should use the Protocol for Balanced Literacy with Supplemented Phonics Documents to determine that all components of BL and phonics are being used as designed. The PLC will select the EBPs to incorporate into their lessons. The PLC taskforce will write a description of the strategy used in the corresponding boxes of Protocol for Balanced Literacy with Supplemented Phonics Documents. All elements should be incorporated within the lessons of the week and the frequency of use documented. Types of balance literacy EBPs that can be integrated include but are not

limited to mnemonic strategies, peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS), and collaborative strategic reading (CSR). The PLC taskforce will develop an EBP fidelity implementation checklist for any EBPs selected and implemented and could be modeled after examples in Appendices C, D, and E.

Mnemonic Strategies. As research has proven, one of the best ways to retain and recall information is to teach students mnemonic strategies, or memory-enhancing strategies. There are numerous mnemonic strategies, but the keyword method has been proven to be the most effective (Fasih, Izadpanah, & Shahnavaz, 2018). The keyword method can be used in different content areas. Students make an association between a keyword, related sentence and an image which then enables the student to recall information. This strategy consist of three steps: recoding, relating, and retrieving. This strategy would be found under the word study component of BL.

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies. PALS is a reading strategy for high school students that aids in supplementing the reading curriculum for students who struggle in reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Thorius, & Santamaría Graff, 2018). Teachers pair up a higher performing student with a lower performing one to work together on reading activities such as reading aloud, listening to their partner read, and providing peer reflection to the different activities. Teachers instruct students to use different learning strategies such as identifying the main idea and foreshadowing what will happen in the passage. PALS allows students with and without learning difficulties to be ardently involved in peer-facilitated lessons. This strategy uses the following

components of BL: shared reading and writing, independent reading and writing, and readers workshop.

Collaborative Strategic Reading. CSR combines cooperative learning, vocabulary development, questioning techniques, and the opportunity for students to practice new skills (Mendieta et al., 2015). CSR was originally designed for expository text, but has been adapted to be used with other texts as well. After the students have learned all four components of CSR through whole class instruction, the students will then use the learning strategy in small groups. The main goal is to improve reading comprehension while maximizing student engagement. This EBP uses the BL components of guided reading and writing, read aloud/write aloud, word study, and writers workshop.

Recommendation Three, to Evaluate and Engage. The PLCs will be responsible for evaluating the model lesson designs shared in the PLC and perceived support of student progress. The PLC will engage in student data analysis to individualize and strengthen the use of EBPs based on data and connection to model lesson plans including a personal and group debriefing. The evaluation of the professional development will require a full semester to obtain student data, analyze and reflect on the program's influence on student reading. The professional development can be completed during PLC professional development days provided once each semester. It is recommended that the PLC Taskforce use their weekly meetings to develop a more thorough understanding of the implementation of the BL with supplemental phonics strategies, and EBPs. The PLC could also use the meetings to study implementation

practices with Fidelity of Implementation (FOI) is the implementation of a practice as intended by the designers or researchers (Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller, 2013). If an EBP is implemented as designed then it will work to increase student achievement (Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller, 2013). The teachers will need to discern the implementation of the recommendations with fidelity in order to examine student reading progress. There will be no evaluation of the teachers during the FOI walkthroughs by peers and administrative designees. The intent of the peer/administrative walk-throughs is to calibrate implementation of the recommendations. The PLC taskforce will develop and refine the implementation as they calibrate and discuss the information obtained from the walk-throughs and self-reflection checklist for BL implementation and newly developed FOI protocols for EBPs selected by the PLC Taskforce. Teachers will use the Protocol for Balanced Literacy with Supplemented Phonics Documents as a model to decide as a team which EBPs will be implemented. The PLC will record the strategies implemented, how they were used in the classroom, and the frequency of use. If fidelity is reached for a particular component of the recommendations, then student reading progress, using Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs), could be used as well.

There are three different constituents of FOI: adherence, exposure/duration, and quality of delivery (Gerstner & Finney, 2015). Adherence means that an instructed followed the procedure of the EBP as it was intended and implemented all components in the correct order. The exposure/duration is the recommended length of the instructional session (e.g. 30 minutes), duration of the EBP (e.g. 16 weeks), and frequency (e.g. once a week) (The Iris Center, 2014). The quality of delivery refers to conveying the EBP using

good teacher practices such as enthusiasm, managing transitions, and providing time for student feedback and questions. If an EBP is implemented with fidelity it increases the likelihood of the intended outcome for the students.

The evaluation of the implementation of programs should be consistent and ongoing (Collier-Meek, Fallon, Sanetti, & Maggin, 2013). It is recommended that assessments be completed weekly and discussed by the PLC team. Once fidelity is established, evaluation of student progress in reading will be a focus of the PLC taskforce. The PLC Taskforce must use the five steps in order to monitor student progress: (a) collect baseline data; (b) identify the goal; (c) create a graph; (d) administer and score probes; and (e) graph scores (The IRIS Center, 2014). Reading comprehension levels are supported by way of such strategies as independent reading and repeated reading strategies (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2017) and Curriculum-Based Measurement for Reading (CBM-reading or reading CBM) (Greenwood, Tapia, Abbott, & Walton, 2003; Solis, El Zein, Vaughn, McCulley, & Falcomata, 2016). Evidence has shown that teachers have effectively used CBMs, also an EBP, to discover a student's progress in reading and development (Codding, Petscher, & Truckenmiller, 2015). CBM has also been concluded to improve reading among students with learning differences, which include Autism and on-task behaviors (Solis et al., 2016). CBM will be used as the evaluation part of balanced literacy EBPs instructional strategies.

When a CBM is implemented, each student is briefly tested each week with the test only lasting one to five minutes. The teacher counts the number of responses that are correct and incorrect in the allotted time to find the student's score. The scores are

recorded on a line graph to compare the performance to the expectations. The teacher can then decide based on the overall student performance whether or not to continue to instruct the same way or change instruction. A change is necessary for an individual student when the student is not meeting the expected reading goal. Changes may include increasing the intensity of the intervention or changing the intervention (The Iris Center, 2014).

The PLC team needs to monitor the progress of each student by using a student progress evaluation chart (The IRIS Center, 2014). After a completed semester or 16 weeks, the campus taskforce will evaluate the FOI of the recommendations. Refinement from the evaluation should be discussed by the PLC specific to the FOI, CBM teacher portfolio data. Revisions should be implemented and evaluation of FOI and/or student reading progress will occur to the end of the second term. Recommendations will be made to the district by the PLC taskforce. Another resource to incorporate into the instruction at the end of the 16 weeks is the Student Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire, which can be used to assess the student's self-efficacy. This would be an extension of the teacher-student relationship that improves student self-efficacy (LaPoma & Kantor, 2013).

The PLC team will also formulate a checklist to include all major components of the EBP. The recommended checklist is an example for the EBP peer assisted learning strategy (The IRIS Center, 2014). The PLC will modify the checklist to adhere to the selected EBP. The calibration of implementation of the EBP may cause the PLC to revise the checklist. An observation form can be modified for each individual EBP selected. At

this point the team will decide to select alternative measures or increase the intensity of the EBP based on the results. Teachers can use the resources on The IRIS Center to aid in their development.

If the district acts on the recommendations, it might spur a development of the BL approach to improve reading scores of ninth-grade students. Teachers' professional development programs can be created with a focus on how to implement the BL approach in teaching reading and at the same time, instill into their students the awareness of what reading fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy can do for them. This intervention or professional development program can take a whole term which is 16 weeks to determine the effects better.

Recommendation Four, to Use Best Practices. The PLC team will use best practices for team goals, use of agendas, taking minutes, agreement of team accountability and growth. The team will use the Agenda for PLC Taskforce to guide their meetings and data evaluation. One session could be taught using the *turnaround training* model. In this model, professional development uses peer interaction, a teacher-to-teacher model because the teacher not only develops knowledge and skills but is taught how to deliver the knowledge and skills to other teachers using a train the trainer model. The teacher-to-teacher training optimizes for greater effectiveness in the learning process (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2013). The selected campus could use this time to complete their training. The PLCs could use The Iris Center resources and modules in order to learn how to successfully implement and evaluate programs and student progress.

The PLCs each be given separate or combined roles, including teams that continue to research evidence-based data; teams that are responsible for planning, and teams that meet to plan and develop a contiguous phonics and BL reading approach with agreed-upon intervention strategies. Alternatively, all teams could take on all three efforts. In the instance where the school or schools wish to continue the phonics-based reading program already in place, the teams would be responsible for integrating the phonics-based reading program into the BL reading approach. The PLC would be responsible for attending the program professional development. Additional responsibilities would also include monthly meetings in which, teachers should share and complete a turnaround of training to share with colleagues who may not have attended the original training. Finally, walk-throughs of colleagues should be completed to create a collaborative system with calibrate the fidelity of implementation (The Iris Center, 2014). Continued professional development could be led by teams, who could invite all reading teachers, paraprofessionals, and even reading specialists and other experts, so that continued professional develop supported teaching using the BL reading approach and the integrated phonics-based strategies(s). This could be easily implemented to the current meetings that are required of the PLCs at the targeted site. Using current resources and equipping the teachers with more could help improve student reading achievement and Lexile level scores.

The PLCs would need to have a tool kit equipped with a variety of resources that they could reach into and utilize. The tool kit for the PLC will be comprised of different EBPs. Evidence Base Practices (EBPs) are a means the taskforce must use and continue

to follow to achieve success. EBPs are programs or a group of instructional practices that have been researched to show proven adequate gains in achievement (Test et al., 2015). The taskforce could look at EBP resources for reading instructional strategies. The PLC should be looking for the balanced literacy components to use for instructional practices. These resources could help train the teachers to use extensions of the practices during professional development. Using the IRIS locator resources the faculty could make data-based instructional decisions for reading (The IRIS Center, 2014). The IRIS Center is developed by nationally recognized researchers and education experts. The research is designed to help bridge the gaps in education by using Evidenced Base Practices. In the professional learning modules teachers learn how to use data to validate the specific program being used during the targeted instruction. The module goes in depth how to score individuals using the growth measure chart.

No single program can make all the difference in literacy as it is always evolving and the students all learn in different ways (Kosnik, Miyata, Menna, & Dharamshi, 2017). Tracking the progress of students will allow a self-correction as secondary teachers are on the path of changing how they teach. To meet the needs of all students we must have a plethora of programs to offer and implement. The PLC should begin with using the EBPs provided and also add additional ones as they research as a team. The PLC must continue to develop depth and enrichment of programs (The IRIS Center, 2014). More examples of these would include: Marzano's researched-based instructional strategies, IRIS Center, and Curriculum-Based Assessment strategies. These three platforms are a foundation to increasing the knowledge of the instructors and the

achievement of the students. These examples are additional resources the PLC can put in their toolkit when looking for different strategies.

Conclusion

Practices for teaching reading fluency require not only an alignment with standards but strategies for facilitating and supporting motivation and self-efficacy. The data analysis in this case study indicated that the secondary phonics-based strategies was perceived to contribute positively to student fluency, accuracy and external motivation. However, the phonics-based strategies were perceived to have little influence on students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. The teachers believe that there was an additional need for their students' success. These results called for an alternative solution to the phonics-based reading strategies, so that more effective reading instruction can improve these reading constructs. In this white paper I provided the recommended goals for implementing the phonics supplemented BL approach. The popularity of the BL approach was examined because it is an important direction in early childhood education and Policastro (2018) proffered that this method may be used with high school students as well. Although few researchers have evaluated the phonics supplemented BL approach at the high school level, a chance exists that this approach will work for secondary education (Policastro, 2018; Policastro & McTague, 2015). Researchers who were interested in the BL philosophy presented the finding that it is better that language not be broken down into letters or combinations of letters and that conventional understandable messages be decoded (Policastro & McTague, 2015). Instead, findings revealed that language should be taken as an entire system that makes meanings of words that function not only in context but with relation to each other. Rodrigo (2018) found mixing phonics

instruction with BL to be an effective balanced approach for adolescents with low reading levels.

The balanced literacy recommended to the local district was a response that emerged from the findings of the local research and in the context of the ongoing debate among BL and phonics advocates. The recommended Balanced Literacy offers a combination of the best of both approaches. The balanced approached has been suggested to support reading motivation, reading self-efficacy, and reading fluency. Phonics is a component of language instruction and should not function in isolation when the BL approach can contain the benefits of phonics instruction but can also support reading instruction for all students, not just students having difficulties or students at risk for failing Lexile scores. Professional development when implemented effectively creates change and increases student achievement (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Implementing a systemic professional development design that includes the EBPs & BL, PLCs, and evaluation method using formative observation of fidelity and student progress will be needed to increase student achievement in the areas of reading motivation, reading fluency, and reading self-efficacy. This study will promote social change by shifting the instructional practices for teaching reading in one rural high school resulting in an influence on students' reading skills thus equipping them with the reading skills necessary to succeed in their future endeavors.

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White Paper Evaluation

1. How likely are you to consider discussing the implementation of a supplemental reading program to include Balanced Literacy, Evidence-Based practices, and continuance of the phonics-based strategies for ninth grade students at the target high school?

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely

2. What information would you like to explore further? (check all that apply)

____ Staff Professional Development
____ Team Building
____ Turnaround Training
____ Resource Allocation
____ Systemic Reading Professional Development
____ Fidelity of Implementation
____ PLC as appointed taskforces to implement the white paper recommendations
____ Other
_____
_____

3. From the list above, which topic would be your first priority and why?

4. What are your thoughts about a strategic plan for High School Reading instruction and the strengthening of students' reading skills?

5. How likely do you think the phonics-supplemented Balanced Literacy approach recommended in the white paper could benefit the students in developing their reading abilities, and improving their Lexile scores?

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely

6. How has this presentation shaped your view of implementing a supplemented Balanced Literacy, EBPs, and Phonics-Based Strategies approach?

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Neutral	Somewhat	Strongly Influenced

7. Do you have any suggestions for improvement of this presentation and/or white paper?

Fidelity of Implementation Protocol for Balanced Literacy

Document	Description	Described use in the ELA Classroom & Frequency
Shared Reading		
Read Aloud		
Independent Reading		
Guided Reading	e.g. PALS	
Shared/Interactive Writing		
Reading/Writing Workshop		
Word Study		

Student Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire

1. I am a good reader.	**1** Not Very Like Me	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Very Like Me
2. It's easy for me to understand the content of a book.	**1** Not Very Like Me	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Very Like Me
3. I think I am doing well in reading this year.	**1** Not Very Like Me	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Very Like Me
4. Compared with others in my class I am a good reader.	**1** Not Very Like Me	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Very Like Me
5. If a text is interesting I don't care how hard it is to read.	**1** Not Very Like Me	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Very Like Me

Agenda for PLC Taskforce

9th PLC Taskforce Meeting

Date:

Members Present		Time:

Team Roles	Person Responsible	Norms
Team Leader		
Recorder/Data Analyst		
Interventionist/Time Keeper		

PLC Focus- You may not discuss all 6 headings in every meeting	Notes
Reflection: A. What is working? B. What are instructional challenges?	
What do we want students to learn? A. Phonics-supplemented Balanced Literacy program and learning targets B. Pre-assessment C. Analyze pre-assessment D. Review lesson plans E. Review learning target	

What do we want students to learn? F. Intentionally plan for learning engagement and balanced instructional strategies	
How do we know that they have learned it? A. Results from student progress evaluation B. Discuss various assessment strategies C. Review and discuss student growth chart and data	
What do we do when students are not improving on the growth chart? A. Review program fidelity B. PLC leader observes and assesses each teacher's program fidelity C. Results are shared and data recorded	
What do we do when students do learn it? A. Discuss EBPs for enrichment B. Create extension activities	
RTI: Identify candidates, establish interventions, and review progress monitoring data.	
Action Items/Closing	