

2019

# Teacher Perspectives of the Implementation of the Journeys Early Literacy Program

Milton Bernard Reese  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Milton Reese

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Sunddip Aguilar, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Evelyn Ogden, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Karen Hunt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2019

Abstract

Teacher Perspectives of the Implementation of the Journeys Early Literacy Program

by

Milton Reese

MA, Albany State University, 2009

BS, Albany State University, 2008

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2019

## Abstract

A small rural school district in the southwestern part of the United States required teachers to provide highly effective literacy instruction by implementing an evidence-based reading program called Journeys. With consistently low reading achievement, it was unclear whether teachers were implementing Journeys as prescribed. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher implementation of the Journeys program for students at an elementary school in the district. The theoretical framework used to guide the study was Clay's emergent literacy theory. The conceptual framework included 5 strands of the Journeys reading curriculum, which was derived from Clay's theory. A modified formative program evaluation case study was conducted. Nine teachers who had taught reading and 2 administrators who supervised reading teachers were purposefully selected for semi-structured interviews. Coding and analysis of interview data indicated that more than half of the teachers were not implementing Journeys with fidelity. Themes that emerged from the interviews were; inconsistent understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction, lack of collaborative planning, teacher's use of an alternate phonics-based resource, focus on technology integration, lack of teacher buy-in, and lack of teacher training in implementation of the Journeys program. Based on findings, a 3-day professional development training was developed to provide training in implementing Journeys' underlying evidence-based strategies. In regard to social change, the study findings and project could assist school leaders in determining guidelines for the implementation of evidence-based reading curricula. The study findings and project could assist school leaders and teachers in effective implementation of Journeys and providing quality literacy instruction to enhance student learning in the district.

Teacher Perspectives of the Implementation of the Journeys Early Literacy Program

by

Milton Reese

MA, Albany State University, 2009

BS, Albany State University, 2008

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

Walden University

June 2019

## Dedication

I dedicate this study, in loving memory, to both my grandmother Mamie Reese and my brother Rodriquez Reese. My entire educational journey has been inspired by my family. They have always encouraged me to achieve things that I did not realize I could master. My support system also includes close friends and personal role models. The consistent calls, texts, reminders, and other forms of communication helped me reach this monumental milestone.

## Acknowledgments

Completing the doctoral study would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my committee: my committee chair, Dr. Sunddip Aguilar; second committee member, Dr. Evelyn Ogden; and university research reviewer, Dr. Karen Hunt. The team provided a limitless amount of constructive feedback which was crucial to producing a noteworthy project. In addition, they provided encouragement and clear direction throughout this process. Thanks, also, to the participants who graciously provided the critical information needed for the project.

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| List of Tables .....  | v  |
| Section 1: The Problem.....                                   | 1  |
| The Local Problem.....  | 3  |
| Rationale .....   | 6  |
| Definition of Terms.....                                      | 7  |
| Significance of the Study .....                               | 8  |
| Research Questions.....                                       | 9  |
| Review of the Literature .....                                | 10 |
| Program Implementation .....                                  | 11 |
| Modified Program Assessment.....                              | 12 |
| Current Academic Rating .....                                 | 12 |
| Struggling Reader Characteristics/Interventions .....         | 12 |
| Teacher and Student Perception of Early Literacy Skills ..... | 17 |
| Effective Reading Instruction .....                           | 19 |
| Early Literacy and Strategies .....                           | 22 |
| Teacher Efficacy .....  | 30 |
| Professional Learning .....                                   | 31 |
| Other Factors.....  | 34 |
| Conceptual Framework.....                                     | 36 |
| Theoretical Framework.....                                    | 39 |
| Journeys Development.....                                     | 43 |
| Implications.....   | 44 |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Summary .....                                   | 46 |
| Section 2: The Methodology.....                 | 47 |
| Research Design and Approach .....              | 47 |
| Qualitative Research Design.....                | 48 |
| Qualitative Approaches.....                     | 48 |
| Program Site.....                               | 51 |
| Participants.....                               | 52 |
| Researcher-Participant Relationship.....        | 53 |
| Gaining Access and Ethical Considerations ..... | 54 |
| Data Collection .....                           | 55 |
| Interviews.....                                 | 55 |
| Role of the Researcher .....                    | 58 |
| Data Analysis .....                             | 59 |
| Coding Data .....                               | 59 |
| Accuracy and Credibility .....                  | 60 |
| Discrepant Cases.....                           | 61 |
| Limitations .....                               | 61 |
| Data Analysis Results .....                     | 62 |
| Section 3: The Project.....                     | 78 |
| Introduction.....                               | 78 |
| Goals of the Project.....                       | 78 |
| Review of the Literature .....                  | 79 |
| Learning .....                                  | 79 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Traditional Professional Learning.....   | 80  |
| Models of Professional Learning.....   | 82  |
| Technology-Enhanced Professional Learning.....                                     | 87  |
| Barriers to Professional Learning.....   | 88  |
| Summary.....   | 90  |
| Project Description.....   | 91  |
| Implementation.....  | 91  |
| Project Evaluation Plan.....   | 95  |
| Project Implications.....  | 96  |
| Local Community.....   | 96  |
| Larger-Scale Change.....   | 97  |
| Conclusion.....  | 98  |
| Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....  | 99  |
| Introduction.....  | 99  |
| Project Strengths and Limitations.....   | 99  |
| Recommendations for Alternative Approaches.....                                    | 101 |
| Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and<br>Change..... | 101 |
| Reflection on the Importance of the Work.....                                      | 102 |
| Analysis of Self as Scholar.....   | 102 |
| Analysis of Self as Practitioner.....  | 103 |
| Analysis of Self as Project Developer.....   | 104 |
| Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....                | 104 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Impact on Social Change .....                                       | 105 |
| Conclusion .....  | 106 |
| References.....   | 108 |
| Appendix A: The Project .....                                       | 129 |
| Appendix B: Certificate of Completion for Protecting Human Research |     |
| Participants Training.....  | 139 |
| Appendix C: Interview Protocol .....                                | 140 |
| Appendix D: Teacher Interviews Patterns/Themes .....                | 144 |
| Appendix E: Administrator Interviews Patterns/Themes .....          | 154 |

## List of Tables

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1. Characteristics of Young Children (Teale & Sulzby, 1986)..... | 41 |
| Table 2. Kindergarten and First Grade Battery.....                     | 43 |
| Table 3. Summary of Themes.....  | 77 |
| Table 4. Project Components and Links to Data .....                    | 98 |

## Section 1: The Problem

For a number of years, educators around the world have grappled with how to foster content area literacy among students. Literacy involves negotiating the complex relationships among reading and writing (Clay, 1972), which is challenging for many students. Students should be exposed to a variety of strategies to effectively read and respond to texts (Clay, 1972). Research has shown that exposing students to formal literacy instruction in Grades K-3 is critical in developing highly literate students (Piasta & Wagner, 2010) and that educational achievement is dependent, in turn, on successful reading development (Melby-Lervåg, 2012). Furthermore, according to Moran and Senseny (2016), early literacy instruction should be included during kindergarten to optimize students' social and emotional development.

Although literacy development will look different depending on the instructional systems and curriculum employed within the school (Clay, 1991), experts agree that teachers play a critical role in assisting students to become efficient readers (Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004; Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2009; Smith, 2009). Similarly, the International Reading Association (2000) suggested that reading teachers contribute to reading development and students' motivation to read. For students to remain engaged, teachers must provide relatable and purposeful literacy activities (Nathan, Pollatsek, & Treiman, 2015). This can be challenging because all students learn at a different pace and in different ways, which means that instruction should be centered on the individual child and aligned with the child's pattern of growth, according to Clay (1972). The theoretical concept of emergent literacy, which Clay

developed, is a child-centered view of literacy which encompasses cognitive processes, strategic learning and performance, problem solving, and self-regulation (Clay, 1991).

Frerichs (1993) and Clay (1991) supported the notion that students should be emerged in the learning of alphabets, phonological awareness, symbolic representation, and communication skills. Teacher's metacognition and pedagogical knowledge, thus, are key factors to effective literacy instruction (Clay, 1972). Highly effective teachers are experts who are aware of their performance and are able to adjust instruction as needed to develop students' literacy skills (Clay, 1991; Frerichs, 1993). Because students must be actively engaged and highly focused to learn, teachers need to emphasize behavior management to ensure students are productive in the classroom (Gage et al., 2015).

To provide an optimal early learning experience for students and promote literacy development, teachers also must use their own expertise and evidence-based strategies. According to research, some instructional methods for teaching reading are more effective than others. Snow and Matthews (2016) noted that many teachers spend significant amounts of time teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The authors further argued that teachers should provide explicit instruction, sensitivity to the needs of the students, consistent feedback, and verbal stimulation (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Schools that use a well-rounded literacy program, place emphasis on professional learning, and use early reading strategies produce students with high levels of literacy (Snow & Matthews, 2016).

### **The Local Problem**

Due to consistently low reading scores, officials in the U.S. state of Georgia placed Washington Elementary School (pseudonym) on the state's failing schools' list in 2015 (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2015). The reading levels of third-grade students were significantly lower when compared to other school districts with similar demographics. Washington Elementary School is classified as a Focus School, which means that schools are in the lowest 10% of the state (GADOE, 2015). In a memo to administrators, the school improvement specialist explained that GADOE (2015) requires Focus Schools to implement a comprehensive reading improvement plan in order to make improvements in student achievement. Due to the lack of academic success, school leaders at Washington Elementary need to increase performance for all students, particularly ones struggling in literacy development. They must put in place progressive interventions to prevent the school from being classified as a Priority School. GADOE identifies Priority Schools as schools that failed to make adequate progress within the three-year time frame of being classified as a Focus School (GADOE, 2015).

Georgia also rank schools by the three-year average of achievement gap scores (GADOE, 2015). GADOE (2015) refers to achievement gaps as a year-to-year measurement of the lowest achieving students in the school. Priority Schools have achievement gap scores that are in the lowest 5% of the state (GADOE, 2015). Focus Schools such as Washington Elementary School are required to develop a leadership team that meets a minimum of two times per month to develop and implement short-term action plans and monitor implementation of actions and interventions to support the

lowest-performing students and those not meeting standards (GADOE, 2015). In Georgia, SchoolDigger, a test database, ranks elementary schools according to the Georgia Milestones Assessment in each content area. In the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, Washington Elementary School ranked 1,094 and 1,151, respectively, on the list of 1,233 schools (SchoolDigger, 2016).

In 2012, education officials in the State of Georgia applied for and were granted a waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act. The waiver prompted the creation of the College and Career Ready Index score (CCRPI) to replace the previously used Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rating, which is part of the No Child Left Behind Law. The CCRPI is a targeted gain score that is used by GADOE to measure student performance and rate schools; schools are assigned to one of three different categories: Priority, Focus, or Reward Schools (GADOE, 2012). The AYP rating included two categories: Meets or Does Not Meet Standards. On a scale from 0-100, Washington Elementary's CCRPI score was 47.1 in 2015 and 47.5 in 2016 (GADOE, 2016). The state of Georgia mean CCRPI score was 76 in 2015 and 71.7 in 2016 (GADOE, 2016). When compared to other Georgia public elementary schools during a three-year period, Washington Elementary's CCRPI score was in the bottom 10%. Washington Elementary qualified for the Focus School determination due to the lack of improvement in gap scores (GADOE, 2016).

According to the school's academic coach, prior to being labeled a Focus School, Washington Elementary teachers used the Open Court reading program to carry out the reading curriculum. However, after the State of Georgia compared literacy progress for 3 years, officials determined that the necessary growth was not reached. With the Focus



School label, school improvement in reading was required, according to GADOE (2016). District leaders wanted to be removed from the Focus School list within the three-year time frame, so they started a search for a program that could assist teachers in providing quality literacy instruction. The district's curriculum director introduced the Journeys guided reading program during the 2015-2016 school term. It was implemented for Grades K-3 in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Researchers have found that learning to read is a complex task for beginners (National Reading Panel, 2000). A tenet of the Journeys curriculum is that students cannot read without sufficient phonological awareness and phonics skills (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Emergent literacy theory supports placing phonemic awareness and phonics at the core of instruction within a larger literacy program (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). The foundation for Journeys was supported by Clay's (1991) research which demonstrated the importance of preparing students to read complex text. Journeys provides comprehensive reading instruction for all learners to ensure early literacy skills and college and career readiness (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a). The program also requires daily use of close reading routines, anchor texts, leveled readers, and technology integration (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a). The Journeys curriculum also incorporates the running records advocated by Clay (2001) as a tool to guide teaching, match readers to appropriate text, and determine what students know about the reading process.

However, according to school officials, teachers at Washington Elementary are not currently engaging in these practices. According to the school's academic coach,

many Washington Elementary teachers teach from teacher-made units, outdated textbooks, and other unreliable resources. The problem at Washington Elementary School is that it was unclear whether teachers are implementing Journeys, an evidence-based reading curriculum, as prescribed.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the fidelity of teacher implementation of the evidence-based Journeys curriculum. In the state of Georgia, failing schools must go through a school improvement process for 3 years that is led by a school improvement specialist assigned by the Department of Education (GADOE, 2015). In an effort to assist in removing Washington Elementary from the state's Focus Schools List, the curriculum director launched a search for a new reading program. The school improvement specialist highly recommended that an evidence-based reading curriculum be implemented immediately. The curriculum department, school leadership team, and parent representatives agreed that adoption of the Journeys curriculum, a research-based early literacy program (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a), held the most promise for improving reading instruction in the school. In the following school year (2015-2016), the curriculum director mandated that Washington Elementary implement the Journeys reading curriculum. Since 2016 teachers have been required to provide English/Language Arts instruction using the evidence-based Journeys early curriculum program.

I conducted interviews to explore the fidelity of implementation of the Journeys program from the perspectives of teachers and administrators at the public elementary

school. Teachers who had worked with the Journeys reading program for at least one full school term and who were currently teaching reading were asked to participate in interviews to understand their perspectives on Journeys and students' literacy outcomes. In addition, I interviewed the school's principal and reading coach to document preferred literacy instructional methods and identify challenges of the Journeys curriculum. Data collected from semistructured interviews may provide evidence of current fidelity of Journeys implementation at Washington Elementary School.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used in the current study:

*Achievement gap scores*: The difference in student performance between a focal group and a reference group from one year to the next (GADOE, 2015).

*College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)*: A comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that is intended to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students (GADOE, 2015).

*Emergent literacy theory*: A theory about the process of learning and the development of meaning and concepts, including how young children understand reading and writing (Clay, 1972).

*Georgia Department of Education (GADOE)*: An educational entity and state agency that "governs public education in the state of Georgia" (GADOE, 2016, p. 1).

*Journeys*: A reading program that was designed to assist teachers in providing language arts and reading instruction in Grades K-6 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a).

Journeys reading includes explicit instruction in key literacy skills at each grade level (Houghton, Mifflin, & Harcourt, 2017b). At the core of the program is vocabulary development, the close reading of complex texts, and using textual evidence (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). The program is also aligned to Common Core curriculum standards. In the early grades, Journeys focuses on developing key skills: phonemic awareness and phonics, reading, writing, and speaking skills (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Anchor texts that identify with the unit's theme are included in each lesson. Schools are able to select whole group and small group instruction.

*Literacy:* The ability to speak, listen, write, and read as well as view print and nonprint text in order to talk effectively with others; to think and respond critically in different settings to many types of print and nonprint text; and to access, use, and produce multiple forms of media, information, and knowledge in all content areas. (GADOE, 2017, p. 17)

### **Significance of the Study**

Primary teachers should place emphasis on the importance of being effective teachers of literacy (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). I addressed a local problem by focusing on Washington Elementary teachers' implementation of early literacy instruction based on the research-based Journeys curriculum. Researchers explored whether teachers are implementing the evidence-based Journeys reading curriculum as prescribed. Parents, teachers, school districts, and other stakeholders could use the findings of the study to contribute to institutional change by improving implementation of the program. Findings of the study could guide additional staff development programs, creation and

dissemination of model lessons, and development of a literacy guide for new teachers. Other schools in Georgia designated as failing schools, using Journeys, may benefit from dissemination of findings from the study. Significant use of Journeys reading program has been noted in the state of Texas and has been adopted by more than 700 schools/districts in the state (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a). Other states including Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana and Rhode Island, Washington, D.C. also utilize Journeys. The study is important because the outcome could support existing literature concerning implementation of evidence-based early literacy instruction.

The results of this study could contribute to teacher effectiveness in implementing Journeys reading program to improve the literacy skills of primary students at Washington Elementary and other similar school districts throughout the state of Georgia. In education, theory influences practice through effective instruction (McNaughton, 2014). Teachers are tasked with teaching students from a variety of educational backgrounds. Therefore, the study is critical because the results could initiate social change by contributing to current research concerning fidelity in program implementation. Standardized test performance of diverse learners could be improved through successful implementation of the instructional strategies outlined in the Journeys curriculum. The study could also be used to demonstrate how the use of research-based programs could contribute to improving early literacy skills for all students.

### **Research Questions**

It was unclear whether teachers were implementing Journeys reading curriculum as prescribed at Washington Elementary. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case

study was to explore teacher implementation of an evidence-based early literacy program for students enrolled in Washington Elementary, a rural elementary school. The primary research question for this study was, How do teachers at Washington Elementary implement or not implement Journeys reading curriculum in their classrooms to increase literacy skills of K-3 students? I sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. How do teachers implement the Journeys curriculum as designed into their early literacy instructional practices?

RQ2. What challenges do teachers face in implementing the Journeys curriculum with their students at Washington Elementary?

RQ3. What are teacher's perspectives on the text, technology, writing, and reading aspects of the Journeys reading curriculum?

The following subsection includes the conceptual framework and literature review supporting this qualitative case study.

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review provides an in-depth study of the extent knowledge base has on teacher effectiveness and low early literacy performance. In the analysis, key thematic links between varied teaching strategies that are meant to improve literacy skills for students in this age group were identified. Over the course of this review, I highlighted both similarities and contrasts between the analyzed research articles, allowing for an in-depth critical analysis of the understandings that exist in the field. Using this approach, I examined the following: Journeys reading curriculum, Emergent Literacy theory, current

academic ratings, early literacy strategies, professional learning, teacher and student perception of early literacy skills, effective reading instruction, and struggling readers. Areas that needed further research and gaps in the literature were also identified. Notably, this assisted in ensuring that the subsequent data collection approaches could make an original and informed contribution to the knowledge base.

In the comprehensive review, sources were used to review pertinent information from Walden University Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, the Georgia Department of Education website, and various educational websites. The search terms used included: early literacy, effective reading instruction, elementary reading programs, individualized reading instruction, teacher efficacy, and primary reading strategies. The keywords were selected based on importance of early literacy skills which resulted in themes for the study.

### **Program Implementation**

Stakeholders in education want to know if the time and money that is invested in schools is worthwhile. The degree of Journeys reading curriculum implementation at Washington Elementary is currently unknown. There are two parts of success of a program: (a) is the program as designed being implemented and (b) are the outcomes for student improvement being met (Stake, 1976). According to Stufflebeam (2003), the purpose of program review could be to improve the quality of a program, but it could also suggest the termination of a program. This study aligns with Stake's responsive evaluation in that it focuses on components of the Journeys curriculum and presents the perspectives of the educators (Stake, 2006). The program implementation review could

also be used to implement a project which is the goal of the study (Stake, 2006). “Is the program being implemented as intended?” is a sample question that could be answered through this review.

### **Modified Program Assessment**

The study was not a program evaluation of the Journeys reading program. I did examine the implementation of Journeys. Stake (2006) asserted that a program evaluation can be strictly or loosely defined. The implementation and service delivery of Journeys was the main focus of the study. Thus, the study can be considered a modified program assessment.

### **Current Academic Rating**

When examining the 2015-2016 Georgia Report Card for third graders, 33% of all students in the state did not meet Reading standards, 59% of all students met standards, and 8% of all students exceeded standards (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2016). In comparison to the state of Georgia, the percentage of students who met and exceeded Reading standards at Washington Elementary School is lower than that of other third graders in the state. The school had 50% that did not meet, 49% that met standards, and 1% to exceed reading standards (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2016).

### **Struggling Reader Characteristics/Interventions**

While an ideal educational environment would be one that records optimal achievements for all students, the reality is that student performance differs and places low-performing students at risk of not receiving the full benefits of the learning content. Authors found that the outcomes for students who do not receive the necessary reading



interventions by Grade 3 are marginally lower when compared to the achievement records of their high-achieving peers (Schechter, Macaruso, Kazakoff, & Brooke, 2015). The research posits that achieving vital reading skills through classroom instruction may not be effective for the learning needs of all students, thereby necessitating additional attention through intervention programs (Vaknin-Nusbaum, Nevo, Brande, & Gambrell, 2017).

One key approach for determining causality for engagement with reading materials is discussed by Vaknin-Nusbaum et al. (2017), who show that low reading achievers also risk reduced efficacy over time. The study linked students' motivations to their self-efficacy, reading comprehension, and out-loud literacy skills, with their high-achieving peers showing increases over the course of the school year even with no reported increases or decreases in this group's motivation levels (Vaknin-Nusbaum et al., 2017). Notably, this makes it essential to implement early learning interventions that motivate low-reading performance students to engage with reading content to improve their achievement scores.

The need for interventions for grade school students who are at risk of low reading achievement requires educators to identify effective strategies for introducing the necessary content to these student groups. Beach and O'Connor (2015) highlighted that model-based approaches have proven effective in reducing the gaps between regular learners and their peers who have reading disabilities, making these approaches essential for reading interventions. Among the gains reported using modeled approaches is an ability to measure gains and predict both word reading and text fluency outcomes for

students, which is used to determine the need for interventions based on grade measure/criteria combinations (Beach & O'Connor, 2015). One such approach is Schoolwide Enrichment Model-Reading (SEM-R), which is a differentiated model with proven efficacy in increasing comprehension scores when compared to control populations under the district reading curriculum (Shaunessy-Dedrick, Evans, Ferron, & Lindo, 2015). Moreover, the findings of this study are complemented by Vaknin-Nusbaum et al. (2017) and their findings on learner motivations, with Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. (2015) noting that the model-based approach achieved better outcomes with no variations in students' attitudes towards reading recorded for district-based and SEM-R curriculums.

In the educational field, the need to provide comprehensive coverage of students' learning needs as covered by the curriculum is a basic requirement, making the efforts that instructors direct towards curriculum development an instrumental element in the subsequent achievement of learner populations (Mahwasane, 2017). As a result, the development of various instruction approaches presents possibilities for improving content comprehension among students depending on the skills that these programs intend to build over each course year. As a literacy improvement model, blended instruction has shown promise in its capacity to influence the efficacy of literacy across diverse student populations positively. A recent study presented the blended model as capable of increasing gains for all grades through to Grade 7, with Grade 2 students showing the highest literacy gains compared to other grades (Prescott, Bundschuh, Kazakoff, & Macaruso, 2017). Moreover, individual programs such as Lexia Reading

Core2 show gains in non-word reading and subsequently improved scores for at-risk students whose learning difficulties were not a result of deficits in working memory (O’Callaghan et al., 2016). This illustrates the need for instructors to consider implementing these programs for literacy interventions to ensure that they can achieve comparable gains for low-reading at-risk students in their classrooms.

With the increasing use of technology in education (Chai, 2017; McDonald, 2017), it becomes necessary for interventionists to give due consideration to the inclusion of computer-aided instruction (CAI) for the development of targeted reading interventions. Bennett et al. (2017) argue that multicomponent supplemental interventions that utilize CAI can increase their capacity to influence reading rates and attitudes for at-risk students positively. Although the research analyzed a sociodemographic that was unique due to its focus on African American populations: it revealed that the use of culturally relevant materials also has potential as an identifier of targeted content for low-reading achievement students.

One possible reason for this is explained by McGee et al. (2015), who found that the key indicators of achievement in reading recovery were a shift from context-only reading to an integrated approach that incorporated both graphical and contextual information. Stites and Laszlo (2017) also conducted on Year 1 and 2 students receiving reading recovery interventions and found that the use of event-related potentials for analyzing content reception also argues for the inclusion of CAI for at-risk students. The study found that phonological awareness and predicting vocabulary were predicted by students’ amplitude figures for the previous year.

There is also need to understand the contextual influences that determine students' efficacy, with the development of social skills being highlighted by Ardyanti, Hitipeuw, and Ramli (2017) as vital for reducing hindrances to learning for at-risk primary-level students. The study's focus on structured learning approaches makes its contribution vital for the adoption of modeled interventions due to their dependence on the structurally tiered approaches for content delivery and subsequent student assessments. The need for social skills to factor into interventions is also supported by McGee et al. (2015), who noted that they were a key determinant in improving the ability for students to enter error action chains and were thereby essential as part of first-grade literacy instruction. The need for these chains is illustrated in the fact that it enables them to monitor and self-correct their reading errors when actively engaging with the reading content (McGee et al., 2015). Instructors must thereby include these concerns in reading interventions to ensure that the recovery programs positively influence students' long-term literacy outcomes.

Austin, Vaughn, and McClelland (2017) based their work on the response to intervention (RTI) framework when trying to develop a multi-tiered approach for developing interventions for students with low reading achievement records. RTI provides a three-tier framework that provides incremental support based on students' achievement levels, with Tier 1 students receiving classroom interventions only while Tiers 2 and 3 were reserved for students who fall behind in the classroom environment (Austin et al., 2017). The result is a framework that allows for the targeted delivery of high-quality instruction for struggling students based on reviews that screen entire

classrooms to identify at-risk children. Moreover, the approach also enables teachers, specialists, and special educators to collaborate in making informed educational decisions for the development of a well-integrated instruction set for struggling learners (Austin et al., 2017). To ensure the success of RTI implementations, Gersten et al. (2017) note that the professionals involved should also have full access to ongoing high-level support as required for all adults who work with student populations. This creates a need for reading recovery interventions to accommodate a multi-stakeholder perspective to ensure that low-reading achievement students can benefit from the targeted attention.

### **Teacher and Student Perception of Early Literacy Skills**

As the primary sources of learning content, teachers provide an invaluable reference for students to develop their understanding of and attitudes towards literacy skill development across the field of education. Fletcher and Nicholas (2016) argued that curriculum subjects require different albeit comparable approaches to content delivery, whereby the materials are developed to match the expected reading ability for each grade. Although Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) showed reduced support for literacy programs in low-performing school districts, a comparable analysis in Australia reveals that the socio-cultural profiles of individual students do not negatively influence their perceptions towards learning (Fletcher & Nicholas, 2016).

The research revealed that the analyzed student populations were more dependent on teacher attitudes for determining the views that they had regarding the importance of literacy skills. In this case, the use of a sample population that included schools in all socioeconomic areas, as well as the analysis of diverse cultural populations, make it

necessary to consider the implications of these results for other countries. While the Australian context may differ from other school settings around the world, it is also necessary to acknowledge the unilateral focus on achievement as a determinant for proficiency in educational systems around the world.

The research by Fletcher and Nicholas (2016) is an essential addition to the literature since it provides empirical support for further analysis of teachers' roles in influencing students' perception of reading and comprehension. However, while the literature is less expressive regarding other sociocultural influences on learners' attitudes, McDonald (2017) introduced a more recent view into pedagogy by proving that parents' reading ability does not factor into students' motivation to study. Therefore, even as Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2016) highlighted the possible benefits of including parents as stakeholders in students' learning, the literature reveals that they can reinforce learned content while limited in the influence that their involvement or lack thereof has on students' perceptions of the learning process. The explicit teaching methods that Fletcher and Nicholas (2016) introduced in their research are highlighted as effective in providing students with the multi-sensory learning model that McDonald (2017) implements using iPads for increased engagement. The development of such strategies is dependent on teachers' awareness and timely response to individual learners' needs, which emphasizes the roles of their position as instructors and human resource elements for implementing the curriculum in their individual subjects and grades.

One key contribution that McDonald (2017) made is that the improvement of learners' perceptions of and attitudes towards learning opportunities is essential for

minimizing resistance to interacting with the curriculum content. While this may appear as a factor of the teaching materials themselves, it is also necessary to accept that teachers' attitudes also influence their willingness to accept and readily disseminate the curriculum that education authorities deem necessary for enhancing learner outcomes. However, Sulaiman, Sulaiman, and Abdul Rahim (2017) found that teachers who are not motivated to deliver on their curriculum goals have the opposite effect of disrupting curriculum consumption and subsequently, students' attitudes towards the content. The research on national primary school teachers in Malaysia revealed that their attitudes towards the curriculum were essential from the beginning of the curriculum's implementation, which helped to positively influence students' adaptation to the content (Sulaiman et al., 2017). The research determined that the influence on learner outcomes depended on teachers' participation in curriculum delivery and development, with unwilling teachers having a reduced capacity to assess and educate their students effectively. Notably, this indicates that teachers' perceptions also influence their capacity to make student-centric decisions when utilizing their experience to implement curriculum goals.

### **Effective Reading Instruction**

Although the effects of learner and instructor perceptions are highlighted as instrumental in determining literacy skills, the differences in instructional approaches also correlate to literacy proficiency reported in these various settings. Analyses of international educational settings have yielded studies such as Huo and Wang's 2017 analysis of learning outcomes for children learning English as a foreign language, noting

that the majority of literature has always focused on analyzing English as a native language. The use of phonological awareness instruction is highlighted in the research as essential in determining the underlying skills that influence learners' understandings, which include non-word reading and phonemic awareness (Huo & Wang, 2017). Additional research by Lipka (2017) validated this model as applicable in teaching approaches for children's literacy programs, with the phonics instruction approach being crucial in enhancing learners' capacity to understand the essentials of English spelling rules. However, Huo and Wang (2017) also noted that there are concerns over the influence that early adoption of this instruction approach can have on learners' conversational skills, with the researchers highlighting that teachers' confidence in their own skills can also influence the attractiveness of the phonological awareness instruction approach.

As Valiandes (2015) highlighted, the differentiated approach requires instructors to possess the necessary skill sets for identifying and intervening in cases involving perceived difficulties in achieving the set literacy benchmarks for learner performance. Even with these limitations involving teachers' efficacy, the analysis indicated that differentiated instruction is beneficial outside the scope of language learning, with Bird (2017) noting its comparative success in improving end-of-course outcomes in Algebra and Biology as well. Additionally, the authors indicated that even as teachers consider the various teaching strategies applicable to their individual subjects, it is also necessary for them to acknowledge their ability to implement these strategies effectively. The research showed that the improvements in comprehension and literacy were mixed (Bird, 2017),



which reduced the generalizability of the study's outcomes to overall applications of the differentiated instruction approach. However, the research by Bird paved the way for more in-depth analysis of the influence that these educational factors have on the efficacy of teachers in imparting literacy skills.

Aside from differentiated and phonological awareness instruction approaches, it is also vital for pedagogy analyses to include the use of blended approaches for delivering learning content. Schechter et al. (2015) presented computer-aided instruction as a vital aid for teaching efforts, complementing teachers' efforts by availing pre-controlled materials to the learners through digital content delivery channels. Therefore, to achieve optimal results, there is a need for teacher-led instruction and interventions in the classroom setting, which is essential in ensuring that students can improve their phonological awareness, word identification skills, word fluency, as well as the acquisition of letter sounds (Schechter et al., 2015). Similar results were achieved by Ozbek and Girli (2017), who found that students reported blended instruction as a fun, engaging, and motivational experience in adherence to the improvements in reading fluency for the analyzed population. Schechter et al. (2015) also recorded the most statistically significant proficiency among students who were regarded as low-performing learners. Notably, this research corresponded to Ozbek and Girli's (2017) who found that blended instruction approaches can also benefit students with learning disabilities by improving their learning outcomes while also enhancing their capacity to engage with and comprehend reading materials.

While the instruction approaches above are effective in improving literacy scores, the differences in student achievement across the United States (U.S.) are a persistent concern for the success of measures that the educational sector implements for early literacy. According to Bornfreund et al. (2015), up to two-thirds of all school-going children in the U.S. failed to achieve the benchmark proficiency levels by the fourth grade, which could also reduce the opportunities available to them in later educational and professional life. However, it is also evident that professionals in the U.S. education sector are aware of the influence that early literacy has on academic achievement. Even with this existing knowledge of teaching strategies and their outcomes for students, Bornfreund et al. (2015) highlighted that only five of 50 states have achieved the seven indicators that the National Assessment of Educational Progress cites as vital in the development of policies that reduce achievement gaps across student populations. Therefore, it is essential for policymakers to acknowledge and incorporate the findings into their decision-making for education approaches, especially considering the disadvantageous position to which lower-income populations are relegated due to ineffective coverage of their literacy needs.

### **Early Literacy and Strategies**

School failure is highly possible if children are not on grade level in reading by the end of third grade (Snow & Matthews, 2016). The study conducted by Snow and Matthews (2016) revealed that pre-kindergarten and Grades 1-2 instruction strategies were a vital determinant of students' future outcomes in both educational and career-related environments. One key drawback in Snow and Matthews' (2016) study was that

teachers are less likely to implement a curriculum that they have a negative attitude towards. Additionally, the findings also revealed that effective assessment of students' needs is a required deliverable for teachers, allowing for the identification of student cases that require more direct attention to achieve peer-level results (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Nonetheless, researchers explained, there was distinct support for a multi-stakeholder approach to the development and improvement of language instruction in early childhood reading programs (Huo & Wang, 2015).

Piper (2016) highlighted literacy as a sequential process, which becomes more effective as it is guided by the assessment that conforms to required practice for teachers. Researchers note that early literacy is primarily the responsibility of the assigned teacher, which also makes it necessary for these teachers to understand the various tools and strategies that they can utilize to improve literacy skills in their classrooms. However, these student populations consist of individuals who have varied learning needs, which can reduce the overall utility of teaching strategies that fail to incorporate these differences when developing content for learners (Ferrer et al., 2015). Over time, Ferrer et al. (2015) noted that these differences can become increasingly noticeable in later years, which leads to a persistent disadvantage being placed on atypical readers who record lower reading scores in these earlier grades. The subsequent gap between the scores for these different learner groups has been shown to persist as they progress through the school system thereby posing a threat to the delivery of adequate teaching care (Ferrer et al., 2015). Evidently, this makes it vital for teachers to understand how to

incorporate strategies that can ensure comparable literacy levels for the differentiated populations that constitute their student pools.

According to Mahwasane (2017), it is vital for children to experience differentiated interactions with learning content to allow them to effectively comprehend the material and understand the ideas expressed in the text. The baseline in this research holds that children who regularly interact with text are also able to learn faster than their compatriots, thereby supporting the idea of a fast-paced learning program that introduces children to varied reading materials at younger ages (Mahwasane, 2017). However, there are concerns as to the efficacy of rushed approaches to implementing this strategy, with Connor et al. (2016) noted that the self-regulatory aspect is vital in this learning process. In fact, the research showed a reduction in students' reading stability over time, which was attributed to the improved efficacy of the literacy instruction content served to these student populations (Connor et al., 2016). This creates a premise for targeted rather than blanket approaches to the application of early literacy strategies for younger learners. Additionally, the need for active participation from the learners highlights a need to consider young learners' learning capabilities effectively to avoid negatively influencing their capacity to develop in other areas such as in their cognitive processes.

Previous research efforts by Valiandes (2015) showed that it is possible to ensure the success of teaching mixed ability classrooms by implementing differentiated instruction methods to provide adequate learning opportunities for all students. Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. (2015) defined differentiation as the process by which students are provided with multiple options for the delivery of learning content, thereby

capitalizing on the strengths that these students possess. However, the success of this early literacy approach is dependent on the teacher's ability to determine the learning needs of each student accurately for the learner to benefit from a differentiated teaching strategy fully. For instance, Palacios (2017) noted that the teacher's ability to assess students is essential in determining normative baseline scores for individual learners, thereby making it essential for teachers to disseminate the learning content and engage in assessments to optimize learning plan instructions to suit each particular setting. Moreover, Valiandes (2015) also noted that group work is considered part of the differentiation process, which allows students to learn from each other and effectively increases the capacity of these mixed student groups to achieve comparable learning outcomes regardless of their individual learning weaknesses.

When discussing the issue of literacy, acknowledging the theoretical foundations of exactly what constitutes the effective delivery of teaching content to the learner is important. According to Tighe et al. (2015), the ultimate goal of reading activities is for readers to acquire the information, synthesize and integrate text, and actively obtain meaning from their readings to achieve adequate levels of comprehension. Evidently, this is an essential process for third-grade students to undergo when building their literacy skills at this developmental stage, which Easton (2015) and Elborn (2015) found has an influence on the subsequent opportunities available to these children in their later educational and professional lives. Considering that children thereby have the potential to become more economically competitive later in life only if they succeed early in reading, it is necessary to ensure that teachers are aware of strategies that can improve students'

experiences and literacy skills (Tighe, 2015). This validates concerns regarding the quality of the teaching strategies that language teachers utilize when building the literacy skills of students in the third and fourth grades, necessitating considerations for solutions that can equitably equip all learners with the necessary proficiencies.

Pedagogical fields identify that children have different proficiencies at different ages, which improve and necessitate the introduction of learning material that progressively becomes more complex as a student advances from kindergarten onwards (Tighe, 2015; Lipka, 2017). For third graders, Cain (2015) and Tighe (2015) identified links between their literacy levels and the use of decoding skills as a means of comprehending the reading material, which is less pronounced in samples of higher-grade levels such as seventh onwards. While Cain (2015) maintained that the model for reading development requires revision to incorporate improvements in the knowledge base, it is nonetheless notable that second and third graders also differ in their use of decoding skills. These skills are necessary for ensuring the effective comprehension of reading materials, which may not necessarily require the use of classroom-oriented content. Bang-Jensen (2016) showed the success of measures such as word gardens, which are simply movable rocks with painted-on words that students can re-arrange to change the content and context at early ages. As a means of increasing interactions between learners and possible skill improvement activities, it is essential for curriculum development exercises to acknowledge such successes and incorporate similarly abstract strategies.

Lipka (2017) researched a sample of second-grade students and found that students' linguistic, cognitive, and literacy skills were predictive factors for their fluency,

adding that phonological awareness influenced fluency across all analyzed age groups. The implications here are that the possible gains to be made with the introduction of programs targeting fluency should include variations of these facets, making it essential to understand the dynamics of their influence on learner outcomes. The use of alternative teaching methods that deviate from traditional classroom approaches, including measures such as the inclusion of rhythmic content delivery, as well as the use of open class environments encourage interaction (Deny, Ys, & Fajrina, 2017).

The Suggestopedia approach that the above researchers proposed was among the strategies utilized for achieving literacy improvements among students from the lower grades, with Deny et al. (2017) highlighting particular gains in reading comprehension for narrative-oriented texts. The ability to increase student mean scores by 25.9 percentage points between the pre-intervention and posttest periods is indicative of a possibility of enhanced learning outcomes for young learners when teachers utilize differentiated strategies for delivering curriculum content.

It is essential to determine the individual components contributing to their reported success in the field. In a study conducted across 55 schools, Foorman, Dombek, and Smith (2016) found the existence of seven key factors influencing the success of early literacy interventions. These included the strength of the practitioner-researcher relationships, capacity to determine the need for early interventions, evaluation approaches and interpretations, curriculum evaluation for curriculum efficacy, time management, selection of and support for interventionists, and the maintenance of communication and collaboration between interventionists (Foorman et al., 2016).

Overall, it is apparent that the interventionists play the key role in identifying and tackling the gaps in teaching efficacy (Elborn, 2015), with inter-stakeholder cooperation serving to enhance the utility of the subsequent curriculum recommendations. Notably, this makes it essential to prioritize the role of teachers in overall understandings regarding the improvement of learner outcomes, which is validated by the extent to which interventionists receive attention as curriculum delivery agents and reviewers in the available literature.

Strategies for improving early literacy outcomes are meant to be effective in the long term, thereby helping students to comprehend learning materials even as the complexity of the content increases with each school year. This made the contributions by McGeown and Medford (2014) instrumental in expanding the knowledge base, whereby they noted that the use of a synthetic phonics approach can increase students' reading and cognitive assessments up to a year after interacting with the teaching materials. Phonics skills should be explicitly taught within the first and second years of a student's educational career (O'Callaghan, McIvor, McVeigh, & Rushe, 2016). Early literacy and necessary interventions are needed to increase the likelihood of on grade-level reading (Gage et al., as cited in National Reading Panel, 2000). Results of the O'Callaghan et al. (2016) study supported the notion that early literacy instruction is needed, particularly phonics-based computer literacy program.

However, the researchers noted that this method was essential in improving learners' short-term recall and letter sound knowledge, making this strategy less suitable as a solution for the holistic improvement of teaching efficacy. In light of this, Elborn



(2015) suggested focusing on the comprehension aspects that are neglected during early reading instruction, which includes inferential, summative, questioning, visualization, connective, and predictive skills as utilized when interacting with teaching materials. Rupp, Afacan, and Pickett (2017) also showed that time delay, embedded instruction, and shared reading make the learning process engaging and thereby, more effective in reducing hindrances to individual skill development. Therefore, the use of strategies that have a limited scope is not recommended to improve individual self-efficacy elements.

From the above perspective, it is possible to see that the evolution of teaching strategies over time is essential as a means of critiquing and validating the varied approaches available in the field. However, the basic elements that define literacy remain the same, with teachers in modern educational settings reportedly including technology in literacy improvements in a bid to enhance learners' access to teaching materials and supportive content. Chai (2017) discussed the use of Apple iPad devices to reduce the boundaries between traditional and digital class environments as applied in a rural school setting. The research highlights that the use of a teaching app with developmental time delays was essential in improving students' performance in identifying phonemes effectively. Moreover, the interconnectivity that the app availed also allowed the students to comprehend their peers' content as well using observational learning. While the generalizability of the research is limited due to the use of a sample pool of only three children, the use of technology in content delivery and evaluation was highlighted by McGeown (2015) as beneficial for ensuring the streamlined provision of targeted content to learners when utilized in an institutional setting.

The research by McGeown (2015) emphasized the role of synthetic phonics over eclectic methods in the development of literacy skills, which are considered vital regardless of the chosen mode of curriculum delivery. However, the development of this content is viewed as a determinant of the subsequent efficacy of the materials in improving learner outcomes, with Lipp and Helfrich (2016) emphasizing the role of collaborations between classroom and reading recovery teachers. However, Aslan (2016) noted that the learning environment presents more opportunities for effective skill building since young learners have to interact with and comprehend content from various subjects as part of their education. One strategy that teachers can use to capitalize on this aspect of learning environments is the use of cross-curricular learning, which Aslan (2016) above described as having the capacity to make comprehension materials more interesting and connecting it to other learning experiences. Even with the proposed benefits of this approach, it is necessary to acknowledge that it does not consider the issue of persistent learning problems as impediments to effective learning. Nevertheless, it introduces the idea of adopting synergistic content delivery approaches across curriculum subjects to enhance literacy skills outside the language teaching environment.

### **Teacher Efficacy**

The issue of teachers' efficacy as determinants of their chosen approach is also discussed by Bird (2017), who noted that the differentiated instruction approach requires teachers to have masters-level skills to implement the strategy's directives effectively. Teacher efficacy provides opportunities for understanding the possibilities that exist for variable outcomes for students even with the application of similar instruction

approaches. When measuring teacher efficacy: word study, word level fluency, and fluency with connected text are critical areas of focus (Brownell, Kiely, Haager, Boardman, Corbett, Algina, & Urbach, 2017).

In the case of students, Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) noted that teachers' efficacy is vital in predicting positive outcomes, thereby making the dilution of teachers' knowledge detrimental to their ability to develop effective programs. In this way, a correlation exists between professional learning, teachers' ability to apply their skills, and subsequent program efficacy in teaching literacy skills to children. While the research on cross-institutional performance is limited due to the use of fragmented approaches across teaching environments, it is crucial to note the historically low support for programs in low-performance urban areas as well as how they compare to learners' literacy outcomes (Pomerantz & Pierce, 2013). Moreover, this sometimes provides additional support for the correlational nature of teacher efficacy and student outcomes, with institutional support featuring as a determinant of learner skill development (Pomerantz & Pierce, 2013). Teacher efficacy in improving literacy skills for students also requires them to enforce these strategies outside the learning environment effectively (Fletcher & Nicholas, 2016).

### **Professional Learning**

As highlighted in the previous section, the role of teachers as curriculum delivery and assessment agents is considered central to the effective impartation of learning content to student populations (Elborn, 2015). A study completed by Reutzel (2015) outlined common confusions that teachers have as related to early literacy. The author

provided research-based answers to various educational questions. Reutzel (2015) responded to the following questions that are directly related to the current project study: (a) Where do children acquire print awareness? (b) How is phonemic awareness beneficial to early literacy? Reutzel (2015) noted that early literacy instruction prepares students for future growth in literacy. Teachers must provide students with support through literacy strategies so they can become strong readers (Kay & Susan, 2017).

However, there are concerns as to the training approaches used for educating these educators, which presents a dual environment in which teachers' skills determine their efficacy in influencing learner outcomes positively. In a recent research article, Thompson (2017) noted that the use of teacher education strategies that prioritize the communal delivery of content to educators is key to the development of a collaborative agenda in their subsequent practice. However, the need for collaborative environments is presented in various publications as crucial in various publications (Foorman, et al., 2016; Thompson, 2017), thereby validating their inclusion in curriculum improvement exercises. Additionally, collaboration outside the context of teacher education environments could be instrumental in guiding the strategies that they develop for their individual student populations.

While Thompson (2017) proposed the use of collaboration teams as essential in curriculum development and subsequent attention to student needs, the research also showed a high variability in the collaboration systems that various teams implement in their institutional settings. The authors supported the notion that it is expected that other teams across states and countries also utilize differential strategies for collaboration,

which makes it difficult to assess outcomes and correlate them to particular collaboration approaches.

Additional analyses also highlighted the efficacy of collaborative approaches even as Mecca (2016) reported that institutions still have bureaucratic barriers that reduce interventionists' access to vital resources such as financing for their programs. Notably, this resulted in the slow development of teaching curriculum as teachers are restricted to the interventions that their institutions can finance and support effectively. Nonetheless, Mecca (2016) noted that the support should be integrated into schools' basic needs since it is essential in ensuring that teachers' learned skills are utilized in developing adaptable and responsive literacy improvement programs.

A comparison of student learning outcomes and those used in professional learning for teachers revealed similarities in aspects such as the use of recall and differentiated learning in improving content retention rates (Phillips et al., 2016). However, this also makes it apparent that teachers also require specialized content for providing them with the opportunities that they need for comprehending, exercising, validating, questioning, and improving their teaching strategies.

The increased dependence on collaboration in both children's and teachers' learning environments makes it essential to consider the contributions of other stakeholders in enhancing students' learning outcomes. Teachers should be immersed in collaborative professional learning opportunities with others in the educational field that supports student improvement. (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Effective collaboration While Phillips et al. (2016) showed that teachers are more effective in developing

targeted learner content when educated using focused coaching approaches, LaCour et al. (2017) showed that students can benefit from nonfocused approaches that reduce the strain on institutions and individual practitioners. For instance, the research introduces parents as the vital influence on the reading attitudes that students develop, making them a possible source for affirmations of teachers' suggestions regarding content consumption outside the school setting (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2016). However, this also requires teachers to have the capacity to make effective assessments and maximize the utility of their recommendations for individual students' learning needs. LaCour et al. (2017) introduced dialogic learning as a vital bridge for struggling students, requiring teachers who operate in low-budget environments to tailor their strategies effectively and capitalize on this availability of support in students' familial environments.

### **Other Factors**

Although the majority of the literature focuses on school-based interventions, it is also necessary to capitalize on the availability of alternative means for delivering reading content and ensuring its use in improving literacy. Gammon and Collins (2016) noted that home literacy is a vital albeit less utilized approach for improving students' literacy due to the variabilities in educational achievement across students' familial backgrounds. The results indicated that, the achievement outcomes of this approach can fail to achieve the required levels of student literacy if implemented without the incorporation of other supportive mechanisms for assessing and responding to students' needs (Gammon & Collins, 2016). However, researchers also noted that prekindergarten students who receive literacy instruction in the home environment also show improvements in first-

grade text levels as well as in their displays of phonological awareness (Gammon & Collins, 2016). While this may represent positive results, the need for the inclusion of professionals for effective evaluation and delivery of intervention content makes it necessary for interventionists to include this approach as a facet of a more expansive literacy improvement intervention for at-risk students (Gammon & Collins, 2016).

The focus on early literacy is expressed in the literature as vital for predicting students' proficiency in higher grade levels (Connor et al., 2016; Elborn, 2015; Foorman et al., 2016; Valiandes, 2015). However, disparities across educational sectors also mean that curriculum development efforts are similarly differentiated, making it essential to consider the outcomes of these contextually unique strategies. Ross, Pinder, and Coles-White (2015) identified charter schools as an educational segment that prioritizes the role of early literacy in students' literacy outcomes, noting that their autonomy enables them to develop individualized programs in response to identified learning needs. However, researchers also found that teacher efficacy had similar outcomes for learners' literacy skills, affirming the findings by Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) regarding the role of teacher efficacy on literacy outcomes in standardized curriculum environments. Nevertheless, the increasing number of students who go through these charter schools also means a high turnover of student populations, which limits the efficacy of postcharter literacy outcomes for students (Ross, et al., 2015). This makes it necessary to identify key strategies that charter schools utilize in improving students' literacy skills to ensure the development of effective foundations for comparisons to long-term postcharter outcomes.

In the literature review from the Griffith, Bauml, and Barksdale (2015) article, the authors noted that the in-the-moment decisions that teachers make when delivering pedagogical content can also help to contextualize reading content more expressively and thereby improve its uptake and retention among early learners. The authors found that teachers could interact with larger student groups when favoring motivation, content comprehension, and engagement-related decisions while smaller groups allowed for more individualized and learner-specific decision-making (Griffith et al., 2015). However, there were also established links between smaller groups and teachers' affinity for in-the-moment teaching, providing more opportunities for instruction to include word study enhancements, assessments, and the development of appropriate problem-solving approaches compared to individual conferences and whole-group instruction (Griffith et al., 2015). The findings revealed that teachers' efficacy influenced the ability to an affinity for engaging in in-the-moment teaching, making efficacy requirements a key requirement for achieving positive literacy outcomes as highlighted in other literature such as publications by Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) and Bird (2017).

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Journeys reading program.** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2017a) designed the Journeys reading program to assist teachers in providing language arts and reading instruction in Grades K-3. For this study's conceptual framework, I drew from Clay's (1991) theory of emergent literacy. I used five of the strands in the theory to determine the fidelity of the implementation. A reading recovery program is an early intervention that has been used in schools where students experience difficulties in literacy (Clay,



1991). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2017b) adapted components of the reading recovery program described by Clay to create the Journeys reading curriculum.

**Strand 1.** Journeys reading includes explicit instruction in key literacy skills at each grade level (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). At the core of the program is vocabulary development, the close reading of complex texts, and using textual evidence (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). The program is also aligned to Common Core curriculum standards. In the early grades, Journeys focuses on developing key skills: phonemic awareness and phonics, reading, writing, and speaking skills (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Anchor texts that identify with the unit's theme are included in each lesson. Schools are able to select whole group and small group instruction.

**Strand 2.** Teachers can utilize both print and online designs to integrate technology in the classroom. Strand 2 of the Journeys reading program entails technology and multimedia learning. Technology such as computerized assessments allows teachers to provide immediate feedback and increase student achievement (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017a). The program includes blended learning formats which could benefit students with a variety of learning styles. Some of the technology components include student eBook, interactive lessons, and the interactive application (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

**Strand 3.** Journeys highlights writing in strand 3 as another critical component of literacy. Two goals of the writing strand are: (a) writing across genres (b) connecting reading and writing. Teachers can address the standards by following prescribed lessons on collaborative writing, skill-based instruction, and performance tasks. Within the

program, each lesson contains a daily connection to grammar and writing. Journeys focuses on the relatedness of spelling and word parts during the writing segment (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Journeys teacher's edition provides a 5-day sequence of instruction that ranges from teaching, guided practice, application, and assessments (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

**Strand 4.** Strand 4 focuses on the main idea in the project study of literacy development. Structure and routines are critical to the success of the Journeys curriculum. It is critical that explicit phonics instruction is implemented in instruction when teaching basic literacy skills. Phonics instruction plays a key role in helping students comprehend text (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 1999). Journeys includes daily phonics instruction in each level of the program (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Starting in kindergarten, the phonics skills are continually reinforced and build from grade in the earlier grades (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Decoding words efficiently increases reading fluency, which assists in improving reading comprehension (Dahl, et al., 1999). Researchers recommend phonemic awareness instruction that is child appropriate, purposeful, and included with other key components of literacy development (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

**Strand 5.** Students experience first reads, second reads, collaborative discussions, and weekly phonics instruction in the early grades (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). The use of graphic organizers and scaffolding are key strategies that are used in Journeys reading program (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Engagement and motivation are key to successful implementation of the Journeys curriculum. Gradual release strategies

that include the “I do, We do, and You do” format supports small group reading instruction (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework for Journeys and this study was Mary Clay’s Emergent Literacy Theory. Many researchers describe Marie Clay as the pioneer for the concept of Emergent Literacy Theory and the Reading Recovery program. Both programs have been recognized internationally in education. Through observations of pre-school aged children, Clay (1972) determined that students are acquiring literacy skills before they enter school and begin literacy instruction. Children do not wait to receive instruction; they are naturally inquisitive. However, to achieve the maximum effect multiple interactions must occur when teaching students to become highly literate (Clay, 1972). Clay’s work reinforces the idea that learning to read must be based on close observation of the children’s behavior.

Clay (1972) argued that children’s reading is a developmental process that teachers should devote substantial amounts of time in teaching. The Emergent Literacy theory explains that students should be taught specific prerequisite skills prior to reading (Rowe, 2000). According to Tracey and Morrow (2012), most teachers will do whatever it takes to ensure that students are able to read. Instructional practices and the awareness of teaching roles contribute to effective reading instruction (Clay, 1972). Reading may be difficult to many students, but when properly taught it can be learned. According to Snow and Matthews (2016), a variety of strategies, programs, and techniques must be used to ensure literacy development. Most teachers use district resources, websites, professional

learning materials, books, and suggestions from other colleagues to promote literacy growth (Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

The term *emergent literacy* was first used by Marie Clay (1972) to describe the acquisition of reading and writing skills that young children have before receiving formal education. The Emergent Literacy theory can be traced back to the views of constructivists based on the notion that learning begins from birth to age 6 (Rowe, 2000). When the mind is viewed as a muscle, this time period is also crucial for language and listening skills. Furthermore, Rowe (2000) described Emergent Literacy as children being conductors of their own literacy knowledge. Emergent Literacy is a basic part of children's developmental knowledge, that expertise in reading and writing have a developmental history before formal instruction (McNaughton, 2014). It is important for children to discover new ideas through reading. Marie Clay saw the need for research when she found correlations between student's literacy skills in the first year of school and their performance thereafter (Flood, Lapp, Squire, & Jensen, 2003). Teale and Sulzby (1986) in their classic review of the research on emergent literacy found five characteristics of young children as literacy learners, shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Characteristics of Young Children (Teale &amp; Sulzby, 1986)

| Literacy learners                                      |  |
|--|--|
| Characteristic   | Function   |
| Literacy   | Integral part of a child's learning process                          |
| Oral language, reading, and writing                    | Develop concurrently and interrelatedly                              |
| Active engagement                                      | One of the leading ways children learn                               |
| Children in a literate society                         | Learn to read and write early in their lives                         |
| As parents and children interact together around print | Adults pave the way to a child's independence in reading and writing |

According to McNaughton (2014), the classroom practice is influenced by implications for instruction as well as teacher expertise. Teachers are not the only ones responsible for providing reading instruction: parents should be involved as well. Parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and teachers are all a part of children's literacy development (Johnson & North Central Regional Educational Lab, 1999). Even though children can read immediately they should be exposed to materials as early as possible. Some ideal practices are providing a literacy-rich environment, reading from pictures, and writing with scribbles (Johnson & North Central Regional Educational Lab, 1999). This provides a pre-cursor to the components of reading which are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. The Emergent Literacy approach describes the acquisition of literacy as a developmental skill that begins early in

a child's life (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000). The framework guided the study and research questions in addressing the need for quality early literacy skills.

Literacy is viewed as participation in culturally defined structures of knowledge and communication (McNaughton, 2014). Clay's theory also requires teachers to start where the student is. The child-centered approach includes ideas of cognitive processes, problem solving, self-regulation, strategic learning and performance (McNaughton, 2014). Numerous literacy studies have been conducted where early learners were the subject (Flood, et al., 2003; Johnson & North Central Regional Educational Lab, 1999; Lonigan et al., 2000; McNaughton, 2014; Moran & Senseny, 2016; Rowe, 2000; Tracey & Morrow, 2012), and similar results were noted. Common ideas that could be key predictors of early literacy development were print awareness, phonics skills, and oral language. Dickinson and Neuman (2011) examined a sample of a kindergarten and first-grade battery. Table 2 includes the areas I assessed to determine appropriate interventions.

Table 2

*Kindergarten and First Grade Battery*

| Literacy strand                  | Test areas                         | Substrand            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Phonological Processing          | Phonological Segmentation          | Phonological Memory  |
| General Language Processing      | Comprehension of spoken directions | Language Development |
| Syntactic/Grammatical Processing | Grammatically Judgement            | Oral Cloze           |
| Semantic Processing              | Vocabulary                         | Similarities         |
| Verbal Memory                    | Memory for words                   | Syntactic word order |
|                                  | Phonological memory                |                      |

The concept of Emergent Literacy evolved as the result of new research in early childhood on how young children develop an understanding of literacy skills (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). More recently, Clay developed an assessment tool to measure Emergent Literacy called, An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Moran & Senseny, 2016). Table 2 illustrates areas of observation that were used to determine fidelity. Overall, the Emergent Literacy theory and concepts of the Journeys curriculum served as guides in this study to explore teacher's ability to provide highly effective early literacy instruction.

### **Journeys Development**

The Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishing company created the Journeys reading program in 2012, in response to the growing need for research-based reading programs (see (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). The Journeys curriculum is divided into seven strands:

- Common Core state standards (Strand 1),
- technology and multimedia (Strand 2),
- teaching writing (Strand 3)
- effective instructional approaches (Strand 4),
- assessment (Strand 5),
- meeting all students (Strand 6), and
- English language learners (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

Each strand includes instruction in reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, writing, phonics and phonemic awareness. The improvement of those skills along with listening and speaking are listed as key outcomes for the Journeys curriculum. Fidelity of implementation of Journeys was measured by conducting interviews including questions from each relevant Journeys literacy strand.

### **Implications**

The extent of the literature on pedagogical approaches to literacy revealed the existence of several themes, such as: Journeys reading program, Emergent Literacy theory, current academic ratings, early literacy strategies, professional learning, teacher and student perception of early literacy skills, effective reading instruction, struggling readers. The research highlighted teacher efficacy, student motivation, cognitive ability, as factors that influence literacy development (Bird, 2017; Schechter et al., 2015; Snow & Matthews, 2016). Strategies for improving early literacy outcomes are effective once comprehension occurs. Phonics-based instruction is needed to improve early literacy.

Valiandes (2015) believed that one of the key deliverables of instruction is the



awareness that students need for them to achieve phonological and contextual comprehension of reading materials. Given the influence of district-developed school curriculum on the teaching materials that educators use, the research is thereby vital as a means for determining methods for delivering this content effectively. The literature revealed that early childhood education strongly correlates to the proficiency that these students display in later grades, making it essential for instructors to assess their students regularly and implement interventions as necessary (Beach & Connor, 2015). The international scope of the literature also makes it applicable to early literacy for schools around the world, making it a comprehensive representation of pedagogical realities of contemporary educational environments.

The research highlighted that early interventions are necessary to prevent the perpetuation of student attitudes and strategies that hinder comprehension in later grades and negatively influence reading outcomes (Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015). The introduction of computer-assisted learning in classrooms also holds promise as a means for increasing students' engagement with reading materials as well as ability to exercise their proficiency. Although there is a need for instructors to understand the benefits of individual programs as well as the efficacy in their individual use cases, the research shows that their use in literacy interventions has positive short and long-term outcomes for learners. However, the research also posited that teachers' attitudes towards the curriculum are vital in determining their ability to apply their skills effectively when providing literacy instruction, with parental attitudes and efficacy having negligible influence on young learners' attitudes and motivation.

The program assessment report would be presented to the board, district personnel, board members, and other community stakeholders. At the building level, I would present the Principal with teacher's perspectives on professional learning and preferred literacy instructional strategies. Georgia Department of Education (2015c) details the initiative that all students will be on path to reading on grade level by third grade. The findings contributed to curriculum adoptions in reading/language arts. Stakeholders can refer to the study to assist in making decisions about quality implementation of a new program. Since there are many school districts currently using the Journeys program, other school districts nationally and internationally could benefit from the findings of the study.

### **Summary**

The literature analysis was conducted to identify publications and reports that could expound on the strategies, challenges, and other factors when implementing evidence-based literacy instruction in the primary and elementary years. Section 1 provides the problem, rationale, definitions, significance, research questions, literature review and implications for the study. The methodology, research design, participants, setting, gaining access, researcher-participant relationship, measures for ethical protection, data collection, data analysis, role of the researcher, and conclusion are explained in Section 2.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher implementation of an evidence-based early literacy program for students enrolled in a rural elementary school. The primary research question for this study was, How do teachers at Washington Elementary implement or not implement Journeys reading curriculum in their classrooms to increase literacy skills of K-3 students? I sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1. How do teachers implement the Journeys curriculum as designed into their early literacy instructional practices?

RQ2. What challenges do teachers face in implementing the Journeys curriculum with their students at Washington Elementary?

RQ3. What are teachers' perspectives on the text, technology, writing, and reading aspects of the Journeys reading curriculum?

To address the research questions in this study, I conducted a qualitative case study. A case study is a detailed exploration of a bounded system and includes in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2016). As part of my qualitative approach, I focused on teachers' perceptions on the implementation of the Journeys curriculum. The study included K-3 teachers who work with students in an elementary school. The reading levels of third-grade students are significantly lower when compared to other school districts with similar demographics. The school is classified as a Focus School by GADOE. Because of the Focus School determination, school leaders decided to implement the evidence-based Journeys reading curriculum. However, it is unknown to

what extent teachers are implementing Journeys in daily instruction. Therefore, I used a case-study design; as Creswell (2016) noted, this type of design can be used to determine meaning; examine processes; and obtain insight of an individual, group, such as teachers, or situation. Implementing an evidence-based reading program may assist in improving reading instruction and fluency for elementary students (Begeny, Laugle, Krouse, Lynn, Tayrose, & Stage, 2010).

### **Qualitative Research Design**

Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative research is used to explore a key concept, or central phenomenon, surrounding a particular problem. Creswell described qualitative research as a process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that are used to explore a specific problem. The research approach that is used to examine a research problem must fit the audience and the researcher's experiences (Creswell, 2014). When using a case-study design, observations, interviews, questionnaires, documents, and audiovisual materials can be used during data collection (Creswell, 2014). Stake (1976) identified a case study as an attempt to study the complexity of a single case and underlying activity. The study is considered a responsive educational investigation. In the formative investigation, I highlighted the perspectives of the participants while reporting the successes and failures of the program (see Stake, 1976).

### **Qualitative Approaches**

Due to the audience of the study, I opted to use a qualitative research design. The problem, purpose, and research questions were best supported by use of a qualitative

approach and case-study design. Qualitative researchers develop research questions based on observations or experiences that become the focus of the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). I conducted interviews with teachers and administrators to analyze the fidelity of implementation of the Journeys curriculum, the implementation of research-based strategies, and how the research-based Journeys strategies are used in the classroom. Qualitative methods bring the researcher in close contact with the participants to capture clear perspectives (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). After considering other methods, I concluded that a modified program formative assessment case study would best allow me to explore the research questions.

**Grounded theory.** Researchers use grounded theory to compare data collected from different interviews, field notes, or documents to derive a theory about the situation after analysis of data collection (Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010). There are three designs of grounded theory: systematic, emerging, and constructivist (Creswell, 2014). I considered grounded theory as a second option because structured interviews could also be used to collect data. However, the ultimate goal in the study did not include discovering and substantiating a theory. Thus, I opted against conducting a grounded theory study.

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is the study of everyday lived experiences (Lodico et al., 2010). In the current study participants completed one interview session. In all types of qualitative research, researchers should reflect on their own experiences and biases in order to accurately report findings (Lodico et al., 2010). The phenomenological approach does not support the collection of data at one point in time;

instead, extensive amounts of data must be collected from the participant over time (Lodico et al., 2010). Phenomenologists seek to retell an individual's story based on the individual's lived experiences (Creswell, 2016). Phenomenology is a less effective approach because researchers do not report the direct findings, instead they make inferences about the participants responses(Lodico et al., 2010).

**Ethnography.** A researcher conducting an ethnography studies a particular group of people and the way that they are molded by the experience and lives that they live (Lodico et al., 2010). Sometimes one person, called a key informant, is used to retell the history of a particular culture (Lodico et al., 2010). Even though this is a method of qualitative research, it was not appropriate for this study focusing on literacy. In the current study I did not focus on specific cultural practices or beliefs of a subgroup. In addition, ethnography requires a tremendous amount of time and personal commitment on the part of the researcher in order to develop a relationship with the participants (Lodico et al., 2010). Because of my study focus and time parameters, I opted against performing an ethnography.

**Case study.** I conducted a modified program formative assessment case study to explore whether teachers at the study site are implementing the evidence-based Journeys reading curriculum as prescribed. A case study is a detailed exploration of a bounded system and includes in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2016). The study site was bounded by virtue of its being the only elementary school in the district that was classified as a Focus School because of 3 years of low student achievement in reading. According to Stake (2006), qualitative studies can be bounded when they are related to

specific issues. The modified program formative assessment case study was conducted to explore to what extent teachers at Washington Elementary were implementing early literacy instruction as prescribed in the Journeys reading program.

The study included K-3 teachers who teach students in a rural elementary school. Case study research is designed to determine meaning, examine processes, and obtain insight of an individual, group, such as teachers, or situation (Creswell, 2016). Implementing an evidence-based reading program may assist in improving reading instruction and student's fluency for elementary students (Begeny, et al., 2010). In this study, teacher's implementation of early literacy instruction through the use of the Journeys reading program was explored. Case studies focus on specific characteristics of the person or program being studied (Lodico et al., 2010). Comprehensive interviews were conducted in an attempt to determine the fidelity of Journeys implementation by reading teachers at Washington Elementary. The curriculum has been in place for 4 years without significant improvements in students' reading achievement. In addition, there has not been a formal program evaluation conducted within the school.

### **Program Site**

I conducted the research in an elementary school in South Georgia. To ensure confidentiality, the pseudonym *Washington Elementary School* is used throughout the study. When reviewing students' reading strengths and weaknesses an online system called Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) was used (Renaissance Learning, 2015). During the 2016-2017 school term, Washington Elementary Media Specialist administered the STAR assessment to 90 third graders. The leadership team

analyzed the performance report from the STAR assessment and the median scaled score was 250 (P. Johnson, personal communication, January 19, 2017). According to Renaissance Learning (2015) third grade students should score within the range of 347-474 to be considered on grade level.

Washington Elementary School Improvement Plan outlines English/Language Arts as a primary focus area for school improvement due to STAR assessment data (T. Ware, personal communication, January 10, 2017). The leadership team at Washington Elementary School discusses reading progress according to STAR assessment in the monthly agendas and minutes. Ensuring effective early reading instruction is important because of the high number of elementary students who fail to achieve basic reading levels (Al Otaiba, Folsom, Wanzek, Greulich, Waesche, Schatschneider, & Connor, 2016).

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling entails researchers intentionally selecting individuals to better understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). Each of the participants was an educator at Washington Elementary where K-3 students are being served. The selected individuals have worked with the Journeys reading program for at least one full school term and currently teach reading. A detailed process was used to analyze the data in order to describe, compare, and interpret the participant's reactions and responses (Fink, 2016).

Washington Elementary School, which serves Grades PreK-5, served as the host site for the data collection. Out of the twenty K-3 teachers, a sample size of 11 educators met the aforementioned criteria to be interviewed for the study, including the Principal



and Reading Instructional Coach. Creswell (2014) suggests that using a smaller number of participants contributes to a more manageable study. The participants were asked to participate in a voluntary interview and sign a consent form that indicated that they could opt out at any time (Appendix D). The initial phase of the study was completed within one semester. Purposeful sampling was used to select teachers from Grades K-3. Additionally, educators had to have at least 1 full year of experience in working with the Journeys curriculum to participate in the study. The criteria for participation was not adjusted because I was able to recruit the desired sample size (see Appendix C).

### **Researcher-Participant Relationship**

The largest part of the case study was collection of data from the participant interviews. Therefore, effective communication and a professional working relationship was established. I was previously employed by the school system in the role of a teacher without a supervisory role. Some of the participants were former colleagues who already had a trusting relationship with me.

In the email correspondence and written letter (see Appendix C), it was clearly explained that the necessary steps would be taken to ensure that individuals were not easily identified by their responses (Lodico, et al., 2010). I omitted demographic information and stressed to the participants that they could withdraw at any time (Lodico, et al., 2010). Creswell (2016) believes the type of information a participant discloses during an interview is dependent on the quality of his/her relationship with the interviewer. When the data was reported, the educator's name was removed and letters were assigned (e.g., Teacher A) and referred to throughout the study.

### **Gaining Access and Ethical Considerations**

Before beginning the interviews, permission was obtained from the school district and the participants. Once the Institutional Review Board for Walden University approved the study (Appendix I), informed consent forms were given to the Principal of Washington Elementary School. Further measures such as explaining the research, identifying risks, maintaining confidentiality, and providing informed consent were taken (Appendix D) (Patton, 2002). There were minimal anticipated risks to a participant in this study. All demographic information was removed from the collected data and pseudonyms were assigned. Participants were informed that the study was completely voluntary, and withdrawal can occur at any time.

According to Creswell (2016) the gatekeeper must be provided with information such as:

- Reasons for choosing the study
- What will be the focus of the study?
- How will the results be used and reported?
- What will the participants or other individuals gain from participating?

Students were not allowed to participate in the study. To meet IRB requirements for protection of human subjects protecting human subjects, I completed National Institutes of Health (NIH) training and received a certificate of completion (Appendix E).

Participants were provided several protections during the study beginning with their identity remaining confidential.

## **Data Collection**

I based the interview questions on my review of relevant literature. Thirteen semistructured, open-ended questions were asked of the teachers and 12 questions of administrators within a 45-60-minute time frame. After transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were compared against the audiotape for accuracy. It is important to check the accuracy of the interviews using member checking and triangulation (Creswell, 2014). At the end of each interview, I emailed a copy of the transcription results to the participants to verify their own responses. The participants were also asked to check for viability of the findings in their setting. I provided interviewees an open invitation to discuss the findings after the interviews. I ensured accurate recording of information on the interview form that was processed through Google Documents. The audio recordings were played back within 24 hours after each interview to compare with the typed data. Participants will have access to the final publication of the research study (Patton, 2002).

The setting for the 45-60-minute, open-ended questioning session was in the school's Media Center for the teachers and in each administrator's office. The goal was to allow the interviewee to select the location to ensure comfort and transparency. The time periods included both before and after school. Qualitative research is most effective when conducted in the natural setting (Lodico et al., 2010).

## **Interviews**

**Justification and appropriateness.** Interviews were appropriate for the qualitative study in order to gain a teacher's perspective. The interview questions created natural conversation while using sub questions to provide clarification as needed (Lodico,

et al., 2010). In the case study the interview was the main data collection tool of the study (Lodico, et al., 2010). I allowed the participants to express their responses in detail during the interview. The interviews supported the purpose of the study by exploring teacher implementation of an evidence-based early literacy program for students enrolled in a rural elementary school.

**Source of interview questions.** The interview questions were derived directly from the research questions of the study. I created questions that dealt directly with teacher fidelity in implementation of the Journeys reading curriculum and literacy skills of primary age students. The questions examined teachers' views on research-based strategies and barriers in providing effective literacy instruction. Creswell (2014) asserts the interview should not be illustrative, but reflective and critical. Interviews were appropriate in the case study because the necessary information was collected from the participants. Through careful listening, the researcher gained knowledge that would not be acquired through other methods like observations or questionnaires (Stake, 2006). By using reflective notes, the quality and relevancy of responses were immediately determined. An advantage for the interviewer was the control over the types of information obtained due to the type of questions used (Lodico, et al., 2010).

**Collecting and recording data.** I received permission from Washington Elementary School's Principal for written permission to conduct the research (Appendix B) before contacting the teachers. An email was the first method of communication with selected participants after I received IRB approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (Approval No. 11-15-18-0554697). Members of the IRB reviewed the

application and all supporting documents to ensure that all ethical issues were addressed before the data collection began (Lodico et al., 2010). I did not begin the data collection process until IRB approval was received. During our first meeting at a faculty meeting, I explained the study and its completely voluntary nature. I also announced that participants could withdraw at any time for any reason. When collecting data, it was important that I maintain a transparent relationship with the participants (Lodico et al., 2010). In a descriptive letter, potential risks and planned safeguards were identified (Appendix D). Participants were notified that an audio recorder and hand-written notes would be taken during the interview (Appendix D). I informed participants that a transcript and copy of the audio would be provided to the participants upon request. All necessary forms were emailed to the school's Principal. I asked for the written consent forms to be signed within 5 days (Appendix D). I visited the school to collect the signed consent forms from the Principal after the 5-day time frame.

**Generating and gathering data.** A logical plan must be in place in order to collect and gather data (Lodico et al., 2010). Participants were given 45-60 minutes to respond to the same interview questions. Each participant answered the questions without hesitation or refusal. By using the semi-structured protocol, I was able to change the order of the questions, omit questions, or change wording if needed during the interview (Lodico, et al., 2010). However, I maintained a specific list of questions that was covered with each educator. Fink (2016) explained, participants should be interviewed alone to avoid any violations of privacy that could alter the results. A mini tape recorder was used to record verbal responses from the participant. Audiotapes can be helpful in establishing

consistency when conducting interviews and were used during the interviews (Lodico, et al., 2010).

**System for tracking data.** I used both hand-written and electronic methods to record data. Google Docs was used to maintain notes electronically. I used a personal reflective journal to record all provided information while comparing the collected notes to the research questions. Summary write-ups and transcripts included labels, codes, and notes (Creswell, 2014). Emerging themes, key concepts and ideas were color-coded using a Google Sheets to easily track data. As recurring themes were noticed, different colors were used to highlight that text. The themes were combined to five broad categories. According to Creswell (2014) five to seven themes are adequate to discuss the findings of the study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I am employed with an elementary school system in Southwest Georgia, not Washington Elementary. My role is as a second-year assistant principal. I deal directly with curriculum development and instruction within my building. I did not have any current work-related connections to Washington Elementary. However, I was a fifth-grade teacher within the school 3 years ago. At that time, I did not hold any leadership nor supervision positions. Walden's research guidelines were adhered to in order to prevent biases. One step includes using member checks and a peer-debriefer to maintain bias-free perspectives (Lodico et al., 2010). A peer-debriefer was obtained to review the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy and identify any biases within the data. Creswell (2016) defines a peer-debriefer as a colleague who works with the research to provide

impartial views of the study. The person who assumed this role was a certified teacher within the research setting who did not participate in the interviews. The participants had the opportunity to make any clarifying statements or corrections. They would also be able to review the audio recording if requested. I provided all pertinent information to the participants to help increase credibility and trustworthiness within the study. In addition, I maintained a professional demeanor during the process and kept personal beliefs and ideas to myself.

### **Data Analysis**

I collected data from participants and completed the data analysis process. The interview transcripts were reviewed closely, and themes developed based on the framework. In qualitative research, it is important to record and examine themes relating to the research questions (Creswell, 2016). Interview data that is aligned with the conceptual framework was grouped and categorized using coding through NVivo qualitative analysis software. I provided clarification to the participants whenever one of the questions was confusing or too difficult to provide an accurate response (Lodico et al., 2010). Representing the finding through the use of narratives and visuals could be beneficial for the audience (Creswell, 2014).

### **Coding Data**

I organized the field notes collected from the interviews and used NVivo analysis software to assist in locating repeated terms or codes. Furthermore, I analyzed all of the data while comparing it to key categories in the conceptual framework to develop common themes. It was important that I read through all of the information several times

to make sense of it. Next, codes and themes concerning literacy development were created to tell a detailed story. A priori codes were established based on the conceptual framework and open codes followed. The participants' responses were compared in order to identify similar and common themes. Responses were also used to maintain focus on the evaluation of the Journeys reading alignment with research-based instructional strategies. I remained open to all answers and all responses in order to identify themes as they emerged. Reoccurring ideas from the participants allowed for combination of themes in coding process. Interview data was organized into tables/charts and the information was reviewed several times to assist with increasing the validity of the questions/responses. Coding is a process that describes categories that can be used to organize data collected from the interviews (Lodico et al., 2010). Open coding could assist in developing sub-themes. Specific themes and patterns were displayed to address the research questions. The information was represented in a table format (see Table 3).

### **Accuracy and Credibility**

The goal in the project study was to determine if it measured the research topic as intended. Semi-structured interviews were used as the key source of data. Accurate and well-defined research questions as well as consistent methodology allow for credibility in research (Yin, 2014). The questions included in the study derived from the conceptual framework. All information relates to the research questions and aligns with the purpose of exploring teacher implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. Member checks and peer-debriefing were used to clarify and ensure accuracy of data that is collected (Creswell, 2016).



### **Discrepant Cases**

Reporting of discrepancies were identified through peer-debriefing and member-checks (Yin, 2014) for interviews. All contradicting information was presented within the study to increase the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2016). I also documented information that did not align with common themes. I did not force codes to fit into a specific category. With peer-debriefing, the researcher and external source met to note any discrepancies that did not support the patterns and themes deriving from data analysis for interviews and observations. However, the participants had very similar responses where no discrepant cases were found. During the member-checks, participants were able to review what they said during interviews. There was no edits nor additional interviewing needed after the process was completed.

### **Limitations**

Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers. In qualitative research personal biases and the researcher's level of expertise in the field can skew findings in one way or another (Creswell, 2014). However, qualitative methods could be more easily influenced by the researcher's biases (Creswell, 2014). I omitted biases by maintaining an open and transparent study with all participants. Depending on the objective of the study, qualitative research may not fully answer all research questions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). The number of participants in the study was a considerably small sample, however, considering the small size of the school it was sufficient (Creswell, 2014). The findings of the study would have been more difficult and time consuming to characterize

in a visual way if a quantitative method was employed (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

### **Data Analysis Results**

Eleven teachers and administrators agreed to participate in the study. Each participant had at least 1 year of experience with Journeys and currently taught reading. An initial email was sent to prospective participants providing a general overview of the study a request to participate in the study. The researcher sent consent forms to each staff member who agreed to participate in the study: The form explained the study in detail and highlighted the risks and benefits of participation. The teacher interview protocol contained 13 open-ended questions and the administrator interview protocol included 11 semi-structured questions. Participant responses were recorded using an audio recorder and transcribed using NVivo qualitative analysis software. Before coding, a data analysis form was created to summarize the main point of the participants (see Appendix G). Google Sheets was used to color-code and highlight common themes. Once all surveys were collected, data were recorded into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

### **Patterns, Relationships, and Themes**

Eleven participants – nine teachers and two administrators – completed the 45-60 minutes interview process. The data illustrated varied responses regarding teachers' implementation of the Journeys reading curriculum and barriers that existed. Patterns, relationships, and themes are discussed as aligned to the three research questions that guided this study:

1. How do teachers implement the Journeys curriculum as designed into their

early literacy instructional practices?

2. What challenges do teachers face in implementing the Journeys curriculum with their students at Washington Elementary?

3. What are teacher's perspectives on the text, technology, writing, and reading aspects of the Journeys reading curriculum?

**RQ1: Incorporation of Journeys curriculum into early literacy instructional practices.** About half of the teachers felt that the Journeys curriculum helped them provide quality instruction in their classrooms. Four of the nine participants consistently implemented key components of Journeys as designed within daily instruction: phonics, spelling, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teachers E, F, and I shared that “evidence-based literacy instruction takes place during the 120-minute reading block where small groups and whole groups are held. I also used an instructional framework that included an opening, work session, and closing” (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Other components that participants shared included gradual release model, websites, goal setting, and simply following the Journeys script.

*Phonics skill development.* Teachers and administrators described the school as highly dependent on phonics instruction. It seemed very important that teachers used a variety of research-based strategies for teaching reading and writing. Strand 4 of Journeys curriculum is aligned with phonics skill development. Phonics is key in acquiring comprehension skills (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). However, some teachers used resources that were not aligned with Journeys nor research-based. Teachers expressed

various ways in which they used materials and instructional components from the Journeys curriculum. Other teachers used trade books, flash cards, sound cards, games to supplement Journeys. Teacher C stated, “When teaching phonics: sing-alongs, sound cards, and picture match games reach more learners” (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Teacher D explained, “When using videos and pictures to teach sounds, students are able to comprehend and catch on the very first time” (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Explicit phonics instruction should occur in a variety of reading and writing activities (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 1999). Three teachers described Saxon Phonics as the resource they pair with Journeys for the acquisition of phonics skills. Administrator A stated, “Most of our teachers in the early grades depend heavily on Saxon Phonics” (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

*Differentiation.* Differentiation seemed to be a critical part of reading instruction to the participants. Varied approaches are supported by authors who believed that teachers should differentiate phonics instruction according to student ability and assessment results (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 1999). Administrator B demonstrated support for a scripted program that allows for flexibility according to student’s needs and expressed how appealing it was to have differentiation built into the program. Six of the teachers recognized the need to provide targeted one-on-one or small group instruction to students who needed differentiation. Teachers C, E, and I agreed that students should be grouped according to reading data within flexible groups.

Differentiation techniques for each strand are predesigned in the Journeys curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

*Supporting struggling readers.* Both administrators noted that Journeys supports students by providing early literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Administrator A stated, “Journeys helps develop fluent readers who are able to comprehend grade-leveled text. Some students are able to read, but struggle with comprehension.” All teachers agreed that there are students who struggle in literacy on a daily basis, and therefore, teachers should provide strategies to ensure student improvement. Teachers A, C, and E believed that students could improve their literacy skills through increased support in phonics, sight words, and vocabulary. Reteach activities and additional strategies are included in each strand to support students who are struggling (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Teacher C stated, “I teach phonics every day because this is the foundation for everything to come. Students have a better chance of becoming great readers if they are good in phonics” (personal communication, November 26, 2018).

*Student engagement in phonics instruction.* Six of the nine teachers described student engagement during phonics instruction as high. Teacher B stated, “When the Phonics Strand is implemented as prescribed students are highly interested in the activities” (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Journeys contains a variety of word recognition and phonics activities to increase student engagement (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Games, music, and student-teacher interactions were some of the resources that teachers felt maintain student engagement. Two teachers noted limited

student engagement due to the implementation method. Teacher E explained, “phonics is not included for the third-grade students I teach” (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

*Monitoring and support for teachers.* Administrators understood that Journeys is a component of the core curriculum at Washington Elementary. Therefore, consistent monitoring and evaluation must occur. Administrator A pointed out, “Walk throughs and formal evaluations must occur to support teachers while giving constructive feedback” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). The participants use Teachers Keys Effectiveness System and Journeys checklists on a regular basis. Administrator B said, “All teachers will receive a minimum of two observations, others may have up to six during the school year. The difference in the number of observations depends on years of experience in the current position and previous performance reviews” (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

All of the teachers used the Journeys program for teaching reading; however, with uneven implementation of the Journeys program as designed. Most teachers continued reliance on other texts such as Saxon Phonics to guide reading instruction. When teachers do not implement the program according to guidelines, professional development for effective implementation may be required (Coles-Hart, 2016). However, the administrators believed that the Journeys curriculum was being used as the basis for instruction in the classroom.

### **RQ2: Challenges to Journeys curriculum implementation.**

*District mandate.* Both administrators were very vocal and supportive of the district's mandate for the implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. Administrator A had only served as an administrator for 2 years at Washington Elementary Schools; however, Administrator B had worked at Washington Elementary since the initial adoption. According to Administrator A, "There were no other options presented. We have to use the program on a daily basis" (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Administrator B added, "Before Journeys, teachers implemented the state's standards with Open Court as the main resource" (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

*Implementation.* When comparing instruction at Washington Elementary to Journeys guidelines, administrators wanted more teachers to model Journeys in their classrooms. Administrator A described the use of teacher-made resources and websites. Some teachers believed that they were providing quality evidence-based literacy instruction before Journeys implementation. Teachers A, C, and H preferred using their own resources and did not believe Journeys was a better program for literacy development. Teacher A found that "implementation of Journeys reading curriculum made their instruction cookie-cutter. There is not enough flexibility in the scripted lessons to fully address all of the standards" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). However, Journeys is designed based on Common Core standards that the Georgia Standards of Excellence were derived (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Sufficient time for implementation was also identified as a challenge for Teachers B, F, and I. Locating or deciding what evidence-based resources to use were presented as challenges for four of the nine teachers. Administrators agreed that there were challenges when

requiring educators to provide evidence-based literacy instruction. Administrator A and B were in sync when identifying teacher buy-in as a challenge. It is critical that barriers to implementation are removed. Some barriers to quality implementation may include: lack of training, limited resources, and time (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). Administrator A stated, “Journeys is not preferred for the teaching of phonics. Most teachers are still using Saxon Phonics during instruction” (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

*Lack of implementation guidelines.* Both administrators realized that a formal, step-by-step process had not been shared with teachers during the 2018-2019 school year. Administrator A stated, “We need to go back to review expectations for the implementation of Journeys. Curriculum implementation guidelines should be established once the program is introduced (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). I know how I want the instruction to look, but teachers need a clear guide on the procedures” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). “We want teachers to use Journeys instructional framework that includes an opening, work session, and closing,” Administrator A explained (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Administrator B noted the desire for teachers to serve as a facilitator of student learning instead of a lecturer.

*Differentiation.* Three teachers found difficulty integrating Journeys differentiation component. Teacher B stated, “I go directly by the script, therefore no differentiation is needed nor required” (personal communication, November 26, 2018). On the other hand, Teacher D understood that Journeys included accommodations but could not provide a clear strategy that was implemented in the classroom. Teacher H described Common Core Coach Books as her go-to for instruction and differentiation.



Based on their responses, it appeared that Teachers B, D, and H did not fully understand the differentiation component or did not accurately implement the program. Teacher G did not feel that Journeys was an adequate first-level intervention for students. The teacher preferred using a separate approach called RtI. The teacher explained,

I develop Response to Intervention (RtI) plans for students who are struggling. I meet with the Student Support Team (SST) to determine specific intervention that will address the student's area of weakness. RtI could be implemented but not as the first level of intervention. (Teacher G, personal communication, November 27, 2018)

*Benefits for the target population.* Six of the nine teacher participants felt that the Journeys curriculum benefitted the target population; however, Teachers E and I answered “yes” on the condition of daily and effective implementation of the program. The Journeys curriculum includes activities for students in Grades K-6 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

According to Teacher G, “Journeys is beneficial when supplemental materials are used in conjunction with the curriculum” (personal communication, November 27, 2018). The three teachers who responded negatively explained that Journeys is aligned with Common Core Standards (CCS) not the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE); however, GSE are derived from CCS and should include the core reading concepts for early literacy.

*Collaboration.* Six of the nine teachers agreed that there was very little collaboration occurring among the reading teachers within their grade level and/or across

the school. According to Teacher A, “How can the reading department be on one accord without meeting? Collaboration should be held weekly during planning time. We need clear goals, resources, and next steps in order to implement any reading program”

Participant F stated, “Collaborative planning is held, but not specifically for improving Journeys implementation” (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Sometimes teachers did not like to share what was occurring in their classes. However, all participants agreed that collaboration is critical to improving Journeys instruction. The integration of collaborative learning is a key component of Journeys (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

*Professional development support.* Out of the nine teachers, only one seemed to have received ongoing professional learning in literacy instruction. Participant E shared with me that she volunteers for training throughout the year to remain abreast on all things reading. The remaining teachers received very little training concerning Journeys. Five teachers stated that they received one training and would like more. All teachers wanted more training from the Reading Coach or a Journeys representative. Teacher A only participated in online trainings or webinars. Administrators echoed teachers’ sentiments that increased, ongoing professional learning was needed to improve implementation. Reading coaches, Journeys representatives, and team leaders have provided training to teachers in the past; however, most teachers have received only one or two trainings in evidence-based literacy instruction. In a recent study, authors concluded that teacher professional development was effective in improving student deficits in reading (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, Haerens, & Aelterman, 2016).

Administrator A admitted, “Sometimes we have not provided quality training for new teachers. It is crucial that we begin with training so that we can get the results we desire” (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Administrator B agreed that training was key to proper implementation: “in order for any new or older program to be implemented effectively, ongoing training is needed” (personal communication, November 26, 2018).

Administrators recognized that while teachers were mandated by the district to implement Journeys, actual implementation of the program varied in terms of degree of implementation. Both teachers and administrators agreed that lack of training in the use of Journeys was the greatest challenge in implementing the program with fidelity. Among other challenges cited by teachers were lack of some Journeys materials, uneven belief in the Journeys program to meet the needs of students, and belief that they needed to continue with other in place reading programs.

### **RQ3: Perspectives on text, technology, writing and reading.**

*Journeys strands and student growth.* Administrator A described the mastery of Journeys strands as the objectives and goals of Journeys: “Following the program as prescribed is the key to reaching our goals” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Administrator A believed that evidence-based literacy instruction could result in a 4% increase in English/Language Arts scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment “with that improvement, students reading Lexile range will also increase” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). When following the Journeys curriculum as prescribed, student achievement can be easily measured (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). The 4% increase in English/Language Arts is an academic performance goal

outlined in Washington Elementary School Improvement Plan for the 2018-2019 school term. Both administrators were adamant about the need for improvement in literacy. Administrator B stated, “We are ultimately measured by our CCRPI (College Career Readiness Performance Index) score. We identified CCRPI improvement by 4 points as a goal in the school’s and district’s improvement plans” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Administrator B explained, “We know that what we are doing is working when students are demonstrating growth in reading” (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

*Technology integration.* Administrator B identified technology use as a necessary component of effective instruction as outlined in the Journeys program. Both administrators felt that teachers were overall competent in implementing technology. Strand 2 of the Journeys curriculum includes interactive components as an integral part of reading instruction (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b). Administrator A explained, “We have at least 2-3 very proficient teachers on each grade-level team. When technology problems exist, they readily assist the other staff member” (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Administrators have seen teachers using e-Books, interactive lesson plans, and Promethean board activities used with Journeys. Four of the nine participants described their level of proficiency as very proficient. Teacher E stated, “I use the technology component daily because of the eBooks and interactive lesson planning features in the teacher’s guide for implementing Journeys” (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Four other teachers explained that they were proficient once given an overview. Teacher H was the only participant who was uncomfortable with

technology: “I’m not proficient nor familiar with the technology components of Journeys” (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

*Integration of reading and writing strands.* Teachers C and I suggested that integrating reading and writing in subjects such as Social Studies and Science provides a cross-curricular approach to literacy development. Two of the nine teachers did not implement the writing strand because they felt it was too weak and felt as if it was not aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence. However, Journeys framework illustrates alignment to state standards. Multiple teachers believed that after rituals and routines are established modeling, small group instruction, and explicit teaching must occur to address Journeys reading and writing strands. Strand 3 of Journeys aligns with teacher’s perspectives by including student collaboration in the integration of reading and writing (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017b).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher implementation of Journeys, an evidence-based early literacy program for students enrolled in a rural elementary school. Eleven participants – nine teachers and two administrators – were interviewed to determine how teachers at Washington Elementary School implemented the Journeys reading curriculum in their classrooms to increase the literacy skills of K-3 students. The following themes emerged in alignment with the three guiding questions for this study.

**RQ1: Incorporation of Journeys curriculum into early literacy instructional practices.** Overall, the data illustrated that phonics instruction was highly regarded at

Washington Elementary School. Teacher interviews support the continuation of part of Journeys but also other programs such as Saxon Phonics to assist with phonics skill development. Instruction typically occurred during the 120-minute reading block during small group and whole group time. Teachers B, C, G, and H incorporated various materials and instructional components from the Journeys curriculum, including trade books, flash cards, sound cards, videos and games. They also explained the importance of phonics, spelling, and comprehension when implementing Journeys. Teachers expressed a variety of misconceptions concerning how Journeys strands should be implemented. Teachers A and D stated, “I just teach the concepts the way that I know how to teach them” (personal communication, November 26, 2018). They did not understand the district’s expectations for Journeys implementation. Teacher E only used the informal and formal assessment techniques incorporated in Journeys. However, teacher F only implemented the small group component of Journeys. Lastly, Teacher I used the bare minimum of the Journeys program by providing students with informational texts.

Differentiation, flexible grouping, high student engagement, and support for struggling readers were key aspects of the Journeys program that were appreciated by some teachers and administrators. TKES and Journeys checklists were used by administrators to monitor implementation and provide support to teachers. Other teachers tended to use web-based resources, teacher-made items, outdated reading material, and other sources that may not be supported by research.

Administrators were more positive than teachers concerning the Journeys program’s potential for increasing student test grades in reading. Most of the teachers

felt that overall Journeys benefited students; however, they also believed that there was a need to supplement Journeys with other materials in order to adequately address the Georgia State Standards of Excellence. Teachers who regularly used the technology component of Journeys thought this was a valuable addition for teaching reading; however, at least one teacher did not use the technology resources of Journeys at all. The comfort level of teachers in using the technology component may reflect the limited professional development teachers received in implementing Journeys. One teacher supported the Journeys program and implemented the program as designed. However, based on the teacher reports the Journeys curriculum was not consistently incorporated as designed into the early literacy instructional program in Washington Elementary School.

**RQ2: Challenges to Journeys curriculum implementation.** Administrators cited the district mandate to implement the Journeys curriculum as a challenge to implementation because there were no other options presented. Teacher buy-in was a major challenge as well. Most teachers preferred to use their own resources instead of or in addition to the Journeys materials. Teachers also believed that Journeys was not significantly better than their previous instructional practices. Therefore, some teachers used their own practices and buy-in was not achieved. Administrators believed that clear expectations on implementation and adequate professional development were not made available to teachers and, as a result, full buy-in and participation were not achieved. Collaboration and training were key challenges teacher faced in implementing the Journeys curriculum with their students at Washington Elementary. Six teachers

discussed the need for effective collaboration and seven expressed that their concerns about the lack of training.

All of the teachers used the Journeys program to some degree for teaching reading; however, with uneven implementation of the Journeys program as designed, most teachers continued reliance on other texts such as Saxon to supplement reading instruction. The administrators believed that the mandated Journeys program was being used as the basis for instruction in the classroom. The greatest challenge to implementation voiced by teachers was lack of a formal and consistent professional development program.

**RQ3: Perspectives on texts, technology, writing and reading.** The reading and writing strands of the Journeys curriculum were viewed by some teachers as not well aligned with the Georgia State Standards of Excellence. Teachers made individual decisions concerning how and when to incorporate the Journeys program in their classrooms. Technology proficiency was high among Washington Elementary teachers. Journeys Strand 2, technology integration, was implemented with proficiency. Thematic patterns across research questions included the inconsistent understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction, lack of collaborative planning, continued focus on phonics beyond that in Journeys requiring the use of other texts and materials, technology integration, and lack of teacher buy-in in regard to Journeys (Table 3). Findings aligned with the conceptual framework of emergent literacy theory where instructional practices and the awareness of how the role of teachers contribute to effective instruction, as summarized in Table 3 (Clay, 1972).



Table 3

*Summary of Themes*

| Theme | Description  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Inconsistent understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction  |
| 2     | Lack of teacher buy-in   |
| 3     | Phonics and technology integration are important parts of Journeys |
| 4     | Importance of collaborative planning                               |
| 5     | Professional learning and training is needed                       |

Quality literacy instruction is critical to student success and school personnel must work to remove all barriers. When implementing a new curriculum, teachers and administrators are faced with the difficult task of integrating new content and teaching practices into the reading program. Insufficient and inconsistent professional development for new program implementation leads to low levels of teacher support for the program, continuation of previous programs and inconsistent reading instruction across the school. The planned project - a 3-day professional development training – is designed to provide the training of teachers in the purposes, processes, and strategies needed to effectively and consistently implement the research-based Journeys program. Section 3 of this project study further explains the project rationale, timeline, and goals.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

I aligned the project with the needs of Washington Elementary School, the study findings, and the current literature. Five themes emerged from analysis of the data collected from Washington Elementary School teachers. The participants expressed the need for further and consistent staff development to increase understanding of the Journeys evidence-based literacy. Using study findings, I developed a professional learning project to support the training needs of the Washington Elementary School staff in regard to implementing the Journeys program (see Appendix A). The project includes 3 full days of learning about quality evidence-based literacy instruction.

I developed the project based on a thorough analysis of participant data which provided insight on how best to address the needs of the school and its teachers. In Section 3, I provide details on the rationale as well as a review of studies from the literature in support of the project. The literature review focuses on preferred formats for training, content-specific professional development, and recommended deliverables for optimal learning outcomes. Section 3 also includes a project description with goals, an evaluation plan, and a discussion of project implications.

### **Goals of the Project**

The key goal of the project is to provide support to promote high-quality implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. Another goal of the project is to provide an understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction. It is also important that alignment between the Georgia Standards of Excellence (CITE) and Journeys is

demonstrated. Last, literacy strategies and best practices will be identified through implementation of the project. Some interview participants described little to no training in evidence-based literacy instruction. At the end of the training, participants should be able to explain the framework behind Journeys.

### **Review of the Literature**

When a new program or curriculum in a school is implemented, adequate training must be provided (Stake, 2006). Findings from my semistructured interviews with Washington Elementary School staff support that quality professional learning must be provided to successfully implement evidence-based literacy instruction. To research the need for professional development, I conducted extensive searches of Walden University's database using Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and EBSCO Host services. The search yielded various results when using the following terms to locate articles, dissertations, and academic journals: *professional learning, professional learning implementation, peer collaboration, teachers and professional development, effective professional development, staff development, and professional learning communities.*

### **Learning**

To design an effective learning experience for adults, it is first important to understand how adults learn. Over the last few decades, researchers have discussed how adult learners bring unique circumstances to various educational experiences. Learning can be thought of as a type of biochemical change that occurs in the learner (Goodnough,

2018). Educators normally assume that the change is positive and permanent, at least until new knowledge replaces what was just acquired (Goodnough, 2018).

There is a constant need for educators to develop and define their professional skills through active learning. Some experts argue that collaborative learning is the most effective approach to improving teacher quality. According to Baird and Clark (2018), continuing education in the form of professional learning is measurable and specific. Educators are faced with the task of continuously improving their practice. Educators who life-long learners continue to improve by including theory and practice in their instruction (Baird & Clark, 2018).

### **Traditional Professional Learning**

Much professional learning continues to focus on training techniques that do not always lead to workplace performance (Goodnough, 2018). In traditional professional development, the workshop is one of the most common formats; the program takes place outside the workplace at a specific time and is always facilitated by perceived experts in that given field (Goodnough, 2018). There are other types of professional development that have the same basic features; they include conferences, institutes, and courses. These types of professional learning programs are called *empty vessel models* (Goodnough, 2018). The reason for this terminology is these behaviorist models are based on outside authorities making decisions about what information should be included in professional development rather than giving voice to those who shall be engaging in the professional learning program (Goodnough, 2018). Teachers and administrators are responsible for acquiring the knowledge needed to improve student performance. This structure of

professional learning and development often results in professionals feeling as if their needs and ideas are not respected and becoming disenfranchised with the professional learning and development process (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). This, in turn, allows the outside authorities to set the standard and even the expectations for the program despite the fact that outsiders do not always have all answers. Therefore, as much as outsiders' ideas should be taken into consideration when appropriate, they should only serve as supportive resources to what the experienced professional brings to the program (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).

Furthermore, many professional learning programs do not acknowledge moment-to-moment learning which professionals actively acquire through a broad range of experience. Adult learners usually possess job-related knowledge and bring their own individual perceptions and experiences to a professional development session (Easton, 2015). According to Easton (2015), there is a need for professionals to be updated with regards to standards; therefore, future professional learning should also focus on a more holistic model in which formalized professional development courses are considered important. By taking these steps, professional development would result in a more authentic professional learning experience and perhaps should be termed *professional learning* rather than *professional development* (Easton, 2015).

Although many adult learners have found life experiences to be useful in navigating many aspects of their daily lives, these experiences are not always sufficient in helping them in their professional lives. Being aware of this gap in their knowledge and skillset helps adults acknowledge the need for professional learning experiences. Framing

this need in terms of how the adult learner can see the benefits that will result from the new learning strategies is a key requirement of adult learning (Baird & Clark, 2018).

Workshops with no follow-up sessions are considered less effective due to insufficient time for useful content and various important activities to be studied (Baird & Clark, 2018). The use of workshops to provide professional development often leads to little or no change in professional strategies or knowledge, according to (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). By giving the adult learner time for repetition in learning and practicing new strategies, the internal competition between the life experiences and learning strategies are minimized (Easton, 2015).

Well-planned professional development and learning workshops can be effective if the focus is knowledge acquisition and practical application. However, many workshops have not met these criteria and are not considered by many to be effective professional development forms (Baird & Clark, 2018). The lack of efficacy in workshops has led to the exploration of alternative forms of professional development. A larger focus has been placed on workshops that occur in the workplace during regular work hours. Having on-site professional development sessions provide a more contextual experience and often demonstrates more meaningful professional techniques and strategies that may be retained longer and utilized more than those which are presented during a traditional professional learning program.

### **Models of Professional Learning**

The preponderance of the literature regarding professional development authors explore professional development in the field of education. However, even up until the

beginning of the 21st century, there had been little systematic research probing the efficacy of professional development programs in the teaching field.

Minimal research was conducted on the effects of alternative forms to the traditional professional development models that were normally used. Fundamentally, any type of educational or training program should be based on the needs of the learner. The needs can be related to professional, personal, religious, social, cultural, or other intrinsic individual needs and serve as a motivator to engage in learning (Baird, 2018).

A number of models for effective professional learning have recently been developed, based on the analysis of the research that has been done in this field. Below are some eight professional development models:

1. The Award-bearing Model: Two-edged sword due to the emphasis on a quality program that is validated by an institution such as a university, this also means the content is controlled by outside experts (Baird & Clark, 2018).
2. The Deficit Model: Addresses perceived weaknesses in the professional and may be used in the context of performance management suggest no clear expectations set for improved and/or competent performance (Baird & Clark, 2018).
3. The Cascade Model: A small number of professionals attend the professional development session and they are responsible for disseminating the session content to other professionals (Baird & Clark, 2018). Usually focuses on skills and knowledge, but not values.

4. The Standards-based Model: Focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills, which will result in meeting specified outcomes and usually ignoring any type of collegiate learning/sharing (Baird & Clark, 2018).
5. The Coaching/Mentoring Model: Defined by an important one-on-one relationship between two professionals, often with one being a novice and the other an expert, although some are based on relatively equal professional experience (Baird & Clark, 2018).
6. The Community of Practice Model: Similar to the coaching/mentoring model described above, but usually includes groups of professionals rather than pairs (Baird & Clark, 2018). Depending on the individual, this could result in a very proactive or passive experience.
7. The Action Research Model: Participants themselves research their understanding of the professional situation in question with a view to improving it, giving the professionals more control and direction to their professional development programs (Baird & Clark, 2018).
8. The Transformative Model: Relies on a number of different aspects of the previous seven models that support a transformative agenda (Baird & Clark, 2018).

There are also other professional learning models, for example, the model that created teaching communities in schools. These communities consisted of expert teachers who served as mentors and advisors to novice teachers by sharing with the novices the strategies and techniques they found to be effective through their years of experience.



This model was termed the “collaborative apprenticeship” model and was composed of four phases. During the introduction phase, the expert teacher would present and model his/her strategies to the novice teacher, then both would discuss and reflect on the experience (Labone & Long, 2016). This was followed by the developmental phase in which the expert teacher actively helped the novice teacher acquire skills and strategies by providing coaching and support while the two collaboratively develop and implement learning activities for the novice. Through the proficient phase, the expert teacher would identify areas of improvement and exploration, the novice would exhibit an increased understanding of best by developing learning activities independently, and then the two would share the experience with their peers.

Finally, during the mastery phase, the expert teacher would observe and participate in the methods designed during the proficient phase while the novice teacher would share, promote, and model the best practices and strategies learned during the professional learning sessions, resulting in the novice teacher transitioning into the expert teacher position (Labone & Long, 2016). Throughout this entire process, reciprocal interactions that nurture the mutual relationship between the two teachers are one important aspect of the efficacy of the program. While this model was developed for a school setting, it is obvious that the expert/novice reciprocal interactions could easily exist in other professional settings (Labone & Long, 2016).

Similar alternative models of professional development some schools are implementing include mentoring, peer observation, and coaching of beginning teachers by experienced teachers and local support groups, usually by subject matter, allowing

teachers to share and network with other teachers. Since these types of professional development usually take place within the school day, participants may engage in these activities for a longer time period than would be expected with traditional professional development sessions (King, Ni Bhroin & Prunty, 2018).

Professional learning programs take multiple forms, which include formal coursework in face-to-face or even online mode, self-initiated action research centers, informal learning opportunities situated in practice, workshops that might have been organized by professional associations (McGlynn-Stewart, 2016). A recent project in Australia aimed at providing information that is more detailed across the country on teachers' professional learning activities. The project was funded by the then Department of Education, Science, and Training and the aim was not to give judgments on the effectiveness of these activities (King, Ni Bhroin & Prunty, 2018). Guidelines for quality professional learning based on the survey and interview data collected showed that (King et al., 2018):

1. Strategic planning should be included in professional learning at system-wide, individual levels and school.
2. Professional learning should be diverse and appropriate to individual and group needs.
3. Professional learning should be explicitly embedded within teachers' work.
4. Professional learning should be diverse and appropriate to individual and group needs.

5. Teacher registration bodies, systems, and schools should work together to share their historical and contemporary knowledge about inducting early-career teachers into the profession.
6. Governments, teacher registration bodies, and schools themselves should investigate and value a variety of evidence in accounting for teachers' professional learning.
7. Schools and teachers should be encouraged to form and develop a range of professional learning partnerships.
8. Encouragement of teachers should be done to develop and/or extend professional learning networks with colleagues.
9. Sectors should be encouraged to work collaboratively in cross-sectorial partnerships.
10. Teaching should be recognized as engaging in a continuing inquiry into practice and this inquiry should be recognized as strongly collegial and collaborative in nature.

### **Technology-Enhanced Professional Learning**

Recently, an increased social aspect of learning and acknowledgment of the role of learning communities' focus has been noticed. Everything is turning to online communication particularly the real-time media. Technology can help facilitate group discussions, collaborations, increased professional dialogues, and even peer support and feedbacks. Technology plays an important role in the building of knowledge socially rather than as a hierarchical model of instruction delivery or a simple interactive drill or

practice process. The models of online teacher professional development are three, as used in various extant case studies. They include: neo-traditional, where the instructor is the key origin of knowledge and learning always focuses on the acquiring of knowledge; social constructivist, where learners through co-construction of knowledge makes meaning of the content; and tele-mentoring, where there is a co-mentorship of learners (Wennergren & Blossing, 2017).

A common problem with the first type is that it relies on a based instructional design, where there is an implicit assumption that learners will display uniformity in the ways they process and organize information and in their predispositions towards specific learning situations. The fact that they are frequently informal, self-directed, and generative is an interesting and unexpected aspect of the latter two types, with implications for ongoing teacher professional development. A further model for moving professional development online is blended learning. Blended learning, or blended e-learning, allows for the initial stimulus and opportunities for the formation of groups which is then sustained by ongoing contact with individuals with the same learning goals and challenges (Pacchiano, 2016).

### **Barriers to Professional Learning**

Many studies have explored the barriers to professional development and professional learning for educators. Knowing the probable and potential barriers will allow the professional learning framework to be constructed to minimize or mediate these barriers (Doğan & Yurtseven, 2018).

Related specifically to the inquiry, many teachers in public schools have little knowledge of what inquiry is and are reluctant to implement teaching strategies to meet changing standards. In addition, inadequate preservice preparation in content, scientific inquiry, and appropriate pedagogical skills had teachers entering schools without proper preparation for engaging in the complex processes required for inquiry-based education (Doğan & Yurtseven, 2018).

There are three structural dimensions of barriers teachers face while implementing reform efforts: technical, political, and cultural. These dimensions of reform implementation also transfer to the barriers in professional development. The technical barrier includes content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and the educators' ability to teach constructively and implement reform. The political dimension's barrier is a lack of school or district level leadership and support but also includes lack of financial or programmatic support for professional development and any lack of resources, equipment, consumables, or materials (Nolan & Molla, 2018). The cultural dimension relates to existing beliefs and values regarding teaching and in this domain, teacher beliefs are a key factor in determining instructional practices. Local supports and barriers are closely aligned and include knowledge and frames for interpreting policies, schedules, budgets, time for planning and reflection along with school-specific philosophies and initiatives competing for attention in schools. Other structural barriers identified in different studies include inadequate inservice (professional development) and lack of adequate preservice training (Nolan & Molla, 2018).

One study identified specific barriers that function more at the individual than the structural level. The authors included time to engage, time for planning, instruction, and collaboration, the educators' beliefs, assessment, and choice in collaboration (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). It is always mandatory that professional development programs must include enough duration and content to carry the participant from the initial orientation stage, through the adoption, evaluate, and innovation stages to the final institutionalization stage. The lack of local leadership, resources, collaboration support, and limited in-service challenge the ability of a professional learning program to meet such duration and content (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).

There is a concern across the literature that limited training for educators leads to an increased need for inservice professional learning. The limited training is the "preparation ethic" which can simply be defined as the educator being focused deeply on content to ensure the student will be prepared for the next level, grade, course, etc. (Wennergren & Blossing, 2017). It is also clear that passion learners have towards their work is a driving force behind their participation in professional development (Wennergren & Blossing, 2017).

### **Summary**

Professional learning programs have key effects in the society and are meant not only to educate but also open people's minds on the improvement needed in their specified field. As discussed above, professional learning models contribute greatly to professional development as seen both in the traditional professional learning and the current professional learning programs. These programs have helped many people in their

profession as teachers to improve in their fields and provide students with the needed knowledge. To some extent, the professional learning programs are turning to technology components including online formats, webinars, and conference calls.

## **Project Description**

### **Implementation**

Small amounts of literacy trainings at the district and school levels were revealed. Therefore, a 3-day, 6-hour professional learning will be created to promote peer collaboration. Participants will be emailed a Google Form which contain a daily evaluation of the training. In order to successfully conduct the training, the following items are needed: meeting area (lab), computers with internet access, promethean board, projector, note pads, flip charts, markers, and timer.

Day 1 will begin with the project facilitator explaining the professional learning objectives. The objectives include: Journeys framework, Journeys implementation, evidence-based literacy instruction, standards alignment, best practices and literacy strategies. The importance of literacy and overview Journeys reading curriculum will be provided. The issue of teacher buy-in will be covered on day one. A variety of methods such as: a team building activity, flip chart, video clip, question and answer will be used to complete session one. A data analysis segment will consist of examining achieved test scores from other districts that are currently implementing Journeys. The sample schools will have similar demographics as Washington Elementary School. Teacher testimonials will be shared from neighboring schools. Later during Day 1, teachers will be given an opportunity to share how they implement supplemental resources in phonics instruction.

A common protocol will be established for the integration of Saxon Phonics and Journeys. Lastly, administrators will share a consistent collaborative planning schedule for each grade level.

Day 2 will consist of Journeys' alignment to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. A review of the Journeys program will initiate the session. Next, teachers examine resources from each distribution of Journeys. Teachers will be given the opportunity to ask questions and share concerns while being guided on the purpose of each teacher resource. The facilitator will guide the group in examining Journeys Framework, Scope, and Sequence. Participants will work in collaborative groups to complete a standards alignment activity. Each group will be given a standard to compare with skills/concepts from Journeys.

Day 3 will be a shared segment with the facilitator and administrators offering insight to the participants. A video clip that demonstrates how technology prepares students for success will be shown. Teachers will use their login credentials to access Journeys online component and navigate to the directed areas. Strands 1-5 will be covered while providing effective literacy strategies. The facilitator will present short lessons on both Strand 2 and 4 to place emphasis on technology and phonics. Participants will view and reflect on the video "Journeys Common Core Digital Resources for the Classroom." Day three end with the administrators outlining the expectations for Journeys implementation.



### **Potential Barriers and Solutions**

The findings of the study revealed a need for professional learning. However, teacher buy-in may be a potential barrier to implementation. Most of the participants demonstrated the desire to use another program for phonics instruction. Administrators must make it mandatory that Journeys is implemented in its entirety. There is a total of 20 teachers and four administrators who will be required to attend. Only 11 of those staff members participated in the semi-structured interviews. Some of the other educators may not see the need for the professional learning sessions. They may feel as if they are veteran teachers who are doing everything correctly. The administrators are expected to give advance notice of the meetings to increase preparedness. Other solutions include providing a conducive environment, sharing other schools' success stories, providing snacks and lunch, creating a sense of teamwork and collaboration.

Another potential barrier is the budget. The facilitator met with administrators before the professional learning to discuss possible costs. The school needs to budget for food, supplies, and any other resources needed during the 3-day training. If more support is needed from a Journeys representative, then that cost must be factored in as well. However, the team will save money by having me serve as the project facilitator. One solution is to ask participants to sponsor the food each day. Sometimes teachers take pride in preparing meals, thus increasing their level of involvement. Other supplies could be purchased through the school's professional learning budget.

### **Project Timetable for Proposed Implementation**

The proposed timetable for project implementation is July 22-24, 2019. The 3-day professional learning will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. The sessions will follow the same format that included discussions, modeling, visuals, and a question and answer block. Washington Elementary's students will be out of school during this time and teachers will be completing post-planning activities. The proposed timetable could assist with teacher buy-in because they can work on scheduling and address concerns before the upcoming school year begins.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

**The researcher.** After gaining final approval from Walden University, the results of data collection and analysis might be presented to provide a rationale for the professional development sessions included in the project. As outlined in the consent forms, participants will have the opportunity to request a copy of the results. Administrators also hold the authority to present the project to staff members. If stakeholders outside of the school desire the results, the project can also be presented. The key role of the researcher is to develop the project for the staff at Washington Elementary.

**Project facilitator.** I will also serve as the project facilitator if the administrators request that the project is presented. I will have to work closely with the staff to ensure that all of the Journeys resources are available during the training. I will create an outline of the needs for the professional learning. Some needs include meeting area, access to computers, promethean board, projector, approval of dates, times, agendas, and

presentation. The overall goal is to provide support for teachers in their implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Teachers.** Teachers will be responsible for participating in the 3-day professional learning sessions. They will be expected to follow norms: be respectful, be on-time, be engaged, be motivated to learn. They will be asked to share information, work in peer groups, ask questions, and participate in all of the collaborative activities during the training. They must bring Journeys teacher resources on the second day of training. Teachers should also know their log-in credentials to access the online component. Electronic evaluations will be emailed to all participants at the end of the professional learning sessions for completion (Appendix A).

**Administrators.** Administrators are expected to attend each of the sessions. When teachers see administrators participating in professional learning, they tend to take it more seriously. One goal is to increase teacher buy-in while stressing collaboration. Administrators must work with the facilitator to provide access to the meeting area, computers, promethean board, and projector. They must also approve the proposed dates and times of the training. Administrators should view agendas and assist in the presentation. Lastly, administrators should have a desire to increase their own learning when monitoring the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

At the end of each session, an evaluation through Google Forms will be emailed to each participant (see Appendix A). The data collected from the evaluations will allow the project facilitator to make any adjustments for the following day. The evaluation will

gauge levels of engagement, learning capacity, and learning needs. The evaluation planned for the project include formative, summative, and goal-based methods.

The lack of effective collaboration was identified as a barrier by the participants in the study. The hope is that structures are designed to align weekly or bi-weekly collaborative planning meetings. If this occurs reading teachers will meet consistently to discuss progress. During this time a monthly two-question survey will be issued (Appendix A). The questions will ask: How has your implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction improved? Describe students' acquisition of literacy skills. The responses will be shared with administrators so that they can determine if more training is needed. Teachers can also make any needed adjustments for the following month.

Finally, at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, one final survey will be sent via email (Appendix A). The purpose of the summative evaluation is to see if any change occurred due to the proposed project. I want to determine if teachers implemented Journeys as prescribed and the effect that this had on students: Describe your level of implementation of Journeys reading curriculum and compare your student's literacy growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Data collected from the questions will determine if the proposed project had a positive effect at Washington Elementary or if more training is needed.

## **Project Implications**

### **Local Community**

Upon completing the training, participants will have the knowledge and skill necessary to implement evidence-based Journeys instruction with fidelity. They will be

equipped with strategies and best practices as identified by Journeys reading curriculum. Some participants seem to question if Journeys was aligned with the Georgia standards. They will collaborate with other reading teachers to ensure planning and instruction meet and exceeds standards. Ultimately, teachers will create a classroom that has high levels of student engagement while developing literacy skills.

Administrators should be on-board with the implementation process. They have the opportunity to effect school change by ensuring that the project addresses the needs of Washington Elementary. Administrators will be able to reinforce expectations of quality literacy instruction. They will also have the skills needed to properly evaluate teacher performance in Journey implementation. Administrators will be able to interpret data more easily when determining if students' literacy skills have improved. The team can then make more sound instructional and personnel decisions.

### **Larger-Scale Change**

Journeys has been implemented in other Georgia schools and throughout other parts of the United States. Whenever there is a new program being implemented, quality professional learning is needed. The results of the project study can be shared with other schools that are struggling with the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. The team could provide training to schools who are newly implementing the curriculum. This will also serve as a networking opportunity where schools can share ideas and strategies for improvement. The project could also serve as a guide for teachers and administrators who have curriculum fidelity issues. Students will have a better chance for successful completion of high school once literacy rates improve.

## Conclusion

The goal of this professional learning project is to provide support for the quality implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. The project seeks to eliminate barriers to full implementation including inconsistent understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction, lack of collaborative planning, a heightened focus on phonics and technology integration, lack of teacher buy-in, and the need for more training. Table 4 outlines the alignment of the project to the research questions of the study.

Table 4

### *Project Components and Links to Data*

| Research Question | Feedback from data                                    | Project Component  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| RQ1               | Phonics implementation                                | Provide PL on phonics implementation   |
|                   | Implementation of evidence based literacy instruction | Journeys implementation<br>Include Saxon Phonics<br>Including supplemental resources |
| RQ2               | Lack of teacher buy-in, collaboration, and training   | Demonstrate successful implementation  |
| RQ3               | Technology implementation                             | Elaborate on Strand 2  |

Section 3 outlines the professional learning project, evaluation plan, and project implications. Section 4 will provide reflections on the entire project.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher implementation of the evidence-based Journeys early literacy program for students at Washington Elementary. Findings from the study suggested that inconsistent understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction, lack of collaborative planning, a heightened focus on phonics and technology integration, lack of teacher buy-in, and the need for more training were barriers to full implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. I created a professional learning project based on these findings. Section 4 includes discussion of the project's strengths and limitations; recommendations; my reflections on my growth as a project developer, scholar, and leader; discussion of the importance of the work; and a consideration of the project's implications, applications, and directions for future research.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

The main strength of the project is the ability to address the problem of the study. The problem of the study concerns teachers' implementation of early literacy instruction based on the evidence-based Journeys curriculum. An increased number of literacy **programs** are being developed to implement evidence-based instruction; therefore, evidence of these programs' efficacy is needed (Greenwood, Abbott, Beecher, Atwater, & Petersen, 2017). Another strength is the opportunity for collaboration. School leaders and policy makers should recognize the supports teachers gain through effective teacher collaboration (McGee, Kim, Nelson, & Fried, 2015). Teachers will be able to share ideas,

strategies, concerns, and questions during the training. Participants will also be paired with teachers from different grade levels to further support the notion of collaboration. There will also be the opportunity to reflect on the status of implementation each month by completing the evaluations.

Sometimes it is difficult to gain teacher buy-in with a new program or a different approach to implementation (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). In analyzing the interview data, I found that lack of teacher buy-in was one of the barriers to the current implementation of Journeys. The participants expressed negative comments when implementing Journeys due to concerns with planning and organization. Time is always a factor to consider when designing professional learning. Teachers expressed the difficulty in allocating enough time to provide the phonics-based sessions (Jeffes, 2016). However, professional learning days, referred to as *postplanning days*, are included in the school's calendar. Some may feel that more time beyond the 3-day professional learning is needed. The way to remedy this issue might be to provide additional sessions during the summer. The interview participants may demonstrate a willingness to participate and to encourage others to do so. However, administrators must set the tone of collaboration and the need for improvement in literacy development. When implementing a new program, a shared vision and clear purpose must be outlined by school leaders (Jeffes, 2016). Administrators may also require participation as a component of their TKES professional learning goal.



### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

An alternate approach could be taken to present the project to educators. Because of time and funding issues, many school officials deliver professional learning through online formats according to the Washington Elementary's Principal. Technology could be infused, and a Google Classroom model could be created. Participants would have access to the same presentation and video clips. The opportunity for collaboration would be accomplished through Google Hangouts. Teachers could save the video on their personal Google Drive for unlimited access and review. The convenience factor could increase teacher buy-in, which was identified as a limitation to project implementation. Participants will have the ability to complete the professional learning activities at home or school at their own pace.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

I applied intense inquiry skills to develop themes from the data collected during the semistructured interviews. The project study presented many challenging and enlightening moments. The crucial feedback from Walden professors helped develop my writing skills. The participants shared several similar ideas and concerns. The ones that appeared the most allowed me to form five reoccurring patterns. The analyzing of themes led to project development in the area of professional learning. When conducting research for the literature review, I noted that quality professional learning programs sometimes end with an evaluation of learning (Goodnough, 2018).

Through my Walden journey, I have taken courses and participated in assignments that prepared me to complete this project study. The most critical course was

Research Methods, where I learned the various types of approaches to research. The concepts I acquired allowed me to determine that the qualitative approach was the best fit for the case study. My research skills have improved through constant searching of Walden's database for peer-review articles and journals.

As an administrator who is an instructional leader, I have a new view of curriculum implementation. This also brings about a change in the way that I support teachers within my own school building. I will be able to refer to literature and research before making key decisions concerning changes in instruction. I plan to adjust the way that I evaluate teachers by allowing them to reflect more on the instruction that they are providing. It is also important to provide support in mastering the Georgia Milestone Assessment System. Washington Elementary will be taken off of the Focus List once the school shows improvement and the CCRPI score increases. As I reflect on the process, I had great amounts of support and encouragement from professors and family members. I think that the project study will be helpful to other educators who are confronted with the same issue.

### **Reflection on the Importance of the Work**

#### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

I have always been interested in the area of literacy development. Originally, I wanted to conduct a study within my own school environment to examine my own theories. However, by using a different site with similar demographics, I recognized several trends that are present within my school. I know that quality professional learning is necessary to successfully implement a new program. I am also aware that some

teachers do not implement the curriculum as prescribed. The students usually suffer academically when this occurs.

I now have more knowledge concerning evidence-based literacy instruction. I can also provide insight within my school during curriculum meeting at the district level. My first stance would be to develop a professional learning plan directly after adopting a new curriculum. For the current curriculum, educators should examine ways to redeliver goals, expectations, and objectives. If the Journeys curriculum is an option, I would be able to cite my own study as research.

I can see true growth upon completing the project study. It has maximized my research potential and assisted me in becoming very organized. As a full-time employee with a part-time job, time management was definitely a challenge for me. The fact that the project covered a real issue in education served as my motivation for completion.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

As an administrator it is important that I continue to perfect my craft. I believe that educators must consider participating in constant professional learning to remain up-to-date with changes in education. Students have various needs as related to literacy development (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Whether they are excelling or struggling, students should receive quality instruction in all subject areas.

A review of credible literature on early literacy and evidence-based literacy instruction shows that students are struggling across the world. Achievement data show that the many students are reading below grade-level (Cuticelli, Collier, & Coyne, 2016). The level of progress, brings a sense of ease in that educators are not alone. The need for

more professional learning is also evident. I have more knowledge concerning how the State of Georgia determines a school's progress. I am familiar with methods for acquiring achievement data from GADOE. In conducting the study, I was able to identify the goals and expected outcomes of the Journeys reading curriculum. I can now consider myself a scholarly practitioner in the area of literacy development.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

The professional learning project that was created was in direct response to the results from the semi-structured interviews. A goal of the project was to provide support to teachers in the implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. Participants could benefit from a variety of collaborative activities during each session. The agenda derived from the themes of the study. As a project developer, I considered all types of learners and included video clips, technology review, modeling, and question and answer components. Collaboration is encouraged by creating mixed grade groups. Peer mentors could serve as leaders who support collaboration and increase teacher buy-in (Ciampa, 2016). Participants will reflect on the sessions by completing an electronic evaluation at the end of each day.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The problem at Washington Elementary School is that it is unclear whether teachers are implementing Journeys, an evidence-based reading curriculum, as prescribed. The study consisted of an investigation of this problem through semi-structured interviews. The data demonstrated a need for professional learning to support the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. Professional learning that

assists in changing teacher's instructional strategies are most effective in workshop and coaching models (Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). The training sessions are designed for teachers but ultimately the students will benefit from increased literacy skills. Even though Journeys is already being implemented at Washington Elementary, the training assumes all participants are novice teachers.

The proposed monthly and annual survey could prove beneficial when examining satisfaction with the curriculum as well as the professional learning. The collaborative sessions could easily be converted into professional learning communities (PLCs). The PLCs would give educators increased opportunities to share expertise and teaching skills.

The need for further research will always exist in an ever-changing field of education. New reading curriculums are being introduced at rapid rates. The study did not expound on the level of support that administrators provided teachers in the implementation of Journeys reading curriculum. The same group of teachers could participate in a case study with a focus on the administrator's support and guidance. Semi-structured questions could also focus on district level professional learning support.

### **Impact on Social Change**

In Section 1, I discussed the impact that proper curriculum implementation has on student achievement. Teachers play a critical role in curriculum implementation. They must understand how the curriculum materials work and how they can be improved (Castro Superfine, Marshall, & Kelso, 2015). The professional learning sessions are a result of participants' responses to interview questions related to the problem of implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

The project could initiate change within the school district by providing a model and strategies for curriculum implementation. Increases on standardized tests and higher literacy rates are hopes of the project. The project was developed to help solve the problem at Washington Elementary and to improve student's literacy skills. Teachers and administrators will receive training on the current reading curriculum and best practices for implementation. Educators who experience similar issues in implementation could also use the project and the instructional strategies as a framework for professional learning in their school. The project could be re-delivered to other stakeholders who have an invested interest in curriculum implementation and student success. Researchers have examined changes in curriculum and the implementation of new programs for decades. Barriers to implementation with fidelity must be addressed by teachers and administrators before desired results can be achieved. A goal of the project is to outline a clear process to address the implementation problem. It is also a goal that the school serve as a Journeys implementation guide for schools in the state of Georgia.

### **Conclusion**

The professional learning session that was created for this project was included in Section 4. After completing the 11 semi-structured interviews, the data was used to create the project. The project study could assist in supporting Washington Elementary School's staff members in implementing evidence-based literacy instruction. It could further support the mandatory Journeys implementation.

The project's strength was being able to address the problem of the project study. The creation of professional learning sessions supports the need for support in evidence-

based instruction. A limitation of the project is teacher buy-in to carry out and participate in the professional learning sessions. High levels of administrative support could be a possible solution to this problem. The project outlined my personal reflections and journey as a researcher from the beginning of the program until the end. I also offered implications, applications, and directions for future research. The goals of the study and of the project remain unchanged: to improve teachers' experiences with new curricula through a project that is both relevant and applicable to the needs of students, teachers, and administrators. It is important to note the information that the project will provide to subject school and potentially other schools. Teachers and administrators were provided an implementation guide to reduce barriers that may arise with a new curriculum. Ideally, the strategies outlined in project will be used to improve literacy instruction and student literacy rates. In addition, teachers will refrain from the use of resources that aren't evidence-based or supportive of the Journeys curriculum.

## References

- Al Otaiba, S., Folsom, J. S., Wanzek, J., Greulich, L., Waesche, J., Schatschneider, C., & Connor, C. M. (2016). Professional development to differentiate kindergarten Tier 1 instruction: Can already effective teachers improve student outcomes by differentiating Tier 1 instruction? *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *32*(5), 454-476. doi:10.1080/10573569.2015.1021060
- Ardyanti, A. W. T., Hitipeuw, I., & Ramli, M. (2017). Structured learning approach (SLA) modification to improve sharing skills of at-risk students in elementary school. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *3*(7), 361-367. Retrieved from <https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes>
- Aslan, Y. (2016). The effect of cross-curricular instruction on reading comprehension. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *4*(8), 1797-1801. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/>
- Austin, C. R., Vaughn, S., & McClelland, A. M. (2017). Intensive reading interventions for inadequate responders in Grades K–3: A Synthesis. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *40*(4), 191-210. doi:10.1177/0731948717714446
- Baird, T. J., & Clark, L. E. (2018). The ‘look-ahead’ professional development model: A professional development model for implementing new curriculum with a focus on instructional strategies. *Professional Development in Education*, *44*(3), 326–341. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov>
- Bang-Jensen, V. (2016). Welcome to the word garden: Composing a curriculum that rocks. *New England Reading Association Journal*, *51*(2), 9. Retrieved from



<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-4316726111/welcome-to-the-word-garden-composing-a-curriculum>.

- Beach, K. D., & O'Connor, R. E. (2015). Early response-to-intervention: Measures and criteria as predictors of reading disability in the beginning of third grade. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 48*(2), 196-223. doi:10.1177/0022219413495451
- Begeny, J. C., Laugle, K. M., Krouse, H. E., Lynn, A. E., Tayrose, M. P., & Stage, S. A. (2010). A control-group comparison of two reading fluency programs: The helping early literacy with practice strategies (HELPS) program and the great leaps K-2 reading program. *School Psychology Review, 39*(1), 137-155. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/study/82900>
- Bennett, J. G., Gardner III, R., Cartledge, G., Ramnath, R., & Council III, M. R. (2017). Second-grade urban learners: Preliminary findings for a computer-assisted, culturally relevant, repeated reading intervention. *Education and Treatment of Children, 40*(2), 145-185. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov>
- Bird, D. O. (2017). *Relationship between teacher effectiveness and student achievement: an investigation of teacher quality* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://cardinalscholar.bsu.edu>
- Bornfreund, L., Cook, S., Lieberman, A., & Loewenberg, A. (2015). *From crawling to walking: Ranking states on birth-3rd grade policies that support strong readers*. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org>
- Brill, K. (2015). Why professional development matters. *Campus Activities Programming, 47*(7), 3. Retrieved from

<https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=109201411&site=eds-live&scope=site>

- Brownell, M. m., Kiely, M. T., Haager, D., Boardman, A., Corbett, N., Algina, J., & Urbach, J. (2017). Literacy learning cohorts: Content-focused approach to improving special education teachers' reading instruction. *Exceptional Children*, 83(2), 143-164. doi:10.1177/0014402916671517
- Cain, K. (2015). Learning to read: Should we keep things simple? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 50(2), 151-169. doi: 10.1002/rrq.99
- Castro Superfine, A., Marshall, A. M., & Kelso, C. (2015). Fidelity of implementation: Bringing written curriculum materials into the equation. *Curriculum Journal*, 26(1), 164–191. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585176.2014.990910>
- Chai, Z. (2017). Improving early reading skills in young children through an iPad app. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 36(2), 101-111. doi:10.1177/8756870517712491
- Ciampa, K. (2016). Implementing a digital reading and writing workshop model for content literacy instruction in an urban elementary (K-8) school. *Reading Teacher*, 70(3), 295–306. Retrieved from <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/trtr.1514>
- Clay, M. M. (1972). Reading the patterning of complex behaviour. Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann Educational Books.

- Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (2001). *Change over time in children's literacy development*. Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.
- Coles-Hart, K. Y. (2016). Teachers' perspectives on reading interventions implemented to low achieving second graders. ScholarWorks. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/2644/>
- Connor, C. M., Day, S. L., Phillips, B., Sparapani, N., Ingebrand, S. W., McLean, L. & Kaschak, M. P. (2016). Reciprocal effects of self-regulation, semantic knowledge, and reading comprehension in early elementary school. *Child Development*, 87(6), 1813-1824. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27264645>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cunningham, A., & Zibulsky, J. (2009). Introduction to the special issue about perspectives on teachers' disciplinary knowledge of reading processes, development, and pedagogy. *Reading & Writing*, 22(4), 375-378.  
doi:10.1007/s11145-009-9161-2

- Cunningham, A. E., Perry, K. E., Stanovich, K. E., & Stanovich, P. J. (2004).  
Disciplinary knowledge of K-3 teachers and their knowledge calibration in the  
domain of early literacy. *Annals of Dyslexia, 54*, 139–172. doi:10.1007/s11881-  
004-0007-y
- Cuticelli, M., Collier, M. M., & Coyne, M. (2016). Increasing the quality of tier 1 reading  
instruction: Using performance feedback to increase opportunities to respond  
during implementation of a core reading program. *Psychology in the  
Schools, 53*(1), 89–105. Retrieved from  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.21884>
- Dahl, K. L., Scharer, P. L., Lawson, L. L., & Grogan, P. R. (1999). Phonics instruction  
and student achievement in whole language first-grade classrooms. *Reading  
Research Quarterly, 34*(3), 312-341. doi:10.1598/rrq.34.3.4
- De Naeghel, J., Van Keer, H., Vansteenkiste, M., Haerens, L., & Aelterman, N. (2016).  
Promoting elementary school students' autonomous reading motivation: Effects  
of a teacher professional development workshop. *Journal of Educational  
Research, 109*(3), 232–252. Retrieved from  
<https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/pug01:7224214>
- Deny, V. S., Ys, S. B., & Fajrina, D. (2017). Suggestopedia method on improving  
students' reading comprehension. *Research in English and Education  
Journal, 1*(2), 129-136. Retrieved from  
<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=fDdooN0AAAAJ&hl=en>

- Dickinson, D. & Neuman, S. (2011). *Handbook of early literacy research*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Easton, L. B. (2015). The 5 habits of effective PLCs. *Journal of Staff Development, 36*(6), 24–29. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1085499>
- Elborn, S. (2015). Early reading development: comprehension. *English 4--11*, (55), 13-15. ISSN:14605945.
- Ferrer, E., Shaywitz, B. A., Holahan, J. M., Marchione, K. E., Michaels, R., & Shaywitz, S. E. (2015). Achievement gap in reading is present as early as first grade and persists through adolescence. *The Journal of Pediatrics, 167*(5), 1121-1125. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26323201>
- Fink, A. (2016). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide*. (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA. SAGE.
- Fletcher, J., & Nicholas, K. (2016). What can we learn from young adolescents' perceptions about the teaching of reading? *Educational Review, 68*(4), 481-496. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131911.2016.1144558?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=cedr20>
- Flood, J., Lapp, D., Squire, J. R., & Jensen, J. M. (2003). *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers. Retrieved from Education Source (Accession Number. 119105183).

- Foorman, B., Dombek, J., & Smith, K. (2016). Seven elements important to successful implementation of early literacy intervention. *New directions for child and adolescent development*, 2016(154), 49-65.
- Gage, N. G., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Prykanowski, D., Coyne, M., & Scott, T. M. (2015). Investigating the collateral effects of behavior management on early literacy skills. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 38(4), 523-540. Retrieved from <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=quzDskoAAAAJ&hl=en>
- Gammon, C. & Collins, J. (2016). The effects of pre-kindergarten reading skills on first grade reading achievement. Retrieved from [http://www.texasreaders.org/uploads/4/4/9/0/44902393/2016\\_literacy\\_summit\\_yearbook\\_.pdf](http://www.texasreaders.org/uploads/4/4/9/0/44902393/2016_literacy_summit_yearbook_.pdf)
- Georgia Department of Education. (2016). College and career ready performance index. Retrieved from <http://ccrpi.gadoe.org/2015/>
- Georgia Department of Education. (2015a). Focus schools. Retrieved from <https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/School-Improvement-Services/Pages/Focus-Schools.aspx>
- Georgia Department of Education. (2012). Georgia receives waiver from no child left behind. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=19>
- Georgia Department of Education. (2015b). Non-negotiable actions and interventions for focus schools. Retrieved from <https://www.gadoe.org/School->

Improvement/School-Improvement-Services/Documents/School%20and%20District%20Effectiveness/Non-Negotiable%20Actions%20and%20Interventions%20for%20Focus%20Schools.pdf

Georgia Department of Education. (2015c). Vision 2020. Retrieved from GaDOE.org/Vision2020

Georgia Department of Education. (2016). Georgia department of education. Retrieved from [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Lexiles: Making sense of a reading measure. Retrieved from [https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/Milestones/Lexile/Lexile\\_Presentation\\_Jan\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/Milestones/Lexile/Lexile_Presentation_Jan_2017.pdf)

Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Literacy and striving readers grant. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Literacy-Reading.aspx>

Gersten, R., Newman-Gonchar, R., Haymond, K. and Dimino, J. (2017). What is the evidence base to support reading interventions for improving student outcomes in grades 1–3? [online] Regional Educational Laboratory Program. Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2017].

Goodnough, K. (2018). Addressing contradictions in teachers' practice through professional learning: An activity theory perspective. *International Journal of Science Education*, 40(17), 2181–2204, doi: 10.1080/09500693.2018.1525507

- Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2016). K-12 public schools report card. Retrieved from <https://gaawards.gosa.ga.gov/analytics/saw.dll?dashboard>
- Greenwood, C. R., Abbott, M., Beecher, C., Atwater, J., & Petersen, S. (2017). Development, validation, and evaluation of literacy 3D: A package supporting tier 1 preschool literacy instruction implementation and intervention. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 37*(1), 29–41. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0271121416652103>
- Griffith, R., Bauml, M., & Barksdale, B. (2015). In-the-moment teaching decisions in primary grade reading: The role of context and teacher knowledge. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 29*(4), 444-457. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02568543.2015.1073202?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=ujrc20>
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (2017a). *Journeys works: Proven results*. Retrieved from <http://www.hmhco.com/shop/education-curriculum/reading/core-reading-programs/journeys#features>
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (2017b). *Journeys: A research-based approach*. Retrieved from [https://www.hmhco.com/~//media/sites/home/education/disciplines/reading/elementary/journeys-2017/pdf/ms135432\\_jou17\\_ntl\\_researchbase.pdf?la=en](https://www.hmhco.com/~//media/sites/home/education/disciplines/reading/elementary/journeys-2017/pdf/ms135432_jou17_ntl_researchbase.pdf?la=en)
- Huo, S., & Wang, S. (2017). The effectiveness of phonological-based instruction in English as foreign language students at primary school level: A research



- synthesis. *Frontiers*, 2(15), 1. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2017.00015/full>
- International Reading Association. (2000). Excellent reading teachers: A position statement of the international reading association. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 44(2), 193-199. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40013543>
- Isbell, L. & Szabo, S. (2015). Assessment: Teacher efficacy and response to intervention. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 81(2), 41-46. Retrieved from Education Source (Accession Number. 100605727).
- Jeffes, B. (2016). Raising the reading skills of secondary-age students with severe and persistent reading difficulties: Evaluation of the efficacy and implementation of a phonics-based intervention programme. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(1), 73–84. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02667363.2015.1111198>
- Johnson, D. & North Central Regional Educational Lab., O. I. (1999). Critical issue: Addressing the literacy needs of emergent and early readers. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED480227>
- Kay, H., & Susan, S. (2017). Investigating master level k-6 reading teachers' attitude toward teaching content-area literacy strategies. *Journal of Teacher Action Research*, 3(3), 72-83. Retrieved from [www.practicalteacherresearch.com/archive.html](http://www.practicalteacherresearch.com/archive.html)
- King, F., Ní Bhroin, O., & Prunty, A. (2018). Professional learning and the

- individual education plan process: implications for teacher educators. *Professional Development in Education*, 44(5), 607–621. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2017.1398180
- Labone, E., & Long, J. (2016). Features of effective professional learning: A case study of the implementation of a system-based professional learning model. *Professional Development in Education*, 42(1), 54–77. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19415257.2014.948689>
- LaCour, M. M., McDonald, C., Tissington, L. D., & Thomason, G. (2017). Improving pre-kindergarten children's attitude and interest in reading through a parent workshop on the use of dialogic reading techniques. *Reading Improvement*, 54(2), 71-81.
- Lipka, O. (2017). Reading fluency from grade 2–6: A longitudinal examination. *Reading and Writing*, 1-15. doi:10.1007/s11145-017-9729-1
- Lipp, J. R., & Helfrich, S. R. (2016). Key reading recovery strategies to support classroom guided reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(6), 639-646. Retrieved from <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/trtr.1442>
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. & Voegtle, K. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lonigan, C. J., Burgess, S. R., & Anthony, J. L. (2000). Development of Emergent Literacy and early reading skills in preschool children: Evidence from a latent-variable longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*, 36(5), 596-613. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.36.5.596

- Mahwasane, N. P. (2017). The acquisition of reading in children: A concept paper. *International Journal of Educational Sciences, 17*(1-3), 76-81.
- McDonald, K. J. (2017). Exploring Factors that Influence African American Males' Reading Achievement and Reading Self-Perception (Doctoral dissertation). Texas A&M University-Commerce).
- McGee, L. M., Kim, H., Nelson, K. S., & Fried, M. D. (2015). Change over time in first graders' strategic use of information at point of difficulty in reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 50*(3), 263-291. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1065932>
- McGeown, S. P., & Medford, E. (2014). Using method of instruction to predict the skills supporting initial reading development: insight from a synthetic phonics approach. *Reading and Writing, 27*(3), 591-608. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1038894>
- McGeown, S. s. (2015). Synthetic phonics vs. an eclectic approach to reading instruction: Implications for the skills predicting early reading acquisition and development. *Psychology of Education Review, 39*(2), 31-36. ISSN: 14639807
- McNaughton, S. (2014). Classroom instruction: The influences of Marie Clay. *Reading Teacher, 68*(2), 88-92. Retrieved from <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/trtr.1286>
- Mecca, D. (2016). Every teacher, every day: What teachers need to implement effective reading instruction. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/every-teacher-every-day-what-teachers-need-implement-effective-reading-instruction>.

- Melby-Lervåg, M. M. (2012). The relative predictive contribution and causal role of phoneme awareness, rhyme awareness and verbal short-term memory in reading skills: A review. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(4), 363-380. doi:10.1080/00313831.2011.594611
- McGlynn-Stewart, M. (2016). How early childhood learning influences beginning literacy teachers' professional learning. *Brock Education: A Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 25(2), 35–52. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1124617.pdf>
- Molapo, M. R., & Pillay, V. (2018). Politicising curriculum implementation: The case of primary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(1). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1173202.pdf>
- Moran, C. E., & Senseny, K. (2016). An examination of the relationship between a child's developmental age and early literacy learning. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1-22. Retrieved from <https://www.cogentoa.com/article/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1169577.pdf>
- National Reading Panel. (2000). Report of the national reading panel: Teaching children to read, reports of the subgroups. Retrieved from [https://www.hmhco.com/~media/sites/home/education/disciplines/reading/elementary/journeys-2017/pdf/ms135432\\_jou17\\_ntl\\_researchbase.pdf?la=en](https://www.hmhco.com/~media/sites/home/education/disciplines/reading/elementary/journeys-2017/pdf/ms135432_jou17_ntl_researchbase.pdf?la=en)
- Nathan, P., Pollatsek, A., & Treiman, R. The oxford handbook of reading. Oxford University Press, 2015.

- Nolan, A., & Molla, T. (2018), Teacher professional learning in early childhood education: Insights from a mentoring program. *Early Years: Journal of International Research & Development*, 38(3), 258–270. doi: 10.1080/09575146.2016.1259212
- O'Callaghan, P., McIvor, A., McVeigh, C., & Rushe, T. (2016). A randomized controlled trial of an early-intervention, computer-based literacy program to boost phonological skills in 4-to 6-year-old children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 86(4), 546-558. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27473924>
- Özbek, A. B., & Girli, A. (2017). The effectiveness of a tablet computer-aided intervention program for improving reading fluency. *Environment*, 49, 50-51. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1143905>
- Palacios, N. (2017). Why all teachers matter: The relationship between long-term teacher and classroom quality and children's reading achievement. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 31(2), 178-198. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/yVcMsvYTdFA8yNmksUxR/full>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Phillips, D., Rupley, W. H., Nichols, W. D., Paige, D., & Rasinski, T. V. (2016). Efficacy of professional development: Extended use of focused coaching on guided reading instruction for teachers of grades one, two, and three. *International*

- Research in Higher Education*, 1(2), 1-13. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/index.php/irhe/article/view/9213>
- Piasta, S. B., and Wagner, R. K. (2010), Developing early literacy skills: A meta-analysis of alphabet learning and instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45, 8–38. doi:10.1598/RRQ.45.1.2
- Piper, M. (2016). Assessment-an integral part of early years literacy teaching and learning. *Australian Educational Leader*, 38(2), 36.
- Pomerantz, F. & Pierce, M. (2013). "When do we get to read?" Reading instruction and literacy coaching in a "failed" urban elementary school. *Reading Improvement*, 50(3), 101-117. Retrieved from <http://www.projectinnovation.biz/ri.html>
- Prescott, J. E., Bundschuh, K., Kazakoff, E. R., & Macaruso, P. (2017). Elementary school-wide implementation of a blended learning program for reading intervention. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 1-10. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220671.2017.1302914>
- Renaissance Learning. (2015). STAR Reading technical manual. Retrieved from <https://resources.renlearnrp.com/us/manuals/sr/srrptechnicalmanual.pdf>
- Reutzel, D. R. (2015). Early literacy research. *Reading Teacher*, 69(1), 14-24. [https://www.academia.edu/7586074/Protacio\\_M.\\_S.\\_2012.\\_Reading\\_motivation\\_A\\_focus\\_on\\_English\\_Learners.\\_The\\_Reading\\_Teacher\\_66\\_69-77.\\_doi\\_10.1002\\_TRTR.01092](https://www.academia.edu/7586074/Protacio_M._S._2012._Reading_motivation_A_focus_on_English_Learners._The_Reading_Teacher_66_69-77._doi_10.1002_TRTR.01092)
- Ross, D., Pinder, G., & Coles-White, D. J. (2015). The impact of structural barriers and facilitators on early childhood literacy programs in elementary charter schools.

- Equity & Excellence in Education*, 48(1), 118-136. Retrieved from <https://www.coursehero.com/file/p6erg396/Routledge-Ross-D-Pinder-G-Coles-White-D-J-2015-The-Impact-of-Structural/>
- Rowe, D. W. (2000). Emergent Literacy: A matter (polyphony) of perspectives. *Handbook of reading research*, 3, 425. Retrieved from <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=UJy-kfQAAAAJ&hl=en>
- Ruppar, A. L., Afacan, K., & Pickett, K. J. (2017). Embedded shared reading to increase literacy in an inclusive English/Language Arts class: Preliminary efficacy and ecological validity. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 52(1), 51. Retrieved from Education Source. (Accession Number. 120593341).
- Schechter, R., Macaruso, P., Kazakoff, E. R., & Brooke, E. (2015). Exploration of a blended learning approach to reading instruction for low SES students in early elementary grades. *Computers in the Schools*, 32(3-4), 183-200. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07380569.2015.1100652>
- SchoolDigger. (2016). Georgia elementary school rankings. Retrieved from <https://www schooldigger.com/go/GA/schoolrank.aspx>
- Seo, S. & Moon, H. (2013). A comparative study of teaching efficacy in pre-service and in-service teachers in Korean early childhood education and care (ECEC). *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(4), 363-376.  
doi:10.1080/1359866X.2013.787394

- Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. A. (2016). Reading disability and the brain. *On Developing Readers: Readings from Educational Leadership*, 61(6), 6-11.  
Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Evans, L., Ferron, J., & Lindo, M. (2015). Effects of differentiated reading on elementary students' reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 59(2), 91-107.  
doi:10.1177/0016986214568718
- Smith, M. (2009). Learning how to teach reading: A tale of two beginners and the factors that contributed to their vastly different teaching perspectives. *Reading Improvement*, 46(4), 247-262.
- Snow, C. E., & Matthews, T. J. (2016). Reading and language in the early grades. *Future of Children*, 26(1), 57-74. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309922393\\_Reading\\_and\\_language\\_in\\_the\\_early\\_grades](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309922393_Reading_and_language_in_the_early_grades)
- Soukeras, D. (2015). School data questions answered. Retrieved from <https://www.onboardinformatics.com/blog/school-data-questions-answered>
- Spalaris, G. (2017). Key components of a highly effective title I reading program. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 77(9), 148-160.
- Special Education Guide. (2016). The special education process explained. Retrieved from <http://www.specialeducationguide.com/pre-k-12/what-is-special-education/the-special-education-process-explained/>



- Stake, R. E. (1976). Evaluating educational programmes: The need and the response. *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*. Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Stake,+R.+E.+\(1976\).+Evaluating+educational+programmes:+The+need+and+the+response.+Organization+for+Economic+Cooperation+and+Development.&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Stake,+R.+E.+(1976).+Evaluating+educational+programmes:+The+need+and+the+response.+Organization+for+Economic+Cooperation+and+Development.&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)
- Pacchiano, D., Klein, R., Hawley, M. S., & Ounce of Prevention Fund. (2016). Job-embedded professional learning essential to improving teaching and learning in early education. *Ounce of Prevention Fund*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED570108.pdf>
- Scarparolo, G. E., & Hammond, L. S. (2018). The effect of a professional development model on early childhood educators' direct teaching of beginning reading. *Professional Development in Education, 44*(4), 492–506. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19415257.2017.1372303>
- Stake, R. E. (2006). Multiple case study analysis. New York: Guilford Press.
- Stites, M. C., & Laszlo, S. (2017). Time will tell: A longitudinal investigation of brain behavior relationships during reading development. *Psychophysiology, 54*, 798–808. doi:10.1111/psyp.12844
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). The CIPP model for evaluation: An update, a review of the model's development, a checklist to guide implementation. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Oregon Program Evaluators Network, Portland, Oregon.

- Suggate, S. P. (2016). A meta-analysis of the long-term effects of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension interventions. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 49*(1), 77-96. doi:10.1177/0022219414528540
- Sulaiman, S., Sulaiman, T., & Rahim, S. S. A. (2017). Teachers' perceptions of the standard-based English language curriculum in Malaysian primary schools. *International Journal of Instruction, 10*(3) 195-208. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1151109>
- Teale, W. H., & Sulzby, E. (1986). *Emergent Literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Thompson, M. K. (2017). We are all in this together: The impact of collaborative professional learning teams on 21st century literacy instruction. Retrieved from [digitalcommons.nl.edu](http://digitalcommons.nl.edu)
- Tighe, E. L., Wagner, R. K., & Schatschneider, C. (2015). Applying a multiple group causal indicator modeling framework to the reading comprehension skills of third, seventh, and tenth grade students. *Reading and writing, 28*(4), 439-466. doi:10.1007/s11145-014-9532-1
- Tracey, D. H. & Morrow, L. M. (2012). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Underwood, M. T. (2014). Identification of specific learning disabilities: Georgia school psychologists' perceptions. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1932&context=etd>

- Vaknin-Nusbaum, V., Nevo, E., Brande, S., & Gambrell, L. (2017). Developmental aspects of reading motivation and reading achievement among second grade low achievers and typical readers. *Journal of Research in Reading, 1*, 1-17.  
doi:10.1111/1467-9817.12117
- Valiandes, S. (2015). Evaluating the impact of differentiated instruction on literacy and reading in mixed ability classrooms: Quality and equity dimensions of education effectiveness. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 45*, 17-26. Retrieved from <https://pure.unic.ac.cy/en/publications/evaluating-the-impact-of-differentiated-instruction-on-literacy-a>
- Voelkel, R. H., & Chrispeels, J. H. (2017). Understanding the link between professional learning communities and teacher collective efficacy. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement, 28*(4), 505–526. doi: 10.1080/09243453.2017.1299015
- Wanzek, J. J., Roberts, G., & Al Otaiba, S. (2014). Academic responding during instruction and reading outcomes for kindergarten students at-risk for reading difficulties. *Reading & Writing, 27*(1), 55-78. doi:10.1007/s11145-013-9433-8
- Wennergren, A.-C., & Blossing, U. (2017), Teachers and students together in a professional learning community. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 61*(1), 47–59, doi: 10.1080/00313831.2015.1066441
- Wilkins, J. J., & Terlitsky, A. A. (2015). Addressing young children's literacy and behavioral needs through family literacy programs. *YC: Young Children, 70*(4), 26-31.

- Wilkinson, M. J. (2016). A study of the impact of a rural central Illinois elementary school district's Response to Intervention (RtI) plan on third grade students' reading achievement. (Doctoral dissertation). (University of St. Francis). Retrieved from ProQuest database.
- Yin, R. K. (2004). *The case study anthology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods)* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Sage Publications.
- Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. H. (2000). Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(2), 130-143. Retrieved from <http://literacyhow.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/SupportingPhonemicAwarenessDevelopmentintheClassroom.pdf>

## Appendix A: The Project

### **Professional Learning Project**

There were five themes identified when examining the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. The participants desired professional learning, an understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction, more confidence in Journeys, consistent collaborative planning, and meaningful phonics instruction. A professional learning project was designed to support the needs of Washington Elementary. The project includes 3 full days of learning about quality evidence-based literacy instruction. It will also focus on implementing Journeys reading curriculum with fidelity.

### **Proposed Activities**

The research findings revealed small amounts of literacy trainings at the district and school levels. Therefore, a 3-day, 6-hour professional learning will be created to promote peer collaboration. Participants will be emailed a Google Form which contains a daily evaluation of the training. In order to successfully conduct the training, the following items are needed: meeting area (lab), computers with internet access, promethean board, projector, note pads, flip charts, markers, and timer.

Day 1 will begin with the project facilitator explaining the professional learning objectives. The objectives include: Journeys framework, Journey implementation, evidence-based literacy instruction, standards alignment, best practices, and literacy strategies. The importance of literacy and overview of Journeys reading curriculum will be provided. Day 1 will seek to solve the issue of teacher buy-in. A variety of methods such as: a team building activity, flip chart, video clip, question and answer will be used

to complete session one. A data analysis segment will consist of examining achieved test scores from other districts that are currently implementing Journeys. The sample schools will have similar demographics as Washington Elementary School. Teacher testimonials will be shared from neighboring schools. Later during Day 1, teachers will be given an opportunity to share how they implement supplemental resources in phonics instruction. A common protocol will be established for the integration of Saxon Phonics and Journeys. Lastly, administrators will share a consistent collaborative planning schedule for each grade level.

Day 2 will consist of Journeys alignment to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. A review of the Journeys program will initiate the session. Next, teachers will examine resources from each distribution of Journeys. Teachers will be given the opportunity to ask questions and share concerns while being guided on the purpose of each teacher resource. The facilitator will guide the group in examining Journeys Framework, Scope and Sequence. Participants will work in collaborative groups to complete a standards alignment activity. Each group will be given a standard to compare with skills/concepts from Journeys. The facilitator will assist in demonstrating alignment after completing the exercise.

Day 3 will be a shared segment with the facilitator and administrators offering insight to the participants. A video clip that demonstrates how technology prepares students for success will be shown. Teachers will use their login credentials to access Journeys online component and navigate to the directed areas. Strands 1-5 will be covered while providing effective literacy strategies. The facilitator will present short

lessons on both Strand 2 and 4 to place emphasis on technology and phonics. Participants will view and reflect on the video “Journeys Common Core Digital Resources for the Classroom.” Day 3 ends with the administrators outlining the expectations for Journeys implementation.

## Training Format and Activities



### Professional Learning Objectives

- Explain the framework behind Journeys Reading Curriculum.
- Provide support for the implementation of Journeys.
- Educate teachers about evidence-based reading instruction.
- Demonstrate alignment with performance standards.
- Identify best practices and strategies according to Journeys.



## Overview

- Day 1
  - Establishing Support
- Day 2
  - Program Alignment
- Day 3
  - Journeys Implementation

## Day 1- Establishing Support

- 8:30-11:30
  - Importance of Early Literacy
    - Team Building Activity
    - Flip Chart Activity
  - Overview of Journeys Reading Curriculum
    - Background Research
- 11:30-12:00
  - Data Analysis
    - Teacher testimonials from neighboring school districts
    - Show archived Assessment Data from states that implement Journeys
      - Kansas, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana and Rhode Island, Washington, D.C
- 1:00-3:00
  - Integrating supplemental resources (Saxon Phonics)
  - Identifying evidence-based resources
  - I need help, who do I see? Reading Coach's Responsibility
  - Administrators share new Collaborative Planning Schedule (job-embedded during the school day)

## Day 2- Program Alignment

- 8:30-9:00
  - Journeys Review
- 9:00-9:30
  - Review Resources (student material, teacher’s manual, etc.)
  - Review Journeys Scope & Sequence
- 9:30-11:30
  - Video- Journeys - Our New Elementary ELA Adoption (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JKbXTIIA7s>)
- 11:30-12:00
  - Examine Journeys Framework- Teacher’s Edition and Resource Guide
- 1:00-3:00
  - Georgia Standards of Excellence/Journeys alignment group activity ([www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org))

## Day 3- Journeys Implementation

- 8:30-9:00
  - Video- Journeys Overview (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8oYA4o0eic>)
- 9:00-10:00
  - View Journeys Online Component (login to site)
  - Video- HMM Journeys Common Core: Texts and Technology that Prepare Students for Success (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yZ5xXDLUI8>)
- 9:30-12:00
  - Strands 1-5
    - Short lessons will be presented on Strands 2 (technology) and 4 (phonics)
    - Video- Journeys Common Core Digital Resources for the Classroom (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyQE3b1AOoc> )
- 1:00-3:00
  - School District’s Implementation Expectations

## Professional Learning Evaluation

- Each participant will complete a daily Evaluation.
- Evaluation will be emailed to the participants.
- Evaluation will be completed through Google Forms.
- Results will be used to modify next sessions if needed.

### ***Professional Learning Evaluation and Feedback Form***

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Presenter(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Position: \_\_\_\_\_ (Example: teacher, coach, director, principal)

I. Overall Evaluation:  Poor  Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent

II. Quality of Engagement: Check one of the following that best indicates your level of involvement throughout most of this experience.

**Authentic Engagement**-I was very involved in this learning experience most of the time. The activities were designed in ways that appealed to the various ways that I best learn such content. The content will be valuable to me and to my school or department or school system.

**Ritual Engagement**-I participated in this learning experience throughout the time allotted. I believe attendance at this seminar/workshop/course is part of what others expect of me.

**Passive Compliance**-I was in attendance throughout the session[s]. I have made some contributions, but nothing significant.

**Retreatism**-Although I was present during the learning experience, I did not always clearly focus on the content, presentations or discussions. Most of the time, my attention was on other matters.

**Rebellion** Throughout this learning experience I found ways, other than the planned activities, to occupy my time and attention. I chose to derail some of the work during the seminar/workshop/course.

What did you learn from this session?

How could this session be improved?

What will you use or do next (next steps)?

What do you now need (topics for future sessions)?



## ***Professional Learning Evaluation and Feedback Form***

Program title: \_\_\_\_\_ Presenter(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Example: teacher, coach, director, principal)

**I. Overall Evaluation:**     **Poor**     **Fair**     **Good**     **Very Good**     **Excellent**

**II. Quality of Engagement:** Check one of the following that best indicates your level of involvement throughout most of this experience.

**Authentic Engagement**-I was very involved in this learning experience most of the time. The activities were designed in ways that appealed to the various ways that I best learn such content. The content will be valuable to me and to my school or department or school system.

**Ritual Engagement** -I participated in this learning experience throughout the time allotted. I believe attendance at this seminar/workshop/course is part of what others expect of me.

**Passive Compliance**-I was in attendance throughout the session(s). I have made some contributions, but nothing significant.

**Retreatism**-Although I was present during the learning experience, I did not always clearly focus on the content, presentations or discussions. Most of the time, my attention was on other matters.

**Rebellion**-Throughout this learning experience I found ways, other than the planned activities, to occupy my time and attention. I chose to derail some of the work during the session.

**What did you learn from this session?**

**How could this session be improved?**

**What will you use or do next (next steps)?**

**What do you now need (topics for future sessions)?**

***Professional Learning Evaluation and Feedback Form (Formative)***

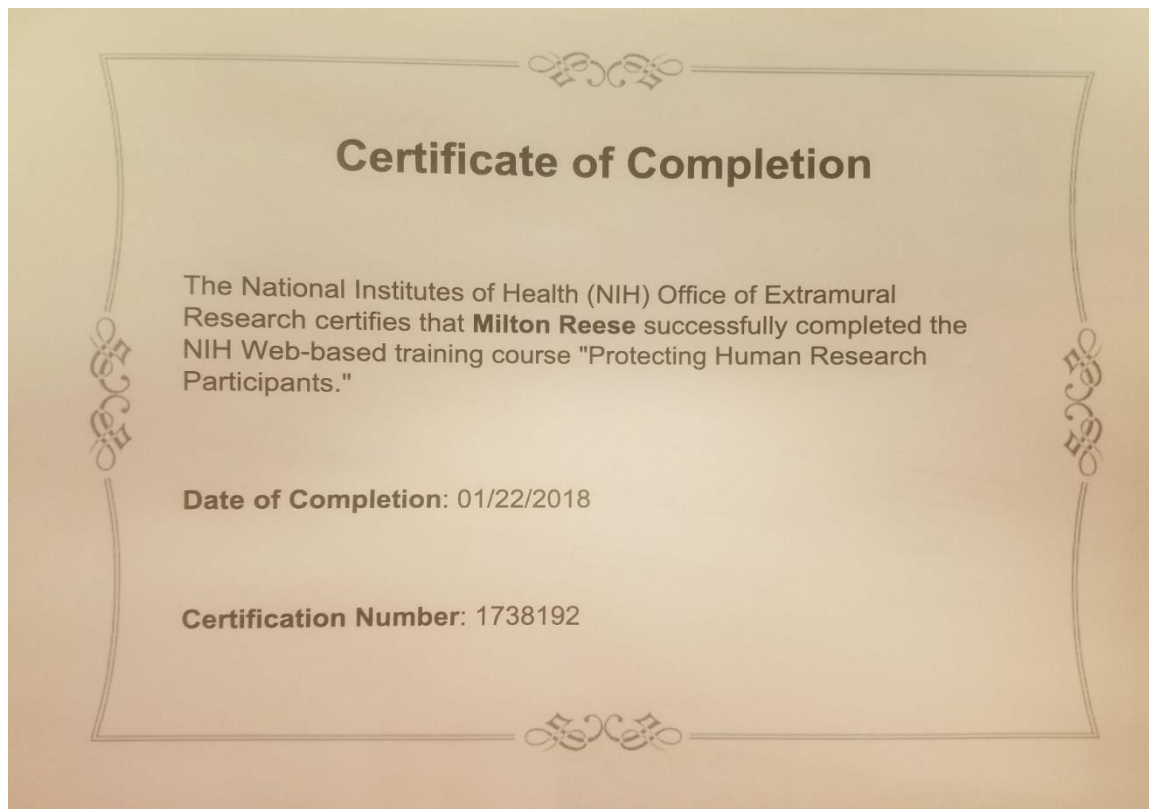
1. How has your implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction improved?
2. Describe students' acquisition of literacy skills.

***Professional Learning Evaluation and Feedback Form (Summative)***

1. Describe your level of implementation of Journey reading curriculum
2. Compare your student's literacy growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

## Appendix B: Certificate of Completion for Protecting Human Research Participants

## Training



## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

**Participant Interview Protocol****Participants:** Grade K-3 reading teachers

Length of Interview: 45-60 min

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Number of Students \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level

\_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Information:

A. Age \_\_\_\_\_

B. Gender: Male Female

C. Academic Qualifications: Bachelor Master Specialist Ph. D.

D. Number of years teaching \_\_\_\_\_ E. Number of years in current position \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you describe quality literacy instruction in your classroom in regard to Journeys?
2. How do you modify/differentiate instruction to ensure that you meeting the expectations of each strand in the Journeys program?
3. What kind of materials and instructional resources do you utilize to align with Journeys curriculum strands?
4. What is the required structure and organization for implementing evidence-based literacy instruction?
5. What do you regularly do to address students who struggle in the area of literacy?
6. Explain any challenges involved in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.
7. Has the Journeys curriculum been beneficial for the target population? Explain.
8. What are student's level of engagement in the phonics instruction from the Journeys curriculum?



9. Describe the strategies that are used in conjunction with Journeys for acquisition of phonics skills.
10. How do you collaborate with team members and other reading teachers to improve instruction using Journeys?
11. Describe any specific training or ongoing professional learning to assist in providing evidence-based literacy instruction.
12. Describe your level of proficiency in implementing the technology components of Journeys reading curriculum?
13. How do you integrate the reading and writing strands in instruction as outlined in the Journeys curriculum?

### Participant Interview Protocol

**Participants:** Elementary Principal and Reading Instructional Coach

Length of Interview: 45-60 min

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Number of Teachers Supervised \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level

\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Information:

A. Age \_\_\_\_\_

B. Gender: Male    Female

C. Academic Qualifications: Bachelor    Master    Specialist    Ph. D.

D. Number of years teaching \_\_\_\_ E. Number of years in  
leadership/supervision \_\_\_\_

1. What was the district's decision process to implement Journeys as the base reading program at Washington Elementary?
2. How is evidence-based literacy instruction supported in the school and district's improvement plans?
3. What are the challenges and mitigators when requiring educators to provide evidence-based literacy instruction?
4. What are the objectives and goals of the Journeys curriculum at Washington Elementary?
5. How was the Journeys designed to support student learning outcomes at Washington Elementary?
6. What was the implementation process and procedures when Journeys was introduced at Washington Elementary?
7. What do teachers, leaders, and other educators in your district consider effective reading and writing instruction in regard to Journeys?

8. What does effective reading and writing instruction look like in your school building in comparison to Journeys guidelines?
9. What strategies are teachers using in conjunction with Journeys for acquisition of phonics skills?
10. In what ways are teachers using the provided technological resources to meet the expectations of the technology strand in Journeys curriculum?
11. Explain the processes that have been established to monitor and support teachers in the implementation of Journeys reading and writing strands.
12. What type of supports and professional learning opportunities are provided to teachers? Are these ongoing?

## Appendix D: Teacher Interviews Patterns/Themes

1. How would you describe quality literacy instruction in your classroom in regard to Journeys?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Journeys made my instruction “cookie cutter”</li> <li>• There isn’t enough flexibility to teach the standards</li> </ul>                                       |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covers essential components of reading</li> <li>• Includes colorful posters, task cards, and reading material</li> </ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily reading, writing, speaking, listening, comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary expansion</li> <li>• Consistently monitoring student’s reading progress</li> </ul> |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction consists of letter-sound recognition, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency</li> </ul>  |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeling, peer sharing, promoting thinking beyond the text</li> <li>• Using informal and formal assessment techniques</li> </ul>   |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent small group instruction based on student’s needs</li> </ul>   |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction in phonics, spelling, and phonological awareness</li> </ul>  |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily focus on fluency, phonics, and comprehension</li> </ul>  |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-quality stories and informational texts</li> <li>• Engaging students in print awareness, letter recognition, writing, and spelling</li> </ul>                               |

2. How do you modify/differentiate instruction to ensure that you are meeting the expectations of each strand in the Journeys program?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses   |
|---------|--|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I facilitate small groups and one-on-one teaching</li><li>• Journeys differentiation does not provide accommodations for every child</li></ul> |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No modification or differentiation from the script is needed</li></ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work in small groups and provide individual instruction as needed</li></ul>  |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participant did not provide a specific accommodation (even though the participant agreed that Journeys has accommodations)</li></ul>           |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole Group- Introduction, Overview, and Review</li><li>• Small Group- explicit instruction at student's instructional level</li></ul>         |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review student's data and implement target instruction based on areas of concern</li></ul>   |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leveled readers for individual practice</li></ul>  |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I used CCGPS Coach books in small groups</li></ul>   |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use of leveled readers</li><li>• Work with individually with struggling students</li></ul>   |

3. What kind of materials and instructional resources do you utilize to align with Journeys curriculum strands?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses   |
|---------|--|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is difficult to find additional instructional resources that will align with Journeys</li> </ul>   |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online programs such as Moby Max and Read Works</li> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alphabet, vocabulary and sound cards</li> <li>• Leveled readers, games, and poems</li> </ul>  |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter-sound flash cards, activity cards for centers, jingles or songs that reinforce letter sound recognition, gigantic weekly/unit posters</li> </ul> |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive Focus Wall</li> <li>• Trade books and anchor texts</li> </ul>   |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>  |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only Journeys</li> </ul>  |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>  |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>  |

4. What is the required structure and organization for implementing evidence-based literacy instruction?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant only provided responses explaining the definition of evidence-based</li> </ul> |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual release model</li> <li>• Modeling and think-aloud</li> </ul>                       |

- C • Setting goals from the beginning
- D • Teach/Model Whole Group, Guided Practice, Small Group Differentiation, Independent Practice
- E • The reading instructional framework includes an Opening, Work Session, and Closing
- F • Whole Group and Small Group literacy instruction within a 120-minute segment
- G • Use of websites and additional materials
- H • Follow the script
- I • Providing a print-rich classroom
- Work in small and whole groups

5. What do you regularly do to address students who struggle in the area of literacy?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide interesting reading material for students</li> <li>• Teach phonics and sight words</li> </ul>  |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Front-loading strategies</li> </ul>  |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support in phonics and vocabulary</li> </ul>   |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress monitor using Journeys checklists of skills, fluency/comprehension assessments, and informal feedback from daily classwork and participation</li> </ul> |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide fluency instruction, guide oral reading, and vocabulary instruction</li> </ul>   |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Journeys screener to determine reading progress</li> <li>• Plan target lessons to meet individual student needs</li> </ul>                                   |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Response to Intervention Plan</li> </ul>   |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of technology</li> </ul>   |

- I
  - Independent and choral reading
  - Conduct real-alouds
  - Provide small group instruction to build on strengths

6. Explain any challenges involved in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locating reliable material that has proven results</li> </ul>  |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to implement with fidelity</li> </ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having all of the required material</li> </ul>   |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students being on grade-level and able to perform throughout the instruction</li> </ul>  |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deciding exactly what to use Journeys or supplemental programs like Unbounded Education, Saxon Phonics, and Write Score</li> </ul> |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to provide targeted instruction</li> </ul>  |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Student attendance</li> </ul>  |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locating evidence-based material</li> <li>• Sometimes I use it anyway</li> </ul>   |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Not receiving on-going training</li> </ul>   |

7. Has the Journeys curriculum been beneficial for the target population? Explain.

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, does not align to the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE)</li> </ul> |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, Journey is beneficial</li> </ul>                                      |



- C
  - The leveled texts and assessments are key success areas
  - Yes, when using the program along with supplemental material
- D
  - Yes, for students who are on grade-level
- E
  - Yes, if implemented daily
- F
  - No, due to the lack of effective training and low CCRPI (College Career Readiness Performance Index) score
- G
  - No, it is not aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE)
- H
  - Yes, strong phonics component
- I
  - Yes, when implemented with fidelity

8. What are student's level of engagement in the phonics instruction from the Journeys curriculum?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students find it a bit boring</li> </ul>   |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When implemented as prescribed, students are highly interested in all of activities</li> </ul> |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with both teacher and student</li> </ul>   |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It requires students to be involved</li> </ul>   |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonics is not included for the grade level that I teach</li> </ul>                            |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited engagement due to the way that it is implemented</li> </ul>                            |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly engaged due to the variety of resources for phonics</li> </ul>                          |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students become accustomed to the routine</li> </ul>                                       |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of engagement because of the games, music, and movement</li> </ul>                 |

9. Describe the strategies that are used in conjunction with Journeys for acquisition of phonics skills.

| Teacher | Summary of Responses   |
|---------|--|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dibels-monitoring reading fluency</li> </ul>        |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover, Copy, and Compare</li> </ul>                 |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sing alongs, sounds and picture match</li> </ul>    |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dibels-monitoring reading fluency</li> </ul>        |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>                            |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent reading and fluency practice</li> </ul> |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics</li> </ul>                            |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxon Phonics (not my preference)</li> </ul>        |
| I       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pictures, songs, videos</li> </ul>                  |

10. How do you collaborate with team members and other reading teachers to improve instruction using Journeys?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By sharing with Social Studies and Science teachers a specific topic/passage in hopes of adaptation in that discipline</li> <li>• Collaboration with other reading teachers is very limited</li> </ul> |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the departmental model at Washington Elementary, there is very little collaboration.</li> </ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly collaboration with other grade levels</li> </ul>   |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We collaborate to ensure student progress</li> </ul>   |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly meetings where reading teachers discuss theories and best practices</li> </ul>  |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative planning is held, but not specifically for improving Journeys instruction</li> </ul>   |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| G | • Inconsistent collaboration with reading teachers |
| H | • Collaborative planning with the grade level only |
| I | • Very little, to no collaboration                 |

11. Describe any specific training or ongoing professional learning to assist in providing evidence-based literacy instruction.

| Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | • One training at RESA (Regional Educational Services Agency)   |
| B       | • Very little professional learning has occurred  |
| C       | • One Journeys professional learning session  |
| D       | • Journeys, iReady, Reading Wonders, Write Score  |
| E       | • Sandra Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy- I participate monthly to help children learn to read proficiently |
|         | • I have been to two trainings for Journeys   |
| F       | • The district does not provide continuous professional learning in this area   |
| G       | • A Journeys representative provide training  |
| H       | • I need more training is needed in this area   |
| I       | • I have only received online coaching/webinars   |

12. Describe your level of proficiency in implementing the technology components of Journeys reading curriculum?

| Teacher | Summary of Responses                                 |
|---------|--|
| A       | • Once shown once, I caught on very easily           |
| B       | • Very proficient because I am a lover of technology |

- C • Intermediate- our school did not have access to all of the technology components
- D • Proficient
- E • I am proficient in integrating eBooks and interactive lesson planning
- F • Very proficient in implementing technology
- G • Very proficient, I use it often
- H • Not very proficient nor familiar
- I • Highly proficient

13. How do you integrate the reading and writing strands in instruction as outlined in the Journeys curriculum?

- | Teacher | Summary of Responses  |
|---------|---|
| A       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was difficult because of GSE alignment</li> </ul>   |
| B       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I explicitly teaching spelling, phonics, grammar, and writing inside and outside of reading</li> </ul>   |
| C       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align Science and Social Studies to the strands</li> </ul>   |
| D       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By consistently following the rituals and routines for the reading and writing strands</li> </ul>  |
| E       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By modeling sentence structures and activating prior knowledge</li> <li>• Provide lots of writing based instruction in developing and communicating ideas</li> </ul> |
| F       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During independent small groups</li> </ul>   |
| G       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions and writing prompts are taken from the series and aligned with GSE</li> </ul>  |
| H       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing component is very weak</li> <li>• I have not implemented the writing strand</li> </ul>   |

I

- Easy to integrate across all subjects



- B
- Assists students in become better readers
  - Use Journey with fidelity

5. How was the Journeys designed to support student learning outcomes at Washington Elementary?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
- Provides essential scripted instruction in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension
  - Develops fluent readers who are able to comprehend grade-leveled text
- B
- Has built in differentiation for struggling students and ones who need acceleration
  - Demonstrates the importance of early literacy instruction

6. What was the implementation process and procedures when Journeys was introduced at Washington Elementary?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
- Daily implementation of Journeys scripted lessons
  - Opening, Work Session, Closing
  - Whole Group and Small Group
- B
- Opening, Work Session, Closing
  - Whole Group and Small Group
  - Teacher as the facilitator

7. What do teachers, leaders, and other educators in your district consider effective reading and writing instruction in regard to Journeys?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
  - Quality phonics component
  - Develops fluent readers
  - Provides a variety of research-based strategies
- B
  - Provides differentiation
  - Includes phonics in the early years
  - Is scripted, but allows for flexibility according to student's needs

8. What does effective reading and writing instruction look like in your school building in comparison to Journeys guidelines?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
  - Use of teacher-made resources and websites
  - No specific time to teach specific concepts
- B
  - Whole Group Instruction
  - Technology (videos, apps, and Promethean board)

9. What strategies are teachers using in conjunction with Journeys for acquisition of phonics skills?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
  - Picture cards, videos, songs, chants
- B
  - Websites, music, small group instruction

10. In what ways are teachers using the provided technological resources to meet the expectations of the technology strand in Journeys curriculum?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
  - Teachers consistently use the technology component
  - Teachers allow students to complete Journeys lessons on tablets, iPads, and computers



- B
- Online teacher's guide & e-books
  - Display lessons on promethean board

11. Explain the processes that have been established to monitor and support teachers in the implementation of Journeys reading and writing strands.

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
- Walk Throughs using Journeys observational checklist
  - Formal observations using Teachers Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)
  - Providing quality feedback in a timely manner
- B
- Monitoring new teachers during walk throughs
  - TKES observations
  - Providing coaching in areas of concern (2 or less on TKES)

12. What type of supports and professional learning opportunities are provided to teachers? Are these ongoing?

Administrator      Summary of Responses

- A
- Some teachers have received training from Journeys representatives, Reading Coach, and Reading Grade Chairs
  - New teachers receive introduction training from the Reading Coach
  - Ongoing training is needed
- B
- Grade-level team leaders have redelivered training
  - I usually provide an overview to new teachers
  - I answer any questions or concerns
  - Training is intermittent