Walden University
A higher degree. A higher purpose.

Walden University
ScholarWorks

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies
Collection

2019

An Ecological View of Urban Kindergarten Reading Instructional Practices

Deborah Ann Clark
Walden University

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

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction 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.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Deborah Ann Clark

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. Bonnie Mullinix, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. John Flohr, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Charlotte Redden, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

The Office of the Provost

Walden University
2019

Abstract

An Ecological View of Urban Kindergarten Reading Instructional Practices

by

Deborah Ann Clark

MA, City University of New York, Brooklyn College

BA, Lincoln University

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Kindergarten students who are identified as at risk in reading often enter school with deficiencies in early reading skills. Little research exists for this vulnerable population on reading instruction in large, urban, school systems. The purpose of this multiple case study, which was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development, was to describe urban kindergarten teachers' beliefs about the environmental factors that contribute to students' at-risk reading status, instructional practices employed to remediate reading, and teacher reports about systems in place to support student reading development. The multiple case study design included (a) structured interviews, (b) observations of kindergarten instructional practices in reading, and (c) a review of documents relevant to the delivery of instruction and home literacy assignments in 3 schools situated in 3 northeastern districts in the United States of America. The constant comparative method utilized included data coding, category development, and identification of themes. Findings indicated that (a) teachers believe parental involvement would influence the development of kindergartners' early reading skills; (b) teachers used a core and phonics curriculum within a print-rich environment to teach early reading skills, with variation in approaches seen within and across school sites; (c) there is a lack of professional development within the schools to enhance kindergarten reading instruction; and (d) the schools' instructional practices may not be part of a coherent instructional philosophy. This study contributes to positive social change by providing educators with a deeper understanding of how to remediate reading with attention to the environmental factors at-risk readers experience at home and school.

An Ecological View of Urban Kindergarten Reading Instructional Practices

by

Deborah Ann Clark

MA, City University of New York, Brooklyn College

BA, Lincoln University

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

July 2019

Dedication

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." Ps 121:1-2.

I dedicate this completed dissertation to my son, Jonathan David. As I progressed through this arduous journey, I have communicated to my son my steadfast determination to acquire a terminal degree, now he can see the fruits of my labor. I also dedicate this dissertation to family members and friends who gave of their time and gave encouragement along my journey to obtain my doctoral degree. "The race is not to the swift..." (Ecclesiastes 9:11), but he who .. endure unto the end…" (Matthew 24:13)

Acknowledgments

All my dissertation committee members, both past and present, have guided me on dissertation journey. My current committee members, Dr. Bonnie B. Mullinix, committee chair, Dr. John W. Flohr, committee member, and Dr. Charlotte A. Redden, the University Research Reviewer who helped me build upon and fine tune the foundation established by past committee members: Dr. Deannie Boddie (retired), committee chair, and Dr. Darragh Callahan (deceased), committee member.

Table of Contents

List of Tables vii

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study 1

Introduction 1

Background 3

Problem Statement 5

Purpose of the Study 8

Research Questions 9

Research Questions 9

Overview of Effective Teacher Practices/Mediating Risk Factors 9

Conceptual Framework 10

Nature of the Study 10

Definitions 12

Assumptions 14

Scope and Delimitations 15

Limitations 15

Significance 17

Summary 18

Chapter 2: Literature Review 20

Introduction 20

Literature Search Strategies 22

Conceptual Framework 23

Literature Review.....28
Common Core State Standards in Reading for K-2 Students.....28
District Standards.....32
Components of an Early Childhood Program.....33
Instructional Strategies and Interventions for Foundational Skills.....34
Instructional Strategies for Literature and Interventions.....45
Instructional Strategies and Interventions for Informative Text.....53
Play as a Function of Culture.....57
Outreach to Parents.....66
Professional Development.....69
Socioeconomic Factors.....72
Bounded Case Study Approaches.....88
Summary and Conclusions.....92
Chapter 3: Research Method.....97
Research Design, Rationale, and Research Questions.....98
Role of the Researcher.....101
Saturation and Sample Size.....102
Instrumentation.....103
Interview Protocols.....103
Observation Data Collection Form.....104
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....105
Data Analysis Plan.....107

Issues of Trustworthiness 108
Credibility 109
Transferability 109
Dependability 110
Confirmability 110
Ethical Procedures 111
Summary 112
Chapter 4: Results 113
Introduction 113
Setting 114
Keywall School District 114
Turnerville School District 115
Ulysses School District 116
Participants 117
Data Collection 119
Interviews 120
Observations 121
Documents 122
Data Analysis 124
Line by Line Coding 124
Analysis of Initial Interview Data: Teachers 125
Analysis of Follow-up Interview Questions 169

Analysis of Observation Data 180

Setting 181

Participants 181

Classroom Learning Environment 182

Instructional Strategies and Activities 191

Conversation/Engagement 205

Subtle Factors 210

Researcher's Presence 210

Analysis of Document Data 212

Discrepant Data 224

Cross-Case Analysis 225

Theme 1: Teacher Beliefs about the Influence of Environmental Factors 226

Theme 2: Teachers Beliefs about Instructing and Supporting Students 228

Theme 3: Remedial Instruction in the Classroom 249

Setting 251

Participants 254

Conversation/Engagement 256

Subtle Factors 256

Researcher's Presence 257

Theme 4: Lack of a Coherent Instructional Reading Philosophy 258

Trustworthiness 261

Credibility 261

Transferability 262

Dependability 262

Confirmability 263

Summary 263

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion 264

Interpretation of Findings 266

Teacher beliefs about instructing and support students (RQ 2) 266

Remedial Instruction in the classroom (RQ 3) 266

Teacher Beliefs about Factors Influencing Early Reading Skills 267

Teachers Beliefs about Instructing and Supporting Students 268

Remedial Instruction in the Classroom 271

Support Documents from State Local or School Levels.................................... 274

Site-Based Similarities and Differences 275

Limitations 278

Implications for Social Change 280

Recommendations for Practice 282

Findings from This Study 282

Recommendations from the Research Literature 285

Recommendations for Research 287

Conclusion 287

References 289

Appendix A: Common Core Standards, K-2 318

Appendix B: Alignment of Research Questions with Data Sources................................321

Appendix C: Informational Letter for Principals...326

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation for Elementary Schools 331

Appendix E: Teacher Flyer..333

Appendix F: Letter of Invitation..334

Appendix G: Interview Protocol for Teachers...336

Appendix H: Observation Data Collection Form 338

Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement 343

List of Tables

Table 1 Summary of Inteviews' Paticipants, Times, and Locations 120

Table 2 Summary of Classroom Observations 121

Table 3 At-Risk Factors: Single-Case Analysis... 128

Table 4 Curriculum Materials:Single-Case Analysis 131

Table 5 Instructional Strategies: Single-Case Analysis 136

Table 6 Instructional-Strategies-Literature Standards Single-Case Analysis................ 142

Table 7 Instructional Strategies-Informational Text Standard: Single-Case Analysis .. 148

Table 8 Reading Interventions: Single-Case Analysis.. 153

Table 9 Professional Development: Single-Case Analysis... 158

Table 10 Outreach Programs: Single-Case Analysis 161

Table 11 Ideal Reading Program Components: Single-Case Analysis.......................... 166

Table 12 Teachers' Roles in Children's Literacy Development.................................... 169

Table 13 Parents' Roles in Supporting Children's Literacy Development..................... 174

Table 14 District and School Leaders' Roles in Children's Literacy Development...... 178

Table 15 Student Population by Teacher and School 182

Table 16 Summary of Instructional Strategies and Activities: Cross-Case Analysis.... 204

Table 17 Reading Program Components Evident in Documents Provided.................... 213

Table 18 Cross-Case Analysis Summary Table... 226

Table 19 At-Risk Factors: Cross-Case Analysis... 227

Table 20 Curriculum Materials: Cross-Case Analysis.. 232

Table 21 Instructional Strategies-Foundational Standard: Cross-Case Analysis 233

Table 22 Instructional Strategies-Literature Standard: Cross-Case Analysis 234

Table 23 Instructional Strategies-Informational Text Standard: Cross-Case Analysis .. 236

Table 24 Reading Interventions: Cross-Case Analysis 237

Table 25 Professional Development: Cross-Case Analysis 238

Table 26 Ideal Reading Program Components: Cross-Case Analysis 239

Table 27 Summary of Research Findings 266

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Children's literacy development is influenced by many factors, such as the home literacy environment, parents' educational level, and teachers' instructional and remedial practices. The development of students' early reading skills is affected by environmental factors, such as poor self-regulation skills (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015), and home literacy environments (Robins, Ghosh, Rosales, & Treiman, 2014) that do not support the development of early literacy skills. Home environments centered on literacy activities encourage the development of early reading skills and/or children's attitude toward literacy (Han, Schlieber, & Gregory, 2017; Jung, 2016; Lewis, Sandilos, Hammer, Sawyer, & Méndez, 2016; Sim & Berthelsen, 2014). Home literacy that encourages early reading skills includes (a) reading to a child (Schick & Melzi, 2016), (b) practicing sounds of the alphabet (Heath et al., 2014;), and (c) helping a child to build receptive and expressive language (Samiei, Imig, Bush, & Sell, 2016). Several critical factors also influence the ability of parents to create literate environments for their children. These factors include the socioeconomic level of the family (Heath et al., 2014), as well as parents' age at the birth of their children (Fagan & Lee, 2013), and the parents' educational level (Hemmerechts, Agirdag, & Kavadias, 2017). In addition, factors such as parents' emotional health (Altinkaynak & Akman, 2016; Froiland, Powell, Diamond, & Son, 2013), parents' phonological awareness skills (Heath et al., 2014), and parents' phonological training (Altinkaynak & Akman, 2016) influence parents' ability to create literate environments for their children. The school environment also influences the

development of early reading skills through curricular standards and materials for reading, such as summer reading programs (Xu & De Arment, 2017). The instructional practices of teachers, which include strategies implemented (Ready & Chu, 2015; Stanley & Finch, 2018), and the home-school connection (Niklas & Schneider, 2015) affect the development of children's early literacy skills.

Few researchers have conducted studies about the influence of these factors on the instructional practices for young children who attend public schools, particularly in large urban communities, and who are identified as homeless or at risk in reading, and who fail to meet grade-level requirements. In addition, little research exists on teacher beliefs about the environmental factors that influence students' reading trajectories. Few studies emphasize the beliefs kindergarten teachers have about how to mediate the classroom environment for these factors. In addition, a lack of research exists about how kindergarten teachers provide instruction for these students and how state and district documents support reading instruction for these at-risk students.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to positive social change because the findings provide educators with a deeper understanding of how to mediate the environmental factors related to home and school that influence the early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. The results of this study also provide information to educators that may allow them to design and adjust instructional programs and practices to help students improve their reading skills. The results of this study also provide information to educators that may allow them to design and adjust instructional programs and practices to help students improve their reading skills by

focusing on the embedded strength of the interpersonal relationships that occur within and across settings by which children are directly or indirectly influenced. In so doing, educators may build a foundation for students' future academic success as productive members of society.

Chapter 1 includes a presentation of background information, which includes a summary of research related to the scope of the study. The problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, and nature of the study are provided. The chapter includes definitions of key terms pertinent to the study as well as a discussion of the assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study and a summary.

Background

The microsystems of family and school interact within the overall cultural context or macrosystem, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) contended, and these microsystems influence the reading development of young children. Interactions between family members or between teachers and students or students and students are evident in parent and child relationships. Parents who experience healthy, thriving relationships with each other create a home environment that is conducive to the literacy development of their children (Froyen, Skibbe, Bowles, Blow, & Gerde, 2013). Also, parents who have frequent interactions with their children are more like to have positive attitude about literacy (Ozturk, Hill, & Yates, 2016). Mature parents who live in these emotionally supportive home environments are more likely to provide reading materials to their children and to engage in meaningful conversations with their children that are focused on literature

(Froyen et al., 2013). However, children of adolescent parents often do not experience literate home environments that are conducive to the development of emergent reading skills (Fagan & Lee, 2013). In addition, the socioeconomic levels of the parents also influence the home environment and affect the development of reading skills of young children. The vocabulary knowledge of children from families of lower socioeconomic levels was found to be lower than that of children from higher socioeconomic levels (Hammer et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2018). However, the literacy skills of children from families with low socioeconomic levels can be offset by parental warmth (Han et al., 2017) and parents' active role in reading activities (Wiescholek, Hilkenmeier, Greiner, & Buhl, 2018). Similarly, the literacy skills of children from families who experience economic challenges can be offset by the development of parent and child reading partnerships (Sim, Berthelsen, Walker, Nicholson, & Fielding-Barnsley, 2014). Altinkaynak and Akman (2016) found that parents who receive parent literacy training are instrumental in improving their children's emergent reading skills, such as sound awareness, vocabulary, expressive, and receptive language. In a similar study conducted by Di Santo, Timmons, and Pelletier (2016), research assistants worked for 6 weeks with parents and their children who resided in a residential program. Di Santo et al. found that the parents increased in their awareness of literacy activities in the home. Unfortunately, the economic challenges experienced by some families may lead to homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009), which may have a negative influence on the reading development of young children (Di Santo et al., 2016). Teacher sensitivity to the needs of students who are homeless can positively influence their reading trajectories

(Wilkins & Terlitsky, 2016). Thus, these studies demonstrate how interactions between the family and the home influence the reading development of young students. These environmental factors necessitate further research to improve the reading trajectories of young children, particularly if they reside in large urban communities.

Even though significant research exists on some of the environmental factors that influence the early reading skills of primary grade level students (Froiland et al., 2013; Gonzalez, Acosta, Davis, Pollard-Durodola, Saenz, Soares, … Zhu , 2017; Heath, et al., 2014; Samiei et al., 2016; Sim & Berthelsen, 2014; Wade, Jenkins, Venkadasalam, Binnoon-Erez, & Ganea, 2018), little qualitative research has been conducted about teachers' reading instructional practices in kindergarten classrooms intended to support students identified as at risk in reading. The ways in which classroom teachers have responded to student needs associated with environmental factors and how state and district documents recommend remediation for these factors is unknown. This study was designed to advance understanding about teacher beliefs, instructional practice and systems supporting the early reading skills of students with attention to at-risk readers and consideration of environmental factors. These factors may affect students' abilities to meet the academic rigor of instructional programs from elementary school through high school and to become informed members of society.

Problem Statement

Kindergarten students who are homeless or at risk may have poor self-regulatory skills (Masten et al., 2015), low levels of vocabulary knowledge (Cuticelli, Coyne, Ware, Oldham, & Loftus Rattan, 2015), and below-grade level expectations in letter naming

skills and ability to segment the sounds in words (Oslund, Hagan-Burke, Simmons, Clemens, Simmons, Taylor, … Coyne, 2017), which negatively influences their academic development (Masten et al., 2015). In order to positively influence the reading trajectories of students who are homeless or at risk in reading, teachers need to be aware of and sensitive to the full range of issues and environmental contexts that influence their young potential readers. The intersection of teacher beliefs, instructional and remedial practices, and extending support from the school may all influence the potential of helping at-risk learners. Homeless children in large urban school districts in the United States may enter school with changes in "brain architecture" that may interfere with cognitive skills and learning (Bassuk, DeCandia, Beach, & Berman, 2014, p. 7). In the New York City school system, where this study was conducted, homeless students were identified as one of the following according to the standards set by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987: living in permanent shelters, transitional shelters, motels, cars, trains, public places, abandoned buildings, or campgrounds; awaiting foster care; abandoned in a hospital; or living with family or friends because of a lack of financial means to secure housing (NYC Department of Education, 2016). Students at-risk status in reading can be determined by their letter naming fluency and performance on a sound matching test (Oslund et al., 2017).

A current issue facing schools is improving the early literacy skills of students who educators identify as homeless or at risk in reading. Students who are homeless or at risk in reading often have several risk factors, such as parents who are teenagers at the time of their birth or mothers who have limited positive engagement with their children

(Fagan & Lee, 2013). Fagan and Lee (2013) investigated the association between adolescent parenting and preschoolers' school readiness and found that the children of adolescent parents are at greater risk for developing reading problems than children of older parents. Wade et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal study involving 501 mothers and their children to explore the role between mother responsiveness and early literacy skills development. At 18 months, the researchers determined that mother responsiveness and verbal engagement during book reading, independently related to their children's pre-academic development. Wade et al. (2018) also determined that parents' verbal engagement with their children during book reading was a stronger predictor of their literacy skills as the child matured than the mothers' responsiveness.

The home environment of children who are homeless or at risk may not support the development of early literacy skills. Aside from other social factors, the mere state of students' homelessness is a risk factor. Masten et al. (2015) investigated decades of research and found that the cumulative effect of homelessness is greater than that of students who are educationally disadvantaged. Masten et al. concluded that educators and other support service individuals must identify homeless and highly mobile students as a critical factor in supporting students. Homeless students often struggle in school and the effect of homelessness, such as loss of privacy, friends, and possessions "creates a life-altering experience that inflicts profound and lasting scars" (Bassuk et al., 2014, p 10). Homeless students also struggle with executive function (Chang & Gu, 2018). According to Chang and Gu (2018) executive function pertains to students' working memory and their ability to maintain focus during a task. Students with poor working memories and

who exhibit challenges maintaining focus in class will undoubtedly experience academic challenges (Chang & Gu, 2018). Teachers, therefore, need to be aware of the range of environmental factors and issues which influence the reading trajectories of these students. Teachers can then determine the instructional practices and strategies to help children meet these challenges and become effective readers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about the environmental factors that influence the development of early reading skills, teachers' beliefs about instructional practices to foster early reading skills, and the remedial instruction teachers provided for homeless or at-risk students. The purpose was also to explore and describe the documents, training, parental outreach and supports needed for the effective development of early reading skills of students who are identified as homeless or at risk in reading in three schools in three northeastern school districts. To achieve this purpose, I interviewed teachers to determine their beliefs, their remedial and instructional practices, and the supports that were provided to them. These determinations provided insight into the student-teacher interactions that occurred in the reading classroom. Teacher reports were further supported through interviews, observations, and examination of school documents. The rich data that resulted from the interviews, the observations and the inspection of school documents at three research sites helped to create a broad ecological view of instructional practices in the kindergarten urban classrooms.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of cognitive development and a review of relevant literature.

Research Questions

1. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?
2. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading?
3. How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?
4. What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading?

Overview of Effective Teacher Practices/Mediating Risk Factors

Teachers have important roles in meeting the academic needs of at-risk students. Researchers indicated that the effectiveness of teachers in meeting the needs of at-risk students is related to several factors, including providing instruction in early literacy skills (Goldstein et al., 2017), recognizing language deficiencies, encouraging active student engagement during reading (Wanzek, Roberts, Al Otaiba, & Kent, 2014), structuring intervention services (Foorman, Dombek, & Smith, 2016), helping

parents create a home literacy environment, and participating in professional development (Amendum, 2014). The organization of this section includes an analysis of each factor.

Conceptual Framework

The concepts related to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory about human development guided this study. Bronfenbrenner defined *ecology* as the study of the relationships and interactions of human groups in their natural or developed environments. These environments grow in relation to the following ecological systems: (a) the microsystem (b) the mesosystem, (c) the exosystem, and (d) the macrosystem. The interactions that occur within and across these systems contribute to the cognitive development of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The conceptual framework was relevant to this study because teachers should be aware of the range of interactions (student-to-student, student-teacher, and parent-child) that can occur within the environmental context. Knowledge of the range of interactions occurring within the child's environment helps teachers to develop appropriate instructional programs and strategies. With appropriate instructional programs and classroom strategies, teachers can help students in their development of early literacy skills.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study with a multiple case study design was conducted to describe how a school's kindergarten reading instructional practices, the case, was designed to support the early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading.

The case for this study was the school's kindergarten reading instructional practices at three elementary schools located in the northeastern region of the United States. This study explored and described teacher beliefs about environmental factors that influenced the development of early reading skills, teacher beliefs about instructional and remedial practices to foster early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. The three schools and seven teachers were located in separate districts. Case study research is a bounded study, and for this study, the boundaries between the kindergarten reading program and the context of reading instruction in the classroom were not clear. Therefore, a multiple case study design was appropriate for this study because three cases provided an opportunity to compare and contrast data sources and related findings.

I selected three elementary schools located in a large urban school district as the research sites. The participants included two kindergarten teachers at two of the research sites and three teachers at the third site for a total of seven participants. I collected data from multiple sources, including initial and follow-up interviews with teachers. I also observed the reading instruction of the participating teachers at the three research sites. I requested the following documents: (a) the kindergarten reading program standards, (b) instructional guidelines that teachers use to deliver the curriculum and/or standards for students identified as homeless or at risk in reading, (c) documents describing the literacy activities that teachers recommend for parents to use in providing support for their children who may be identified as homeless or at risk in reading, and (d) documents about after-school literacy programs that serve as an outreach to these students.

At the single-case level, data from each source were analyzed using line-by-line coding that Charmaz (2006) recommended for qualitative research. Charmaz and Merriam (2009) recommended the constant comparative method for qualitative research to construct categories from coded data for each source at each site. I conducted a content analysis recommended by Nuendorf (2001) and Merriam to examine the documents. At the cross-case level, the coded and categorized data were analyzed for themes and discrepant data that emerged across all sources, and which formed the key findings for this study. I analyzed these findings in relation to the research questions and interpreted them in relation to the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Definitions

Early reading skills. Early reading skills relate to a child's ability to recall letters and their sounds and to manipulate these sounds (Froiland et al., 2013; Stanley & Finch, 2018) as well as vocabulary knowledge (Broz, Blust, & Bertelsen, 2016; Cuticelli et al., 2015). Children's oral language, including receptive and expressive language, is also included in a definition of early reading skills (Heath et al., 2014; Samiei et al., 2016).

Homeless students. For this study, homeless students were defined as (a) living in shelters, transitional shelters, motels, cars, trains, public places, abandoned buildings, or campgrounds, (b) awaiting foster care placement, (c) abandoned in a hospital, or (d) living with family or friends because of a lack of financial means to secure housing (NYC Department of Education, 2016).

Instructional strategies. Instructional strategies are the approaches that teachers use to actively engage students toward the accomplishment of a goal/lesson. They are

used to help meet the learning styles of the students, as well as individual students' developmental needs, such as think-pair-share, cooperative learning, hands-on learning, flexible grouping, small group, graphic organizers, K-W-L charts, scaffolding, direct teaching (explicit teaching), and word wall.

Kindergarten progress monitoring in reading. For this study, teachers monitored students' progress by assessing their ability to answer literal and inferential questions from various anchor texts. The students' independent and instructional levels were determined every 3 months; however, every month teachers assessed students whose independent levels were below the standard for that time of the year. A student's independent level was defined as the Fountas and Pinnell level (e.g., A, B, C, D) at which a student can read and comprehend text with at least 95% accuracy. A student's instructional level was defined as the level at which the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

Kindergarten reading standards. For this study, the reading standards for kindergarten students reflected the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts for reading that this state and this school district adopted in 2012-2013 (New York State Department of Education, 2014). These reading standards were organized into three categories: literature, informational text, and foundational skills.

Kindergarten students at risk in reading. For this study, educators in this large urban school district identified kindergarten students at risk in reading based on their performance on the Fountas & Pinnell Text Level Gradient (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Students were identified as at risk in reading perform at Level A by mid-year.

Metacognitive strategies. For this study, metacognitive strategies are described as those strategies that students self-employ, if necessary, to process the information in a text, such as summarizing, asking questions, drawing a mental picture, and making predictions.

Urban school districts: These districts are in large metropolitan areas that serve a significant number of students who received free or reduced lunches.

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions. The first assumption was that teachers would respond openly and honestly to the interview questions. This assumption was important because teachers' responses influenced the credibility of this study. The second assumption was that the assessment used to identify kindergarten students at risk in reading accurately determined students' at-risk status in reading. This assumption was important because the findings of this study rested on the beliefs of teachers about how to improve the early reading skills of students identified as homeless and at-risk in reading. The third assumption was that observations of instructional reading lessons in kindergarten classrooms reflected reading instruction that occurs on a typical day in a typical classroom. This assumption was important because the findings of this study were based on actual instruction in the classroom rather than on a staging of instructional practices. The fourth assumption was that documents collected on the school and district levels accurately reflected policies and practices that educators implemented at the research sites to address the learning needs of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. This assumption was important because school documents indicated if a

disconnection between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum existed for those students who were at risk in reading.

Scope and Delimitations

The problem narrowed the focus of this study, which was a lack of qualitative research on the influence of kindergarten reading programs on the early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading, particularly in relation to the beliefs that teachers have about how to support the development of these skills. These beliefs, as well as instructional practice in the classroom, may have a significant influence on reading programs, particularly in relation to the development of early reading skills for these students. This study was further delimited by the participants of this study, which included kindergarten teachers who taught in an elementary school in a large, urban district in the Northeastern region of the United States. An additional delimitation was time, because I collected data during school year 2016-2017 and again during school year 2017-2018 for the additional three teachers at a third research site.

Limitations

The limitations of a qualitative research study are often determined by the design of the study. For this multiple case study, one of the limitations was related to data collection and the length of the study. I conducted one initial interview and one follow-up interview with each teacher and one classroom observation of an instructional reading lesson. The limited number and duration of interviews and observations may not have captured a typical day of instruction; observations that occur over an extended period may have given a more accurate picture of typical instruction. Conducting one initial and

one follow-up interview with each teacher may not have given me adequate time to build rapport, thereby limiting the degree of candor and the comfort level participants had with me. The study could have been extended so that teachers could have been observed several times over a 5-month period. By extending the study, a clearer picture of the strategies and interventions that are in use by teachers could be obtained. However, collecting data from multiple sources for each case strengthened the findings of this multiple case study.

A second limitation was related to the possibility of potential bias in relation to data collection and data analysis. This potential bias existed because I was the sole individual responsible for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Therefore, I used specific strategies to improve the trustworthiness of this study, such as triangulation, member checks, and reflexivity, which are described in detail in Chapter 3.

A third limitation was related to the identification of students at risk for failure in reading, which influenced the implementation fidelity of the instructional practices at each research site. Assessments in reading may not have been administered in the same way in all kindergarten classes at each elementary school or across the three elementary school sites. Teachers who did not receive training in the use of assessment tools perhaps did not adhere to guidelines for administration of the assessment. Therefore, students whom teachers should have identified as at risk in reading may not have been included in the sample, or conversely, students who were included in the study may not have met all identification criteria.

Significance

The significance of a study is determined in relation to it making an original contribution to educational research, to improving professional practice related to direct instruction in the classroom, and to contributing to positive social change. Concerning an original contribution to research, this study was unique because the purpose was to describe how a school's kindergarten instructional practices were designed to support the early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading at three elementary schools in a large urban district in the northeastern region of the United States. Concerning professional practice, this study was significant because it may provide educators and researchers with a deeper understanding of the instructional and remedial practices that kindergarten teachers use at school to mediate for known risk factors among a vulnerable population at risk in reading. Additionally, this study was significant because it may contribute to possible policy changes at the school district level that are necessary to support the emergent reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. This study may also contribute to positive social change by equipping students with the support they need for strengthening their emergent reading skills at a critical time in their academic development. Society benefits from good readers in many ways. Students may emerge as contributing members of society because they have experienced greater levels of academic success in junior and senior high school, perhaps even deciding to continue their education in undergraduate and graduate schools. In addition, as these students enter adulthood and parenthood, they may realize the importance of creating literate environments for their own children. The findings of this

study may be transferable to school systems or districts that have similar demographics as the students in the present study.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the study and its essential elements, such as the background of the study, the initiating problem, and purpose of the study, as well as the lens through which I interpreted the data and determined the study's design, along with the assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Environmental factors influencing students' development of early reading skills include the home literacy environment, the level of positive and frequent interactions parents have with their children, and poor letter naming skills. Additional environmental factors that influence a child's development of early reading skills are the parents' socioeconomic level, their homeless status, and if they are children of adolescent parents. These environmental factors, along with the concern to positively influence the reading trajectories of homeless and at-risk students in reading, gave rise to the study's problem statement. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' beliefs and instructional practices to promote the development of early reading skills, along with documents detailing instructional practices, outreaches to parents, and support to teachers. Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory (1979) served as the conceptual framework, informing the study's design, as well as the interpretation of data collected. A multiple case study design was used to address the fluidity of the boundaries between the kindergarten reading program and the context of reading instruction in the classroom. I described three cases examined involving three schools inclusive of multiple kindergarten

classrooms and teachers. I used line-by-line- coding to analyze the data on the single-case level, followed by the coding and categorizing of data at the cross-case level. I introduced definitions to elucidate terms within the context of the study. I shared the assumptions guiding my study that teachers' interview responses were honest, tests used to identify at-risk status were accurate and valid, and that lessons observed were representative of instructional practice. The delimitations of the study included the problem of the study, the participants of the study, and the time frame for the collection of the data. The limitations of the study involved the limited duration of the study, my potential biases, and any inherent weaknesses in any of the assessments used to determine at-risk status. The significance of the study is that it may lead to improved pedagogy in addressing the environmental factors influencing the development of reading skills for kindergarten students who are homeless or at-risk in reading. Considered collectively, the elements presented in Chapter 1 provides an overview of my study.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review for this study. I describe the search strategies for the literature review and the conceptual framework. I explain how the conceptual framework was applied and its significance for this study. After the review of current research related to the problem, I continue with a discussion of the major themes and gaps found in the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Students in large, urban school districts in the United States who are homeless or considered at risk in reading face challenges that interfere with their school success. *Homeless status* is defined as students who are living in temporary housing, in a public place, or doubled up with friends or relatives (McKinney-Vento Homeless Act of 1987). *At risk status* in reading is defined as students who do not make grade-level requirements at target times during the school year (beginning, middle, and end). These students may face several academic challenges, such as poor self-regulation skills (Masten et al., 2015) and home literacy environments that do not support the development of early literacy skills (Robins et al., 2014). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development, the settings in which a child is immersed, such as school and the home, and the interactions between these settings, can influence a child's intellectual development before and after the child transitions to the school setting. There is a plethora of research (Chang & Gu, 2018; Masten et al., 2015; Phillips, Norris, Hayward, & Lowell, 2017) that details the academic challenges faced by students who are homeless, but the problem identified for this study was that few qualitative researchers have used an ecological lens to describe how the environment of the home and the school influences the early reading skills of these students identified as both homeless or at risk in reading. Taking this into consideration, this study focused on describing how school kindergarten teachers in a large urban school system take these ecological factors into consideration as they work to support the early reading skills of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading.

A summary of the research supports the relevance of this problem related to meeting the learning needs of these students. In the attempt to close the achievement disparity among these group of students, most states have adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, which include standards that address foundational reading skills, literature, and informational text (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018c). Response to Intervention, although not mandated by federal law, is considered as a "systematic process for a child's response to 'screening, intervention, and monitoring'" envisioned under the Individuals with Disability Act (Posny, 2019). In addressing the learning needs of these students, research also indicates that specific socioeconomic factors must be considered, including homeless status (Bassuk et al., 2014; Smart-Morstad, Triggs, & Langlie, 2017; Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014), low maternal educational level (Magnuson, 2007; Phillips et al., 2017) and inadequate home literacy environments (Hartas, 2011; Robins et al., 2014). Teacher effectiveness factors related to professional development (Bingham & Patton-Terry, 2013), instructional strategies and the home-school relationship (Brand, Marchand, Lilly, & Child, 2014) are also important to consider when addressing the educational needs of homeless students who are at risk in reading. Thus, educators who design reading programs must recognize the unique instructional challenges that students identified as homeless or at risk in reading may present and the research-based instructional strategies needed to address these challenges.

This chapter includes a review of the literature. The chapter includes a presentation of the search strategies employed to obtain peer-reviewed journal articles

published within the last 5 years, and a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework within the context of current research. The literature review contains a discussion of the environmental factors of the school that influence the early reading skills of kindergarten students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. These factors include (a) the K-2 reading curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, (b) the instructional strategies that teachers use to deliver these standards in the classroom, and (c) reading interventions pertaining to reading instruction for early childhood students identified at risk in reading. Literature reviewed includes the environmental factors related to the home, including the socioeconomic factors that influence the reading development of kindergarten students identified as homeless or at risk in reading, and teacher effectiveness factors in relation to student achievement in reading. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the themes and gaps that surfaced in the literature review.

Literature Search Strategies

Several literature search strategies provided guidance for locating peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2018. Strategies included searching specific databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, and ProQuest. Key words used in the search included *family, home*, *homelessness, federal and national or state policies,* and *reading* to find journal articles. Other key words utilized to expand the search for literature on reading curriculum and instruction at the elementary school level included *reading, elementary school and/or kindergarten and reading comprehension*, *primary grades and improving reading,* and *reading first*. The Walden University library staff suggested accessing the Thoreau database using the following key words: *child* or *children* and *homeless* or

homelessness and *literacy* or *literate*. This search yielded several relevant journal articles. The delimitation of "related journal articles" provided additional literature for the review, as did a search of the SocINDEX, which resulted in several peer reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2015. Education Source, with the search term, *research-based instructional strategies* yielded several articles, and one additional article from the "find similar results" feature. Citation chaining served to provide updated literature for at least one article through Education Source. Some problems encountered were finding articles published prior to 2010, finding empirical studies, and duplicating this search with similar terms. The terms, *tactile* and *early reading* resulted in only one article, so the "find related articles" search was once again employed. The ERIC database provided a suitable search engine from which to locate article titles. The results of the exhaustive literature search are presented in this chapter, beginning with the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Intellectual development can be fostered in the settings in which children are immersed. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development guided this study. The theory of ecological development posits that cognitive development is cultivated in the settings in which children are situated. Bronfenbrenner defined ecology as the study of the relationships and interactions of human groups in their natural or developed environments. The ecological framework of human development focuses on the interconnectedness of various systems found in a child's learning environment. These ecological systems are as follows: the microsystem-the immediate environment in which children are immersed, the mesosystem-the interactions between microsystems, to the

exosystem-the system in which they do not participate but which exerts an influence, and the macrosystem, the overall cultural environment in which children are involved.

These systems are nested within each other and the interactions occurring within the systems are important. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem form a structure that is consistent within similar cultures and subcultures, although variations occur within these structures across social classes. Events occurring in any of these structures may influence children's reading development. The influence of these events, according to Bronfenbrenner, should determine public policy. Based on this theory, therefore, educators should consider those events that positively or negatively affect students' development of early literacy skills. Educators must understand these events in relation to the microsystem, the mesosystem, and the exosystem so they can determine how to support literacy development through appropriate policies and programs.

Important interactions also occur across these nested systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that events, or "ecological transitions" (p. 6) which affect cognitive development and behavior, occur across these various ecological systems. These events influence the roles that individuals eventually assume in society. Bronfenbrenner contended that changes in roles equate to different expectations. For example, a child who becomes a big sister may be expected to look after the younger child, or a child who enters junior high school may not be expected to walk home from school. Bronfenbrenner argued that the most profound events occurring across these ecological systems are those events that allow a child to observe the actions of others, such as a child observing his or

her parents read a book. A child observing an activity is more likely to engage in that activity than one who has not observed the activity. These activities, whether intended or unintended, assist a child in adopting an observed behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In relation to this ecological framework, teachers should assist young children in making a role transfer from nonreaders to readers. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), this role transfer is possible through modeling. The capacity of a child to learn through modeling, however, is dependent on the level of stress found in an ecological system. Therefore, educators must determine if stress in an environment, such as the home, contributes to a parent's inability to model appropriate literacy behaviors. Stress often arises from the parents' exosystem, such as their place of employment or their past family life, which makes addressing their children's transitions to other ecological systems challenging (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, educators should understand the events that influence parents' ability to help their children mature as readers. Educators armed with this knowledge can mediate for these factors. Observation and investigation from an ecological perspective can make this knowledge possible.

The interactions (e.g., student-to-student, student-teacher, and parent-child) occurring within and across within the settings equate to a system. The basis of the ecological framework for human development is indicative of a systems' view (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The systems view embraces a dyad as a method of analysis, but also extends to describing the interrelationships among multiple individuals as a factor in human development, particularly in relation to the support that a person may receive within and across the "nested structures" of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979,

p. 3). Therefore, the need exists for an examination of such factors as interconnected relationships within and across various ecological systems. An in-depth understanding of these relationships within the classroom, for example, is necessary to bridge the achievement gap in reading between at-risk students and their peers.

Current research also supports Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological concepts about human development. Woolley and Bowen (2007) explored the influence of social capital, or positive adult-child interactions, on the level of school engagement of adolescent students in middle school. Woolley and Bowen found that the development of these positive adult-child interactions within the school setting or mesosystem, which is the cornerstone aspect of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development, serves to minimize some of the risk factors in the lives of middle school students. These risks are associated with crime levels in neighborhoods and students' demographic statistics. Similarly, Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) determined the home literacy growth pathways for children at several points during their childhood (15 months, 27 months, 37 months, and 63 months), finding a correlation to their pre-kindergarten emergent literacy skills. Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda's study aligned with Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem because students from families with a higher economic level and level of maternal education perform better at the prekindergarten level. In related research, Han et al. (2017) explored the influence of familial interactions in fostering the development of children's early emergent skills. Han et al. found that maternal warmth creates an environment rich in emotional affirmations between parent and child, which leads to a rich home literacy environment and improved performance on the children's oral

language (receptive and expressive language). The interactions within a family correspond to Bronfenbrenner's microsystem because the familial relationships influence a child's cognitive development (Han et al., 2017).

Thus, this study benefitted from the conceptual framework because it was focused on the various interactions within the child's world, particularly in relation to parent-child interactions, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined as the child's microsystem. This study was also focused on the interactions between teachers and students that occur within the child's mesosystem, and the influences that occur within a child's larger environment, which Bronfenbrenner described as the exosystem, particularly in relation to the alignment of the Common Core State Standards to the reading program. Lastly, this study was focused on the cultural influences, such as the socioeconomic status of the family, within a child's macrosystem. All these systems are embedded or nested systems that influence a children's cognitive development. Taking all of these points into consideration, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about environmental factors which influence the development of early reading skills, teachers' beliefs about instructional practices that foster early reading skills, and the remedial instruction teachers provide for homeless or students at risk in reading. This study was also explored and describe the documents, training, parental outreach and supports needed for the effective development of early reading skills for students who are homeless or at risk in reading.

Literature Review

This literature review is organized into six major sections. The first three sections include a background discussion on pathways leading to the adoption of the Common Core Standards, followed by (a) the reading curriculum for early childhood students, particularly kindergarten students, within the context of national and state standards; (b) reading instruction in the kindergarten classroom that is aligned with these standards; and (c) instructional standards and interventions for students identified at risk in reading in the early childhood classroom. The fourth section of the literature review is a review of an analysis of play-based learning and its role in furthering the academic pursuits of kindergarten students. The fifth section is an analysis of current research utilizing a similar research design and theoretical framework. This section also contains analysis about the socioeconomic factors influencing young children's reading development, including homelessness, the family's socioeconomic level, and maternal education. The sixth section is about effective models of professional development and outreach to parents.

Common Core State Standards in Reading for K-2 Students

The Common Core English Language Arts Standards for students in Grades K-2 are divided into the categories of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The subcategories for reading are foundational, literature, and informational text skills. The K-2 reading standards guide instruction in the classroom (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2019). These standards are found in Appendix A.

foundational reading skills standards for K-2 students include a continued emphasis on establishing and building student knowledge of phonics, phonological, phonemic awareness, and orthography (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). K-2 students should be able to

> (a) demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print; recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters; understand that words are separated by spaces in print; and recognize and name all upper and lower-case letters of the alphabet; (b) demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds; count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words; blend and segment onsets and rimes of single spoken words; isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds in three-part phonemes; and add or substitute individual sounds in simple, one-syllable words to make new words; (c) know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words and read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding. (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a).

In relation to the literacy standards, K-2 students should be able to

> (a) ask and answer questions about key details in a text; identify the main topic and retell key details in a text; describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text; and ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text; (b) recognize common types of texts; with prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and 'define their

> roles' in telling the story; with prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear; and with prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories; (c) actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding and with prompting and support, make connections between self, text, and the world around them. (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d).

The new standards related to informational text emphasize some of the same skills as the literacy standards, but also introduce new skills (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b). For example, K-2 students should be able to, with prompting and support…

> ask and answer questions about key details in a text; with prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text; with prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text; and with prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b).

However, K-2 students should now be able to

> identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book; name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text; and describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear. (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b)

K-2 students are also now required to “identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text; identify basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic; and actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding” (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b).

Limited research exists on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards across a variety of subjects, including reading. Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011) found a lack of alignment between the standards and state standards and assessments. Porter et al. (2011) argued that educators must be knowledgeable about college and career readiness standards because these standards were the catalyst for the adoption of the Common Core State Standards so that students could handle cognitively complex nonfiction texts. The Common Core State Standards and Initiatives (2018c) chronicled students to have skills in the intellectual manipulation of complex text for successful completion of college. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards for K-12 students established the pathway for equipping students from all economic strata with the ability to be not only college ready but career ready (New York State Department of Education, 2014). The Common Core State Standards offer the opportunity for the provision of equal educational opportunities for all students (New York State Department of Education, 2014). These standards in reading for K-2 students do not dictate how to teach, so opportunities for instructional creativity or innovation remain. The standards provide K-2 teachers with the benchmarks’ students should reach in reading by the end of Grade 2. The standards also allow highly mobile students to experience continuity in their educational goals. However, little research is available on

the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, especially for vulnerable student populations such as students identified as homeless who are at risk in reading.

District Standards

The state of New York adopted the Common Core State Standards and Initiatives for K-12 students in 2010. Educators in NYC Schools were required to integrate these standards into all K-12 instructional programs by 2013-2014 (New York State Department of Education, 2014). Network teams and trained teacher center staff members provided support to NYC teachers in implementing these standards into their instructional activities in the classroom (New York State Education Department, 2012). Teacher center staff members also served as the informational base for the selection and design of curriculum materials, instructional tools, and optional curriculum frameworks and units of instruction related to these standards. Principals and their staff members selected the curriculum materials used in each school (New York State Education Department, 2012). The New York City Department of Education also published a document titled *Core Knowledge Language Arts*, which was comprised of a listening and learning strand across 11 domains, and a skills strand, which includes 10 units. The lessons in the skills strand were aligned to the Common Core State Standards and to the NYC *Core Knowledge Language Arts*. Therefore, curriculum in the NYC schools was defined as a collection of lessons revolving around a specific content, inclusive of objectives and goals with supporting teacher and student resources. The goals and the objectives, with accompanying strategies, were aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the New York State Standards. The goal of these resources was to increase

the professional knowledge base of teachers and allow for the assessment of students across all learning goals and objectives.

Components of an Early Childhood Program

Effective teachers provide instruction to students in early childhood classrooms that fosters the development of early literacy skills. The National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000) described these early literacy skills as (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics instruction (c) silent and guided reading, (d) vocabulary, (e) fluency, and (f) comprehension strategies. Phonological awareness is a broad term that includes phonemic awareness. It should be taught authentically through playing games, as well as listening to songs and stories that contain alliterations and rhymes (Haggard, 2014). Phonemic awareness refers to the isolation, the deletion, the substitution, the categorization, blending, and segmenting of phonemes in words (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Phonics instructions refers to teaching students to use letter-sound (grapheme-sound) relationships to read and write words, as well as the blending and segmenting of sounds in words (Brown, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Ortiz et al. (2012) classified vocabulary into two broad categories: code-based and meaning-based. Code-based skills refer to the broad range of skills students need to successfully decode words, including phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. Meaning-based skills refer to language skills, which include vocabulary, grammar, and world knowledge (Ortiz et al., 2012).

Instructional Strategies and Interventions for Foundational Skills

Instructional strategies are defined as instructional practices that teachers employ to ameliorate the academic deficits of students (Skibbe, Gerde, Wright, & Samples-Steele, 2016). Instructional strategies are used to assist students in meeting a lesson's goal (Meador, 2018). Common Core ELA standards for kindergarten students in foundational skills include the following: print concepts (awareness), phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). I discuss each concept that fall under foundational skills in the following paragraphs.

Print awareness. Children should have an awareness of print. In preparation for becoming readers, they need to know, for example, that spoken words are represented in print and that words are read from left to right (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). The foundation for print awareness, or print concepts, per the Common Core Standards (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a) begins in the shared reading between a reader and a nonreader. Parents are in a unique position to build their children's awareness of print. Pillinger and Wood (2014) provided a DVD as well as "briefing pack" to train parents participating in a pilot study, (Pillinger & Wood, 2014, p. 157) and to give the rationale for joint reading of books. Pillinger and Wood determined that parent attitudes and confidence levels about joint reading improved, children's enjoyment of reading improved, the initiative had a positive influence on parent-child reading behaviors, and students' print awareness improved. Parent-child interaction through dialogic reading are vital parts of a preschool child

literacy development. As students transition to kindergarten, teachers can add to children's literacy development through dialogic reading.

Dialogic reading is a research-based intervention that teachers use to develop early literacy skills (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Dialogic reading includes instruction at both the literal and inferential levels of understanding. Therefore, teachers often use dialogic reading as an instructional strategy to assist students in improving their oral language skills. In dialogic reading, teachers use picture books to develop students' print awareness (i.e., title of book, author, and spacing of words). Effective dialogic reading capitalizes on dyad interactions between teacher and child or even parent and child. These interactions (student-teacher and parent to child) are of primary importance in the development of literacy skills.

Teachers should provide explicit and consistent instructional guidance in the use of dialogic reading as an invention. Pillinger and Wood (2014), in a pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of parent dialogic, shared reading interventions and parent attitude, among preschool students, outlined prompts to standardize procedures when using dialogic reading. *CROWD* is an acronym that gives directions to reader actions: *Complete prompts*, leaving out a predictable word in a sentence, *Recall prompts*, recalling what has happened in the story, *Opened-ended* statements, *Wh- prompts*, questions beginning with wh, and *Distancing prompts*, assisting students in making connections between the text and the student (Pillinger & Wood, 2014).

Read alouds should not be undertaken without a checklist to guide the session. Christenson (2016) examined the read aloud interactions of experienced kindergarten

teachers through the lens of *Class Interactive Reading Aloud* (CIRA). Read aloud sessions were observed, formal and informal interviews were conducted, and classroom environments during the observations were examined to create rich data in this collective case study. The four teachers used interactive read aloud to teach emergent skills and "maximize their literacy learning" (Christenson, 2016, p. 2145). The coded information was triangulated across and between the interviews and the observations, cross-case analysis. Christenson's findings showed the codes for the teachers' comments to the students during interactive read alouds. Some of these codes appeared to parallel the prompts from the study conducted by Pillinger and Wood (2014). For example, the *C* in the acronym CROWD (used to describe procedures used to guide the interactive read alouds between parents and child study parallel the *higher order code* (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). The *R* in the CROWD acronym parallel parent interactions that were coded *low order* (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). The procedural guide for dialogic reading (Pillinger & Wood, 2014) along with the examples of teacher verbal exchanges during a read aloud (Christenson, 2016) can be used to direct and give concrete examples of dialogic reading to teachers.

Phonological awareness. Instructional strategies should also be employed to build on students' phonological awareness, which the National Early Literacy Panel (Paciga, Hoffman, & Teale, 2011) stated is a predictor for reading and school success. The Common Core Standards for kindergarten Foundational Skill strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a) include teaching rhyming words, counting and blending segments, and syllables, as well as blending onsets and rimes and identifying

initial medial, and final sound/phonemes.

Phonological awareness is a broad term that encompasses several skills for proper reading development (Brown, 2014). Phonological awareness is built as students' progress from larger sound units to smaller sound units, sentences, syllables, onsets, rimes, initial, medial, and final sounds (phonemes) of words. Students learn that the English language includes various sound units (phonemes) represented by various graphemes (letter or letter combinations), and that these units can be manipulated to form various words (Brown, 2014). Phonological awareness is predicated upon students being able to hear the different sounds that form the basis of the English language.

Zoski and Erickson (2017) conducted a study to determine if a "three-pronged linguistic awareness intervention" (p. 38), which included morphological awareness, phonological awareness, and letter knowledge, is as effective as the traditional interventions of phonological awareness intervention and letter knowledge intervention for struggling kindergarten students. Three treatments groups participated in 20 weeks of intervention for a total of 120 hours. The mean age for the at-risk kindergarten students was 72.1 months. Zoski and Erickson determined that the addition of a morphological awareness intervention did not negatively influence the effectiveness of traditional interventions. Students receiving interventions in the three treatments showed significant gains in word reading, phonological awareness, morphological awareness and morphological spelling. Goldstein et al. (2017) conducted an intervention among struggling preschool students. Goldstein et al. sought to determine if classroom teachers believed the intervention was beneficial, if they could effectively implement a phonemic

awareness intervention in their classrooms, and if the phonemic awareness of the treatment group was effective compared to the vocabulary and comprehension intervention for the control group. The program for the treatment group (n = 60) was *Pathway to Literacy* and the program for the control group (n = 53) was *Story Friends.* The mean ages for participants in each group were 56.4 months and 55.9 months, respectively. Goldstein et al. determined that the teachers perceived the social validity of the intervention and believed the intervention could be successfully implemented in their classrooms. Goldstein et al. also determined that an intervention program focused on phonemic awareness is significant for struggling preschool students transitioning to kindergarten. The strength of Goldstein et al.'s study was that the researchers sought to determine the social validity of the intervention. Social validity of an intervention approach is important because if teachers do not believe in its efficacy, they may be reluctant to follow the prescribed path of its implementation.

In related research, Simmons et al. (2011) examined at-risk kindergarten students' response and teachers' perception to a supplemental reading intervention program, known as *Early Reading Intervention.* Simmons et al. found that the intervention students performed better than the control group in alphabet knowledge, letter sound recognition, phonemic awareness, and word attack skills. Fien et al. (2015) conducted a similar study to improve the reading achievement of at-risk first grade students. Fien et al. used a multitier approach, which aligned the core instructional program with the intervention program. Fien et al. determined that the phonemic awareness of the students receiving intervention improved. The strength of the study was that the intervention could be

implemented by either classroom teachers or instructional assistants with only 30 minutes of daily engagement.

An effective practice is teaching literacy skills is in combination with fine and gross movement (Callcott, Hammond, & Hill, 2015; Chang & Gu, 2018; Hamm & Harper, 2014). In a study on the explicit teaching of phonological skills, including letter-sound knowledge, the alphabetic principal, blending, rhyming, and segmentation along with movement, Callcott et al. (2015) found that combining movement and explicit teacher of early literacy skills "is a synergistic benefit for children" (p. 209). A strength of Callcott et al.'s study is that one of the movement activities can be achieved in 15 minutes a day, so the implementation would be feasible in the average classroom. Hamm and Harper (2014) also focused on the importance of fine motor skills in the development of literacy skills, but they included the importance of visual perceptual skills as well. Hamm and Harper found that the foundational literacy skills (i.e., letter naming and initial sound fluency, and nonsense word reading) of kindergarten children who received small-group intervention improved when these skills were combined with fine and visual motor skills development.

Phonemic awareness is another skill that students should be taught, and therefore instructional strategies that enhance phonemic awareness should be utilized in the classroom. Brown (2014) defined phonemic awareness as the ability of students to differentiate, identify, and work with phonemes, the smallest unit of sounds, to read and write words (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Brown contended that oral language is the vehicle through which phonemic awareness is achieved. A

variety of books should be used in the classroom to improve a child's ability to differentiate between phonemes in the English language. These books should highlight rhymes and predictable passages so that students have repeated opportunities to hear a variety of phonemes and build literacy skills (Kozla, 2015). Librarians can provide services to parents toward building literacy skills through nursery rhymes (Kropp, 2013). High quality education for the kindergarten classroom should also include the teaching and posting of nursery rhymes, as well as the teaching of finger plays and songs, as viable strategies to build phonemic awareness (Brown, 2014).

Formative and summative assessments of at-risk students are necessary components of effective RTI protocols. Oslund et al. (2012) examined progress monitoring measures to predict the responses of kindergarten students to early reading interventions at schools located in eastern Connecticut and south-central Texas. The curriculum-based assessments comprised the basic skills cluster that included reading or writing of letters or words, referred to as alphabetic, and isolating, blending, and segmenting sounds, referred to as phonemic awareness (p. 86). The published assessments were the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and included the Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtests. Oslund et al. determined that although the combined measures of DIBELS and the ERI measures predicted the amount of variance in student scores, the mastery checks were the "strongest individual predictor" at each of the progress monitoring points (p. 97). Thus, tools used to monitor the progress of at-risk students are

an aspect of RTI protocols that should be given as much consideration as the choice of the intervention.

Phonics instruction. Several models exist to assist in phonics instruction. Two such models are synthetic phonics and eclectic phonics. In a comparison of synthetic phonics to eclectic phonics, McGeown (2015) explored implications for early reading acquisition. McGeown found that letter-sound awareness and memory span were skills that students drew upon when instructed through a synthetic phonics approach, which the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000), also defined as an approach that relies on the teaching of phonemes or the smallest sound units. Students use this knowledge to sound out and blend letters to read words. Therefore, students depend on their memories to recall the pattern of letters and their sounds to read words. McGeown concluded that letter awareness and sound awareness are vital to the attainment of early literacy skills; therefore, students who come to school with vocabulary deficiencies may benefit from synthetic phonics.

Stanley and Finch (2018) conducted an action research study to determine if the employment of two instructional strategies would improve the alphabet knowledge of kindergarten students who were not able to identify 10 letters and their sounds at the beginning of the year. The instructional strategies involved alphabets books and direct handwriting practice of the letters and sounds the students did not know. Huang, Clark, and Wedel (2013) conducted a similar study using an iPad to improve students' alphabet knowledge. Both studies revealed that the post-assessment scores of the students' alphabet knowledge were improved by use of the iPad (Huang et al., 2013) and alphabet

books (Stanley & Finch, 2018). These instructional approaches appeal to multiple senses with tactile letters and an iPad for alphabet knowledge improvement. Although the subjects in a study conducted by Mohamad and Tan Abdullah (2017) were dyslexic students, such an approach may be beneficial for students who are at risk for reading failure. According to Mohamad and Tan Abdullah, incorporating tactile letters and an iPad offered the "use of multiple pathways to the brain at one time" (p. 170), emphasizing the strategies' strength to match alphabet books and handwriting practice. A strength of Mohamad and Tan Abdullah's study is that it offered a multisensory approach to learning via use of the tactile letters and the iPad. A weakness in in this study is that students may not have access to iPads in the classroom, thus limiting its applicability in all classroom settings.

Grapheme instruction. Vowel graphemes, such as ee, ai, and ea, represent different spellings for phonemes. Savage, Georgiou, Parrila, and Maiorino (2018) sought to determine if small group intervention would influence the reading outcomes of kindergarten and first grade students. The intervention involved the teaching of graphemes in a text called "Direct Mapping," teaching vowel digraphs, and a two-step process for teaching regular and irregular words called, "Set-for-Variability" (Savage et al., 2018, p. 227). It was determined that the small-group intervention, which was conducted for 10-11 hours over an 11-week period, was effective in improving the reading outcomes of at-risk students. The weakness in this intervention model was that the students participated in 30-minute sessions outside the classroom, along with

additional time when possible. It may be difficult to schedule this intervention model in a typical classroom.

In a similar study focused on teaching frequently occurring grapheme-phoneme words in children's text, Chen and Savage (2014) found that the treatment group outperformed the word usage control group in reading measures. Earle and Sayeski (2017) attested to the benefit of "direct, explicit, and systematic instruction" (p. 267) of graphemes-phonemes words to improve student reading outcomes in agreement with Chen and Savage and Savage et al. (2018),

Sight words. There are various methods to teach sight words. January, Lovelace, Foster, and Ardoin (2017) conducted a study to determine which of two methods of learning sight words was most effective and efficient among first grade students who were at risk in reading. The two methods were Incremental Rehearsal (IR) and Strategic Incremental Rehearsal (SIR). Incremental Rehearsal involved the incremental addition of unknown words as new words were introduced, but in the case of SIRS, known words were introduced one at a time. Interventionists repeated phrases when introducing the words and when correcting students' responses. It was determined that the SIRS method was more efficient and effective than the IR method among first and second grade students (January et al., 2017). Teacher modeling is important in flashcard interventions, just as it is in another intervention called Sight Word Instruction is Fundamental to Reading (SWIFT) (Broz et al., 2016). In SWIFT, words are modeled by the teacher and repetition is plentiful, as in the flashcard interventions (Broz et al., 2016). Games are also

a method to teach sight words, along with phonemic awareness (Gibbon, Duffield, Hoffman, & Wageman, 2017).

The early classroom environment plays a role in students' early literacy development. Baroody and Diamond (2016) sought to determine how the literacy environment of 4- and 5-year old preschool students would relate to their interest and engagement in literacy activities, and how the quality of the environment related to their early literacy skill development (phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and expressive language). Students' interest in activities were determined by the teacher during free play and their levels of engagement by researchers during free play and whole group activities (i.e., read alouds) using Likert scales. Literacy-rich environments have the following: classroom management, opportunities for verbal exchanges, a variety of books and opportunities for read alouds as well as print and writing materials, charts, and charts with students' opinions and likeness (Baroody & Diamond, 2016). Baroody and Diamond determined that classroom literacy environment was related to teachers' report of interest and observers' report of engagement during free time. Students' letter knowledge was positively related to teachers' report of interest and observers' report of engagement during whole group instruction. The interest and observations were related to student phonological awareness (Baroody & Diamond, 2016). The classroom environment should be replete with charts that are generated in conjunction with the development of phonological skills.

Fluency. In a discussion of foundational skills that support emergent readers, Brown (2014) argued that fluency is an outgrowth of the development of oral language

skills. As students grow in their oral language abilities, they concurrently grow in their knowledge of the alphabetic principle and the structure of the English language (Brown, 2014). Their growth in oral language also strengthens their ability to read and comprehend text (Brown, 2014). It is important to develop oral language skills through fluency training (Förster, Kawohl, & Souvignier, 2018). A longitudinal study conducted by Förster et al. (2018) used on-going assessment and differentiated instruction to improve the reading fluency of third grade students. The differentiated instruction that proved effective in improving fluency was paired one-minute reading with another student. Students still showed the evidence of the fluency training when they were retested at the end of fourth grade. Förster et al. demonstrated that fluency improvement can be affected within a context of whole-group instruction, but the study would be needed to repeated using kindergarten-aged students as the subjects. Fien et al. (2015) used a multi-tiered approach to improve, among other things, the oral fluency of first grade students. Students in this instructional and intervention approach had teacher modeling, increased opportunities at guided and independent practice, and alignment between the core program and the intervention. Students receiving the treatment improved in oral fluency reading (phonemic awareness, word recognition, and reading comprehension; Fien et al., 2015). Kocaarslan and Yamac (2015) stated that rereading of words contained on word walls is a viable strategy for improving fluency levels.

Instructional Strategies for Literature and Interventions

The standards under this strand include key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity

(Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d). The key ideas and details standard are met when students ask and answer questions about a text, retell a story, and identify characters, settings, and major event. The craft and structure standard involved asking and answering questions about unknown words, naming the author, title, and illustrator, and recognizing different genre. The standard of integration of knowledge and ideas is met when students see the relationship between illustrations and the story (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d). The following sections include a discussion of questioning techniques/strategies, discussion of strategies for retelling a story and identifying story elements (story maps), vocabulary development, strategy to improve comprehension, and small group intervention. Interventions and whole group instructional strategies are interspersed throughout the sections.

Story mapping (whole group and intervention). The use of instructional strategies should be based on the present need of students. Thompson (2017) found that the common thread across teachers' use of instructional strategies in their kindergarten classrooms was student need. Grünke and Teidig (2017) combined partner work with positive enforcement and story mapping to improve the reading comprehension of third-grade students. Teachers read, modeled, and completed the story maps, using the maps to retell the story. Students and their partners followed the same procedure modeled by the teacher to complete the story map. This procedure was repeated daily. Grünke and Teidig found that the comprehension of the students improved. This approach, as well as the approach by Millah (2018) was suitable for whole group instruction. Millah's study differed from Grünke and Teidig's study because it focused on students determining the

main idea and details for paragraphs. Other researchers substantiated the value of story maps as an intervention to improve comprehension for third grade students with ADHD (Chavez, Martinez, & Pienta, 2015) as an approach to improve comprehension.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary development should be the result of teachers' deliberate actions. Jalongo and Sobolak (2011) contended that educators need to provide adequate instructional time for students to develop their word knowledge. After selecting vocabulary words for instruction and assessing children's knowledge of chosen words, teachers must give students time for repeated opportunities, in varied contexts, to learn a word (Myers & Ankrum, 2016). This instruction should also utilize enactive, iconic, and symbolic practices (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). Enactive practices involve the attachment of some action to the teaching of vocabulary words. The action could involve using the word in a retelling of a story or in the creation of a new story with the use of props (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). With respect to iconic practices for vocabulary development, activities might include the attachment of an object to a newly introduced word. As teachers focus on the use of enactive and iconic practices, students will learn to make associations (i.e., symbolic practice) with the symbols for the ideas that the teacher presents (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). Teachers should employ a variety of strategies to strengthen students. McKenzie (2014) reviewed visual strategies to strengthen young learners' vocabulary knowledge. McKenzie spoke of using the following: Venn diagram, the Frayer model, Vocab-o-gram, and word maps to provide interactive visualizations in young children's learning of vocabulary words.

Vocabulary instruction also benefits students in their development of receptive and expressive language. In an article that explored the use of evidence-based strategies to support vocabulary growth for young children, Myers and Ankrum (2016) identified three tiers of words: Tier 1 words are defined as words that lend themselves to pictorial representations such as cat, dog, and cow; Tier 2 words are abstract words such as friendship, love, and loyalty. Tier 3 words are words that are found in core academic content areas such as science, social studies, and mathematics.

The importance of expanding the vocabulary of young children cannot be understated. Vocabulary provides the foundation for reading comprehension (Moore, Hammond, & Fetherston, 2014) and the development of literacy skills (Hammer et al., 2017). Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds enter school with a smaller vocabulary bank than their peers from middle-income backgrounds (Hammer et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2018). Therefore, kindergarten teachers should consider this research, especially in providing instruction for students who are identified as homeless or at risk in reading.

The context for expanding vocabulary should also be based on real-life situations that children may encounter daily (Paciga et al., 2011). Similar to how the multiple reading of a text aids the development of fluency (Förster et al., 2018), multiple reads of a book with a focus on vocabulary also aids in the learning of new vocabulary words (McKenzie, 2014; Paciga et al., 2011). In an examination of vocabulary instruction in early childhood, Christ and Wang (2010) encouraged the explicit teaching of vocabulary from thematic units. Christ and Wang compared the process of vocabulary development

to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which involves assimilation and accommodation; however, they called this process fast mapping (Christ & Wang, 2010, p. 85). Young students take in clues from their environment (assimilation) and adjust or expand their understanding (accommodation) as they encounter new instances of word use (Christ & Wang, 2010).

An instructional approach that allows for additional contact time with vocabulary content may be useful to aid some students in improving their vocabulary knowledge. Cuticelli et al. (2015) outlined a multi-tier instructional approach in the classroom. The tiered instruction involves the core instruction and tier 2 instruction. The tier 2 instruction takes place with small groups of students for 20-30 minutes, four days each week, supplementing the core instruction (tier 1). Students are shown examples and non-examples of illustrated words followed by explicit instruction of the word on the second day, along with various illustrated pictures of the vocabulary word. The second day of instruction also involves a "picture sort" (Cuticelli et al., 2015, p. 50). During this sort, the students identify the vocabulary word and describe the pictures. During the third and fourth day, students are given examples of the word along with the definitions. The teacher models and scaffolds to assist the students in the creation of word webs and charts, gradually extending their knowledge as necessary. Multitiered instruction offers promise in the development of a student's vocabulary and students' reading outcomes with respect to phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and fluency.

Dialogic reading has at least one other instructional benefit in addition to providing the awareness of print, building parent-child relationships, improving parent

confidence in book reading with their children (Pillinger & Wood, 2014) and developing the surrogate parent-child relationship (Baker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2014). Dialogic reading can be used to build vocabulary growth. Gonzalez, Pollard-Durodola, Simmons, Taylor, Davis, Fogarty, and Simmons (2014) labeled conversation before, during, and after dialogic reading "extratextual talk" (p. 215). Extratextual talk involves higher-order questioning and statements that often translates into students' vocabulary growth (Elleman, Lindo, Morphy, & Compton, 2009).

Gonzalez et al. (2014) conducted small-group interventions among preschool students to determine if teacher-led conversations before reading and after reading influenced the development of receptive and expressive vocabulary. Small-group intervention, which covered science and social studies themes were conducted over an 18-week period in 20-minute sessions. Teacher instruction and teacher extratextual talk were taped, coded and analyzed. Teachers built the students' background knowledge and previewed the book before the shared-reading intervention. During reading, the teachers explicitly taught children the meaning of two to four vocabulary words that were chosen prior to beginning the study. After shared-book reading, students were led in a conversation that included book-related questions about the vocabulary words. Guided conversations occurring during the sessions included "declarative sentences in which the teachers label/identify information, define/explain, clarify association between words and concepts and relate a book to children's statements" (Gonzalez et al., 2014, p. 215).

Gonzalez et al. (2014) provided teachers with scripted teaching points about the content-related vocabulary but allowed the teachers to develop the flow of the lesson by

their unique teaching styles and personalities. Through the “explicit vocabulary instruction, interactive dialogues, conceptual clustering of words and the ‘sessions’ structure” (p. 217), Gonzalez et al. demonstrated significant gains in preschool students’ receptive knowledge and receptive and expressive knowledge of content area words. This intervention provided a script for implementation, but also allowed teachers to interject their creativity in the lesson, advantageous for teachers who yearn for guidance, yet want room for creativity (Gonzalez et al., 2014). The investment in time for this intervention, 20 minutes daily for 13 weeks, is achievable in a classroom setting. An intervention that would involve a larger time commitment may present challenges to fit within an existing schedule. There were parallels between Gonzalez et al.’s (2014) study and Pillinger and Wood’s (2014) study. The parallels were evident in the coded teacher feedback (Gonzalez et al., 2014) and the procedural prompts, which lead to the teacher feedback (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). For example, Pillinger and Wood used the acronym CROWD to outline procedural prompts during dialogic reading; the D stands for “Distancing,” where students make connections between themselves and the text. In Gonzalez et al.’s study, students were also guided to “connect concepts in the story with life experiences” (p. 220). Adding to the discussion, Gonzalez et al.’s findings may be compared to Christenson’s (2016) findings to add to the rationale for this study on at least two levels. First, both researchers advocated for the use of teacher and student dialogic interactions with similar characteristics. Second, both researchers highlighted the use of higher order questioning techniques platformed from content related books (Christenson, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2014). Irrespective of the term used to describe the teacher and student

interactions that occur from reading a book, shared-reading (Gonzalez et al., 2014) or interactive read aloud (Christenson, 2016), children benefit from the act of book reading. Gonzalez et al. used a teaching approach that segments instruction into three parts, beginning, during reading, and after reading. This systematic and segmented approach may also be useful in improving comprehension.

Comprehension. Dubé, Dorval, and Bessette (2013) used an instructional approach that segments a lesson into a set of activities followed before, during, and after. They used this instructional approach as an intervention to improve the comprehension of third and fourth grade students. The teachers explicitly taught strategies to improve the reading comprehension of students over a nine-month period with 90-minute sessions. Students were grouped according to need (i.e., flexible grouping), and the four teachers and one interventionist met monthly to determine the strategies to be taught and to regroup students as needed. The reading comprehension strategies were taught through explicit teacher modeling, independent and guided practice, assessment, and teacher feedback. Dubé et al. (2013) determined the reading performance of the students improved from pre to post assessment. The possibility of implementing 10 monthly 90-minte sessions within an instructional day might be difficult to schedule. Additionally, daily interventions that evidence improvement in students' literacy skills (Christenson, 2016; Cuticelli et al., 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2014) might be preferable and manageable to an intervention that takes place monthly with a 90-minute commitment. The implications of flexible grouping with its attention to meeting "the diverse and changing needs of all students" (Dubé et al., 2013, p. 3) is noteworthy. The integration of flexible grouping

with the other small group interventions might be advantageous to meeting the need of at-risk students.

Guided reading/Small group. Classroom instruction that affords a small group of students with focused teacher attention and increased opportunities to practice an early literacy skill has a beneficial place in the early childhood classroom. Oostdam, Blok, and Boendermaker (2015) conducted individual and guided reading group interventions to determine if the reading attitude, reading vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension of at-risk students in grades 2 through 4 would be influenced. They determined that the one-on-one and guided reading formats influenced only the reading attitudes and fluency levels of these students. In contrast to these findings, Fien et al. (2015) found that the performance of at-risk first graders who received small group intervention based on a multi-tier intervention approach, showed “potential positive effect” on reading comprehension measures. The intervention, which was provided by teachers, was explicit and provided students with multiple opportunities to practice skills taught such as nonsense word reading, sound spelling, and fluency practice. The strength of Fien et al.’s study was that teachers who received professional development could implement the model in their classrooms.

Instructional Strategies and Interventions for Informative Text

Informative texts include key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and the range of reading and level of text complexity (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b). Students ask and answer questions about the details in a story, identifying the main idea and retelling the key details, and describe the

connection between "individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text" (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b). The craft and structure standard involve asking and answering questions about unknown words in a text, identifying the front and back covers, and the title, as well as the author and illustrator of a text (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b).

Despite the differences in text structure between expository and fictional literature, some strategies can be used for both types of text structure. Kuhn, Rausch, McCarty, Montgomery, and Rule (2017) conducted a study to explore the influence of explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies with nonfiction texts compared to fictional texts on the reading comprehension and vocabulary attainment of first and second grade students. The strategies, which were explicitly taught by classroom teachers, were as follows: teaching students to differentiate the important information from the unimportant, teaching student to activate schema for a story (e.g., connecting the known to the unknown), and teaching students to visualize information (Kuhn et al., 2017). Teaching content vocabulary words was also a part of the study. Students were taught the strategies alternating between 2 weeks of nonfiction texts followed by 2 weeks of fictional texts followed by hands-on activities. Classroom teachers individually assessed students' application of the strategies, attitude regarding nonfictional text, and vocabulary development. The cycle was repeated twice for an 8-week intervention period. Kuhn et al. determined that students' attitude concerning nonfictional texts improved significantly over that of fictional texts. Additionally, the effect sizes for the use of the three strategies were greater for nonfiction text than it was for fictional texts

for a first-grade class. The results also indicated that students learned more nonfictional vocabulary words than fictional words. A significant finding was that comprehension strategies could be used with both nonfictional and fictional texts and that, through explicit instruction, students were able to identify the differences in text structure (Kuhn et al., 2017). However, the feasibility of this study's implementation in the average classroom is questionable. Neugebauer, Chafouleas, Coyne, McCoach, and Briesch (2016) determined that teachers' perception of an intervention implementation could influence student achievement. The three classroom teachers assessed the students' levels on vocabulary attainment, attitude regarding nonfictional texts, and use of the strategies, individually. Dombek et al. (2017) and Williams et al. (2016) conducted studies focused on teaching text structures found in expository texts and discovered that instruction led to improved comprehension of expository text structures. Dombek et al. involved whole class instruction in science and social studies among kindergarten through fourth grade students using a developed instructional program, content-area literacy instruction using strategies such as think-pair-share and brainstorming to get across the content area. Students who participated in the instruction showed improvement in oral language and reading comprehension levels. Although it would be nearly impossible for a teacher with a class of 25 students to conduct individual assessments as was done in Kuhn et al.'s study, Dombek et al.'s methods may be more feasible for the average teacher to implement.

Expository text structure differs from that of narrative texts. Informative or expository text structures include description/list, cause-effect, compare and contrast, and

problem-solution (National Education Association [NEA], n.d.), as compared to fictional narratives, which usually include characters moving toward completion of a goal (Breit-Smith, Olszewski, Swoboda, Guo, & Prendeeville, 2017). Breit-Smith et al. (2017) conducted a study on sequencing text structure in a small group setting (i.e., three students) intervention for preschool students with language impairment not related to autism, cognitive, or language impairments, or English as a second language. Intervention services were administered by special education teachers and speech teachers. The teacher used language facilitation strategies (e.g., asking inferential and literal questions, and positive feedback), provided support during questioning (e.g., think alouds, summarizing the text, using visual cues, and having student to identify topics characteristics) and planned activities after the interactive book reads (e.g., using graphic organizers). Breit-Smith et al. determined that teachers had increased use of the language facilitation strategies and students had significant increases in expository text and language skills related to sequence text structure. Breit-Smith et al. did not use a diverse group of students; all the students were Caucasian; neither were any children from different socio-economic groups. The average income of the families was from $50,000 to $85,000 and up. Parents had at least a high school degree and above. These factors constituted weaknesses in the study, so the study would need to be replicated with a group of racially and economically diverse students. In a meta-analysis on text structure instruction, Hebert, Bohaty, Nelson, and Brown (2016) found that the focus on text structure, mostly compare/contrast and cause and effect, led to improved comprehension by students, and that writing (i.e., note taking and sentence writing) helped improve the

effectiveness of text structure instruction. These effects were also noted for students who were at risk in reading (Hebert et al., 2016).

Play as a Function of Culture

Play is an important part of reading instruction. However, varied definitions of play exist. Hope-Southcott (2013) noted that play is “enjoyable, child-centered, and imaginative” (p. 40). Peterson, Forsyth, and McIntyre (2015) defined play as a “child-initiated activity . . . in which the child has freedom of choice as they discover and construct understandings from interactions with others and objects” (p. 42). Weisberg, Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek, and Golinkoff (2013) defined play as “playful activities ‘that are’ joyful and voluntary” (p. 41). Pyle and Bigelow (2015) defined play as “peripheral to learning; as a vehicle for social and emotional development; and academic learning” (p. 390-391). Thus, definitions of play are similar in that the child is at the core of its perpetuation and play benefits the child.

Researchers have also described various characteristics of play, as well as concerns that teachers believe hamper their implementation of play in their classrooms. One characteristic of play is that it is a child-centered, natural activity that allows children to interact with individuals and objects in their environment, which fosters learning (Weisberg et al., 2013). In a Canadian study about balancing play-based learning with curriculum requirements, Peterson et al. (2015) believed that play is socially constructed. Teachers in Peterson et al.’s study believed they needed to understand the child’s culture before play could be an effective tool in their classrooms. Teachers felt that acceptable play in one cultural group may not be acceptable in another cultural

group. Teachers, therefore, believed that effective play in the classroom presents time consuming challenges that compound their workload. Nevertheless, Peterson et al. concluded that play-based learning supports the growth of students in ways that aid their academic growth. Thus, educators should be aware of play's underlying principles or tenets when considering its place in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

Another characteristic of play-based learning is that it supports the social and oral language development of students (Peterson et al., 2015). As children communicate with each other in play, they build expressive and receptive language. Expressive and receptive language development is fundamental in the development of reading ability (Paciga et al., 2011). Play-based learning also fosters the sharpening of social skills. By engaging in play, children learn to make behavioral adjustments, thereby building social skills (Hansel, 2015; Hope-Southcott, 2013).

Teachers face a quandary as to when classroom play should cease in place of curriculum mandates (Peterson et al., 2015). This dilemma may be more intense among first grade teachers than among kindergarten teachers. First grade teachers, Peterson et al. (2015) noted, should contemplate the appropriate times to integrate play into the daily activities of their students. Despite the potential of play-based learning to encourage social and oral language development and reading readiness, Peterson et al. also found that it adds to teachers' concerns about implementation. Peterson et al. stated that teachers must find a balance between curricular demands and the implementation of play-based learning in the classroom. Teachers also must address parents' concerns that play-based learning time will not detract from their child's preparedness for the next grade.

The implementation of play-based learning is especially intense in the first-grade classroom because teachers must assure parents, as major stakeholders, that play-based learning is an integral component in the classroom. Despite the inherent challenges that play-based learning presents in the classroom, however, Peterson et al. believed that teachers can successfully implement play in their classrooms.

Successful implementation of play in any classroom is dependent on the direct actions of the teacher. Hope-Southcott (2013) investigated the use of play in her kindergarten drama center. Hope-Southcott found that student learning improved in many areas (e.g., cognitive, social, fine motor, gross motor, and communication domains). Student learning improved through teacher planning, introducing appropriate subject area tools, allowing sufficient child-interaction time, making centers distinctive, and making deliberate attempts to develop language. These actions were facilitated through observations and critical reflections. For example, Hope-Southcott, as the teacher-researcher, created a bakery-themed center through a “shared experience” (p. 41) of a neighborhood bakery. In a similar study, Peterson et al. (2015) advocated play centered on themes. Hope-Southcott noted that she introduced the following props at various times to expand students’ experience: rolling pins, oven mitts, wooden cookies, spatulas, cookie sheets, muffin pans, buttons to decorate the cookies, gingerbread scented, playdough, a storefront window, order forms, and paper bag for the delivery of the cookies. These tools served to reinforce a bakery-themed play. Hope-Southcott introduced the items as she observed the children’s interactions. Hope-Southcott took pictures, maintained notes on the children’s conversation, and collected work samples as

evidence of student learning. Hope-Southcott also reflected on the experiences that students still needed to meet their learning goals.

Similar to the findings in the Hope-Southcott (2013) study, Einarsdottir (2013) found that teachers' observations of children involved in play are important to the success of play-based learning. In an action-based research centered on the attitudes of preschool teachers to play and literacy and the connection between play and literacy, Einarsdottir noted that observation is pivotal in the play environment. Einarsdottir found that preschool teachers' observations of students in play led to the establishment of learning goals centered on literacy development. Teachers modeled and supported the integration of play and literacy through the introduction of "prop boxes" focused on a theme (Einarsdottir, 2013, p. 100). Materials that supported the theme of a grocery store included items that could be found in a story (e.g., groceries, paper money, credit card slips, telephones, and cash register). Teachers also demonstrated interpersonal actions that could occur in the store. They supported the children's learning through questioning, gradually withdrawing their support as the students grew in independence. The preschool teachers found that as they connected play and literacy, so did the children. The findings from the Hope-Southcott study, as well the study conducted by Einarsdottir concluded that the development of themes and scenarios lead students toward their desired learning goals.

Hope-Southcott (2013) also argued that the construction of scenarios leading to desired educational goals is considered inquiry-based learning. Citing the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Hope-Southcott stated that inquiry-based learning

necessitates creating an atmosphere that engages students so that exploration, investigation, and communication are evident in play. The experiences in the bakery center created opportunities for students to explore numbers and expand their literacy and language skills. Her creation of a dynamic and engaging learning center in the classroom capitalized on students' interests and literacy skills, showing that play-based learning is an appropriate tool in the classroom. Not only is play-based learning possible, play-based learning leads to the development of other social skills that are necessary for academic success (Hope-Southcott, 2013).

Students acquire other skills in play-based learning that may prove helpful in their role as students. Self-regulation is a skill acquired through play-based learning (Hope-Southcott, 2013). Self-regulation refers to the ability of a child to establish goals and stay focused until the goals are reached. Play-based learning allows for the development of this skill because children are focused on maintaining play. The inclusion of play-based learning in the early childhood classroom is an academic necessity because it is the foundation for children's development in vital areas such as expressive language, social and emotional development, cognitive development, and physical development (Hope-Southcott, 2013).

Social and emotional development. Play is also pivotal in the development of a child's social-emotional development. Blocks, in their various geometrical shapes, offer children the opportunity to address events that influence their immediate world (Hansel, 2015). Children who have experienced a house fire, for instance, may be able to reenact this occurrence with a favorable ending by using blocks, thereby gaining an outlet to

express their feelings regarding the traumatic event. Hansel (2015) concluded that block play offers opportunities for social and emotional growth in young children. In a discussion about blocks as standard equipment in primary classrooms, Durham (2015) argued that block play offers children the opportunity to build and maintain relationships, as well as learn how to resolve conflict. Relationships with children's own peers is not the only by-product of block play because children also learn to build relationships with adults (Durham, 2015).

Cognitive development. There are benefits to returning blocks to the classroom. Hansel (2015) contended that the use of blocks by children in the classroom has many unexpected benefits. For example, blocks offer children the opportunity to improve their spatial visualization and orientation skills. Children may use blocks to construct types of building they observe in their environment, as well as to learn the related terms for these buildings from books that teachers read to them. Children also learn to problem solve as they attempt to recreate or construct a building. Play with blocks in the early childhood classroom is also beneficial to students in improving their cognitive skills in mathematics (Hansel, 2015).

Block play affords children the opportunity to explore "measurement, geometry, and spatial relations" (Hansel, 2015, p. 48). Block play encourages students to have sensory and visual experiences with three-dimensional objects, an experience that is not achieved with pencil and paper. Children also learn to count and measure the length, width, or height of blocks. Block building also affords children the opportunity to explore part-whole relationships through geometric shapes; for example, children learn about the

part-whole relationship as they recreate the roof section of a building (Hansel, 2015). Children in Hansel's (2015) study drew and labeled pictures of their creations, posting them in the classroom for future conversations. Children also explored the immediate surroundings of the school and used computer tablets to take photographs of the buildings. These photos served as the platform from which children would name the shapes in a building composition, reinforcing their knowledge of geometric shapes. Building with blocks allowed children to learn about their spatial relationships to the building they created. For example, are they "next to" or in front of" their buildings or is the triangle "on top of" or below the square? Although block building appears simplistic, especially with teacher assistance, Hansel found that it provides invaluable mathematical experiences for students. Thus, Hansel concluded that teacher assistance in structuring play activities should not be viewed as an intrusion to play-based learning.

In a related study about balancing play-based learning with curricular mandates, Peterson et al. (2015) found that teachers were concerned that any structuring of children's play would minimize the child-centeredness of the play. However, Hansel (2015) found that teacher structuring efforts in relation to play expanded student learning. Children's vocabulary expanded through teachers' open-ended questioning and the integration of related books. Hansel concluded that block play not only provides an in-depth exploration of geometric shapes, but it also creates a pathway for scientific explorations.

Exploration of geometric shapes, along with an assortment of other materials, establishes a foundation for scientific learning. Block play offers the pristine opportunity

to explore physical science (Hansel, 2015). The introduction of balls, cylinders, and ramps creates an environment that leads to the formation of questions and hypotheses. Children may begin to question why some towers collapse and others do not. Through careful scaffolding by the teacher, children can also learn about the significance of foundations, "balance and equilibrio" (Hansel, 2015, p. 47). Einarsdottir (2013) believed that teacher scaffolding is integral in play-based learning. Books added to the building block area about these various concepts are also helpful in fostering knowledge.

Physical development. Block play helps children to develop physically. As children use blocks, as well as other items that teachers may place in the block area, such as rolling materials, vinyl gutter materials, ramps and chutes, children improve their fine and large motor skills (Hansel, 2015). Fine motor development is particularly important when children begin writing. Block play also develops eye-hand coordination, another important skill that children need in formalized education. Hansel (2015) believed that coupling child-created drawings with block play further prepares a child to make the transition to formal education and is also instrumental in the physical development of motor functions. Block play in the classroom offers yet another opportunity to add to a child's repertoire of school-ready skills (Hansel, 2015).

The inclusion of sorting materials in an early childhood block area often affords children the opportunity to expand their verbal abilities. Hansel (2015) explored the use of blocks in the kindergarten classroom and found that one teacher described the positive influence of sorting and naming the wood scraps in the block area on students' expressive language. This teacher believed that students grew in their expressive language and

creative abilities because they played with blocks. Children were only limited by their imagination as they explored these open-ended materials and found uses for them that were unique for each child. Another teacher found that a child who was not known for engaging others in conversation carried on intense self-talk as he played in the block area. This teacher chronicled the child's experiences with the open-ended materials by taking pictures and asking the student to write one-word descriptions of his block creations (Hansel, 2015). Holmes, Romeo, Ciraola, and Grushko (2015) investigated the relationship between social play, creativity, and receptive language. They found that environments characterized by complex social play and cooperative learning evidence a significant growth in children's language abilities. Holmes et al. (2015) observed complex social play centered on thematic play environments such as role-playing as customers and employees at McDonald's, playing house, or pretending to be a firefighter. Literacy props and relevant print material were found in the responding classroom areas, and teachers modeled and demonstrated various roles without exerting a controlling influence over the children's play (Holmes et al., 2015).

In summary, play is an invaluable tool for early-childhood educators who are knowledgeable about its many benefits and understand how to scaffold its use in the classroom. Astute teachers can balance play with curriculum demands (Hope-Southcott (2013; Peterson et al., 2015). Oral language and mathematics skills grow as teachers integrate play into their early childhood classrooms, which are necessary skills for students' progression through the educational system (Hansel, 2015; Paciga et al., 2011). Foundations for literacy skills are developed as teachers create thematic units centered on

the recreation of social interactions with supporting props (Einarsdottir, 2013). These thematic units allow for the promotion of authentic writing activities as well as the development of oral language (Einarsdottir, 2013). Gross and fine motor skills are developed through play. The development of self-regulation, which enables children to move toward established goals, is also a skill developed through planned interaction with play (Hope-Southcott, 2013). Thus, play offers a different route to the acquisition of necessary cognitive, social and emotional, and physical skills for early childhood students.

Outreach to Parents

Parents can be instrumental in creating home literacy environments that lay the foundation for early literacy skills. Chang and Cress (2014) conducted a study about the development of preschool children's oral language development within the context of visual arts. They examined the dialogic interactions between parents and their children in relation to their children's drawings. Prior to the start of the study, Chang and Cress (2014) informed parents about strategies they could use to maintain conversations with their children. Chang and Cress (2014) concluded that positive interactions between children and their parents expanded children's oral language capabilities, putting them in a better position to be fluent readers. Niklas and Schneider (2017) conducted a similar study in which the researchers examined parent-child interactions and gave instructions on expanding these interactions (parent to child). The instructional assistance was on parent-child interchanges during book reading and the strategies shared with the parents were on building a home literate environment. Niklas and Schneider determined that

phonological awareness, a key component for the development of early literacy skills (Brown, 2014; Goodson, Layzer, Simon, & Dwyer, 2009) was improved.

Engaging children in conversation around literature with dialogic reading is beneficial to the parent-child relationship. Dialogic reading fosters the development of children's vocabulary knowledge (Zevenbergen, Worth, Dretto, & Travers, 2018), early literacy skills such as print awareness and increased levels of parent confidence (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Niklas, Cohrssen, and Tayler (2016) conducted a dialogic parent training that was achieved in two sessions. They determined that the home literacy environment improved as well as children's phonological awareness. The first session involved informing parents of strategies to a build a home literacy environment and the second session alerted parents to the principals of dialogic reading. Teachers have limited time to conduct parent worksheets, so research-based interventions that can be administered in two sessions are noteworthy.

Roles of parents. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term and includes the alphabetic principal, phonics, and phonemic awareness (Goodson et al., 2009). Parents should build their children's awareness of letters, sounds, the combination of these letters, and engage their children in conversation. Robins et al. (2014) explored the depth of letter knowledge in parent-child interactions as a function of socioeconomic status. They found that parents who not only required that their children make connections between letters and sounds but also required children to put together letter combinations or graphemes made significant progress. In a similar study, Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) determined that parents who progressed from didactic to dialogic

conversation with their children (Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014; Trivette & Dunst, 2007) and who progressed from informal activities of exposure to language to formal activities that included the teaching and writing of letters (Robins et al., 2014) established their readiness for successful school entry.

Parents engaged in home literacy activities should center their efforts on the construction of meaning. In an examination of parents' interactions with preschoolers during book reading, Han and Neuharth-Pritchett (2014) found that parents construct meaning around a shared text, which is called dialogic reading. In dialogic reading, a parent is (a) helping a child make sense of the text by asking who, what, where, when, and why questions; (b) providing feedback that confirms and builds on children's expressed level of understanding; and (c) demonstrating sensitivity to children's current developmental stages. Parents fuel these interactions (parent to child) with "immediate and non-immediate talk", which refers to literal questions, whereas non-immediate talk refers to inferential questions (Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014, p. 57). Print referencing activities within the shared reading context can be either verbal or nonverbal, with verbal referring to questions about print and nonverbal referring to the spacing between words or reading from left to right. Enemuo and Obidike (2013) found that parents who not only read to their children, but also assisted children in writing words helped their children make connections between speech and written words and saw higher gains in literacy related tasks in kindergarten. The home literacy environment is critical to the cultivation of early literacy skills (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013; Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014).

Parents who engage in conversations around books with their children prepare them for future reading skills.

It is the role of parents to have books and other learning materials in the home. According to Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011), parents should make an increasing number of books available for their children as they mature. Parents should have toys to promote eye-hand coordination, as well as access to audio and video equipment, and items for imaginative play (e.g., costumes for community workers, tea sets, and housekeeping furniture). Lastly, Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda stated that parents should recite poetry with their children, play alphabet games, and expose their children to cultural and historical sites. The strength of this study is that it provides school and district leaders with information on helping parents to develop productive home-literacy environments, even providing the materials for families who may be experiencing homelessness.

Professional Development

Teachers who receive professional development in early literacy development and instruction may be better positioned to influence the literacy development of their students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bingham and Patton-Terry (2013) undertook a longitudinal study to determine the language and literacy outcomes of a program for at-risk preschoolers. Teachers received one-on-one coaching for oral language development. The findings revealed that the Early Reading First program positively influenced the oral language skills of preschoolers and that students maintained these skills through Grade 1. The weakness of this professional development model is that one-on-one coaching may

not be economical feasible with teachers who teach in large school districts. In another study, Amendum (2014) used an embedded approach to professional development. Amendum found that a reading intervention program, along with the embedded professional development approach, was instrumental in improving letter-word identification, word attack skills, spelling of sounds, and passage comprehension skills of the intervention group compared to the students in the control group. Amendum also found that the perceptions of Grade 1 teachers about teaching literacy skills, implementing interventions, and professional development changed because of their participation in this embedded approach to professional development. The strength of this model professional development may be economically feasible if school employees can be trained to provide the intervention rather than hiring external school personnel. The use of external personnel to provide ongoing and in-class support may be beyond the budget allowances of some schools.

In a similar study, Porche, Pallante, and Snow (2012) examined the role that professional development played in improving the reading achievement of kindergarten students. Porche et al. sought to determine the Collaborative Language and Literacy Instruction Project's (CLLIP) influence on reading achievement across several outcomes including letter naming fluency, initial sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and picture vocabulary. The CLLIP included research-based instructional strategies and skills that consultants taught to teachers through on-going professional development and mentoring. Administrators and teachers were required to participate in the CLLIP, which contrasted with Amendum's (2014) study on embedded professional development in

which only teachers participated. Teachers and administrators in Porche et al.'s study also received support through emails, phone calls, and weekly team meetings from the directors, the reading coach, and the CLLIP staff. The staff used an observation protocol and a checklist to determine if teachers employed the methods and resources as instructed. Coaches met with the teachers and gave constructive feedback, detailing strengths and weaknesses. Within this professional development model, on-site literacy coordinators were available to the teachers. The CLLIP coach also gave teachers instruction about how to implement small group instruction and differentiated instruction, which resulted in significant improvements in phoneme segmentation and initial sound fluency among at-risk kindergarten students in the treatment group. Porche et al. concluded that professional development models that allow for teacher mentoring improve early literacy outcomes for young students. Markussen-Brown et al. (2017) and Lonigan, Farver, Phillips, and Clancy-Menchetti (2011) conducted studies similar to Porche et al. Their professional development models also included coaching and professional development sessions to improve early childhood teachers' skills and knowledge. The professional development models in the studies conducted by Porche et al. (2012); Markussen-Brown et al. (2017) and Lonigan et al. (2011) were all linked to improvement in early childhood students' reading outcomes. The model of professional development sessions that included the use of mentors is plausible in schools and or districts with budgets for teacher training. Trained teachers can provide mentoring for untrained teachers. Additionally, schools that have teacher leadership positions would

also be in a better place to shift personnel to adopt this model of professional development.

Roles of teachers. To be effective, teachers must also be able to provide tools to help parents assist their children in making a smooth transition from home literacy learning to school literacy learning. In the districts represented in the three research sites for this study, teachers are provided with the opportunity to engage with parents on a weekly basis. This weekly time provides an occasion to both prepare and present research-based ways to improve the parent-child dyad and the children's home literacy environment. Parent tools may include providing them with skill appropriate websites as well as games to reinforce foundational literacy skills (e.g., letter identification and letter sounds). Equipping parents to assist their children in building literacy skills may help foster better parent-child interactions and build early literacy skills.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic factors also play a role in the reading development of young children. These factors include (a) homelessness, (b) the economic status of the parents, (c) the mother's level of education, (d) child-care providers, and (f) the home learning environment. I discuss the socioeconomic factors that influence early literacy development in the sections below.

Homelessness. Homelessness, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987 refers to children and or their parents who may be displaced from their home and are (a) living in shelters, transitional shelters, motels, cars, trains, public places, abandoned buildings, or campgrounds, (b) awaiting foster care placement, (c) abandoned in a

hospital, or (d) living with family or friends because of a lack of financial means to secure housing. Other studies related to homelessness are also significant. In a study about housing instability and school readiness, Ziol-Guest and McKenna (2014) found the parents' poverty level had a significant influence on the presence of behavioral problems among students who moved three more times. Similarly, in a longitudinal study about the academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students in Grades 3-8, Cutuli et al. (2013) and Herbers et al. (2012) found that the academic achievement of homeless or highly mobile students was adversely influenced by being homeless; however, after several years in a stable home environment, negative academic effects were no longer evident. In contrast, Cutuli et al. (2013) also found that the academic performance of these students was atypical because they were recipients of special educational services. Schools that offer special services to homeless students as a result of federal, state, or district mandates often ease the transition from students' homeless environment to school, as well as mediate the negative influence that homelessness has on at-risk students' academic achievement. Students' attendance, ethnicity, and gender also account for this "academic resiliency" (Cutuli et al., 2013, p. 854).

Homeless or highly mobile students faired differently in a study that drew subjects from the large urban area of Philadelphia. Using integrated administrative data, Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Chen, Rouse, and Culhane (2012) explored the effects of homelessness and school mobility experiences on the educational outcomes of Grade 3 students. Fantuzzo et al. defined homelessness as those students who live in in cars, or

other unsuitable forms of housing, or shelters rather than those students who live with family members or friends. Similar to Herbers et al. (2012), Fantuzzo et al. found that early homelessness and high school mobility negatively influence student success in the classroom. Fantuzzo et al. also found that early homelessness leads to behavior problems in the classroom related to task completion and social engagement. According to Fantuzzo et al., students with high school mobility experiences defined as three or more school changes in kindergarten, first, second, or third grades, had lower reading rates than those students who were not homeless and who did not experience similar levels of mobility.

Homelessness coupled with high school mobility also detracts from students' academic growth trajectories. Ziol-Guest and McKenna (2014) examined early childhood housing instability in relation to school readiness and found that the number of family moves, particularly three or more moves in early childhood, often leads to the development of behavioral problems. Fantuzzo et al. (2012) determined that high mobility negatively influenced the performance level of Grade 3 students. Students in Fantuzzo et al.'s study were older than students in Ziol-Guest and McKenna's study so the age difference may account for the difference in these findings.

In related research, Hinton and Cassell (2013) investigated the experiences of eight homeless families with children between the ages of 4 and 8 and found that parents were not aware of the need for early education and intervention services. They also found that positive parent-child interactions were infrequent. In fact, many of these parent-child interactions exhibited harsh tones and disapproving comments (Hinton & Cassell, 2013).

This finding is important because parent-child interactions are the foundation for early literacy, and infrequent and negative interactions often interfere with young children's acquisition of prerequisite literacy skills (Robins et al., 2014).

Another study dealing with parent-child interactions in relation to at-risk students is significant. McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, and Green Wright (2012) explored school readiness skills among Head Start students across the United States, which included students identified as at risk, and they found that authoritative parents positively influence their children's end-of-year kindergarten outcomes. McWayne et al. (2012) and other researchers (Hartas, 2011; Raag et al., 2011; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011), also found that low levels of maternal education had an inverse influence on children's early literacy skills. McWayne et al. found that authoritative parents who are responsive to their children's needs and are affectionate, yet do not waiver in their parental decisions, positively influenced the development of their children's reading outcomes. However, McWayne et al. also found that the parenting styles of authoritarian parents are coercive and retaliatory. These parents adversely influence their children's attainment of early reading skills. In addition, the early reading assessments of children who had authoritarian parents were lower than that of children who had authoritative parents (McWayne et al., 2012).

Homelessness often cultivates a plethora of adverse experiences, which adds to the stress levels experienced by families. Homeless families may encounter frequent interruptions in school and home life, disruptions in their social relationships, health problems, and violent shelter environments. Housing instability, for example, leads to

social and psychological challenges as parents experience the frustration of not being able to provide for their children (Dykeman, 2011). Families are forced to live with other family members or friends (Buckner, Bassuk, & Weinreb, 2001; The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). The loss of family privacy often results in a sense of helplessness (Dykeman, 2011). Parents' inability to provide shelter for their families also extends to their inability to provide adequate educational resources (Dykeman, 2011; Jeon, Buettner, & Hur, 2014; Luther, 2012). These experiences often create stress for children who demonstrate heightened fluctuations in their emotional states, as well as feelings of anger (Hinton & Cassell, 2013).

The stress that homeless parents experience often leads to psychological challenges. In addition to the loss of privacy that families may experience in a shelter and the loss of connectedness to former neighbors, parents also experience a fear of losing their children to social services (Dykeman, 2011). The fear of violence and increased noise levels are also daily stressors (Willard & Kulinna, 2012). Parents may also be concerned about restoring economic normalcy to their families. These psychological challenges may lead to feelings of demoralization, which Okado, Bierman, and Welsh (2014) defined more specifically as feelings of distress, depression, and parental inadequacy. In a study of 117 kindergarten children from three Pennsylvania districts, Okado et al. (2014) investigated school readiness with respect to two latent constructs, demoralization and support for learning. They discovered that demoralization and support for learning operate distinctly from each other. Parents who experience feelings of depression and stress are less likely to engage in positive parent-child interactions. The

inability of parents to engage in healthy interactions with their children negatively influences their children's development. This negative child development, according to Okado et al. is evident in four areas, including attention in class, learning behaviors, classroom engagement, and language/literacy skills. The children's status as homeless and highly mobile often leads to the cultivation of negative social behaviors, which hinders academic achievement (Okado et al., 2014).

The ramifications of homelessness have far reaching effects for children's academic learning. Homeless children, because of the stress that their parents experience (Dykeman, 2011) and a less than ideal home environment (Willard & Kulinna, 2012), often exhibit poor self-regulatory skills in the classroom (Masten et al., 2015). These self-regulatory skills are related to attentiveness in the classroom and flexibility in switching from one task to another (Baker, Cameron, Rimm-Kaufman, & Grissmer, 2012; Masten et al., 2015; Raag et al., 2011). Policymakers who understand these factors could create homeless shelters that are similar to traditional home environments, and educators could assist in the nurturing of these self-regulatory skills for kindergarten students who are homeless and highly mobile.

Homeless and highly mobile students and their parents often experience disruptions in their social networks because of housing instability (Okado et al., 2014). Hallett (2010) explored how residential instability complicates students' lives. Although the subjects in Hallett's (2010) study were college students, their findings may apply to homeless and highly mobile elementary school students. Hallett contended that both social and academic supports are needed to ease the transition of homeless students to

college life in a dormitory. Just as homeless college students may not have a home or safe place to go to during college breaks (Hallett, 2010), homeless kindergarten students may not have a safe and quiet place to study in a shelter. The establishment of such a place may create environments that are better suited to the completion of homework assignments. Similar to homeless college students who may not have the support of their parents while at a dormitory (Hallett, 2010), homeless children living in a shelter may no longer have the social networks they enjoyed in their former neighborhood. These social networks may include extended family members and close family and friends. Just as college students need to consider housing between the breaks or how to budget financial aid monies (Hallett, 2010), parents in shelters need assistance from educators to obtain the support necessary to help their families, including providing for school supplies, job related resources, and job training or retraining workshops. Hallett concluded that these resources can help alleviate the stress level for homeless families, as well as increase the possibilities for jobs that can help families obtain economic stability.

Executive functioning. In other related research on families who may be socioeconomically disadvantaged and homeless, Chang and Gu (2018) investigated the role of executive function and fundamental motor skills on reading proficiency rates of kindergarten students who came from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Chang and Gu referred to executive function skills as the child's working memory and inhibitory control. According to Chang and Gu, students need a good working memory "to retain information for the purposes of completing a task or making a response to… reading-related tasks" (p. 254). At least one other researcher found that students with a poor

working memory will have academic challenges. Morgan et al. (2017) found that students with poor working memory have cognitive flexibility challenges. In this measure, students had to sort pictures cards according to a predetermined rule. The inhibition function represents a child's ability to remain focused on a task and not be distracted by unrelated occurrences (Chang & Gu, 2018). Chang and Gu and MacDonald, Milne, Orr, and Pope (2018) found that executive function (i.e, working memory and ability to maintain focus) and fundamental motor skills such as running, skipping, and hopping were significantly related to academic challenges. Chang and Gu found the association between motor skills and executive function related to socioeconomically disadvantaged kindergarten students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. With the knowledge that the executive function of students who are identified as homeless may be lower than that of students who are not homeless, it behooves policy makers and educators to work at improving the executive function of students through direct reading intervention as well as through the development of students' motor skills.

Vocabulary development. Extensive vocabulary knowledge is important in the development of a child's comprehension. Unfortunately, homelessness and poverty are connected (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Poverty often places a child at academic risk. Some children raised in poverty have lower vocabulary banks than children raised in higher socioeconomic levels (Cuticelli et al., 2015). The lack of oral language experiences in the home often accounts for these variances in vocabulary ability and growth between children who are from families of low socioeconomic levels and those from higher socioeconomic levels (Hart & Risley, 1995). The mother's educational

level also accounts for the lower vocabulary ability of children who live in households with low socioeconomic levels (Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, & Vernon-Feagans, 2016). The influence of poverty, which often accompanies homelessness, negatively influences many areas of a child's academic development. Interactions occurring in the classroom can be varied, involving whole group instruction or small group instruction in the form of dyads or triads. Interactions (student-to-student and student-teacher) occurring across and between settings can profoundly influence students' cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, teachers should capitalize on interactions (student-to-student and student-teacher) in the classroom to maximize cognitive development, especially in the development of students' vocabulary knowledge. Students' knowledge of vocabulary words is important in their development as readers. Shared book reading activities is a context proven successful in teaching vocabulary words and science content for preschool students (Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2016).

Parents' economic status. The economic status of parents also influences the academic progress of their children. Bassuk et al. (2014) stated that a contributing factor of homelessness is poverty. Economic factors that influence the individuals who are poor may also influence children in families who are homeless. Jeon et al. (2014) examined family and neighborhood disadvantage, the home environment, and children's school readiness for preschool students. Jeon et al. determined that students score lower on cognitive tests when they have a larger number of economic risk factors after controlling for neighborhood disadvantage. These economic risks can be offset by what Dupere,

Leventhal, Crosnoe, and Dion (2010) called the "neighborhood socioeconomic advantage" (p. 1227). Dupere et al. defined this advantage as the presence of individuals who are at higher economic levels. Dupere et al. examined the reading and mathematics achievement of students in Grades 1-5 and determined that the presence of affluent neighbors was conducive to improved school achievement. This finding substantiated Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of the ecology of human development. Bronfenbrenner posited that a child's development is influenced by individuals in surrounding settings. Froiland et al. (2013) found that communities, which consist of people from a variety of socioeconomic levels, can positively influence the development of early literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers. According to Froyen et al. (2013), these nested groups included families not on welfare, families whose parents earned a college degree, and families who live in homes. This theoretical perspective about nested groups is similar to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. Even though low socioeconomic levels create risk factors that negatively influence student achievement, these negative influences can be offset.

Children who live in families with incomes at or below the poverty level often develop behaviors that interfere with their academic pursuits. In their study of early childhood housing instability and school readiness, Ziol-Guest and Mckenna (2014) classified children as "poor" (p. 110) if they move three or more times during the first 5 years of their lives. They found that these children experience more externalizing behavioral problems, such as calling out, aggressive behavior, non-compliance, and attention deficits that interfere with academic learning (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014).

Ziol-Guest and McKenna did find that children from “poor households” (p. 109), but who moved two or fewer times did not demonstrate the same degree of behavioral and attention problems as those children who moved three or more times within the first 5 years of their lives. This study is significant because in order to help children who are poor and homeless transition from home to school life, educators should be aware of the difficulties that some children may experience in the classroom. In Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory about the ecology of human development, not only are children’s experiences in the home setting important, but the interactions between home and school are also critical.

Children from families that subsist at or below the poverty line may present significant academic challenges. In a study about teaching reading skills to young children living in poverty, Luther (2012) stated that children from poor families represent the next generation of family members whose economic base does not allow for the purchase of educational resources. Hartas (2011) also stated that parents from a lower socioeconomic base do not have access to the same services and resources as higher socioeconomic families. As a result, these parents do not positively influence their children’s home learning to the extent that parents from higher socioeconomic levels do (Hartas, 2011). Robins et al. (2014) found that among families of high socioeconomic levels, the depth of exposure to the alphabet and its sounds is deeper than for families of low socioeconomic levels. They also found that the depth and breadth of this exposure better prepares young children to meet the challenges of early literacy programs (Robins et al., 2014).

Children who live in poorer socioeconomic environments may have parents who were also not successful in school. Therefore, Luther (2012) contended that these parents may not feel equipped to help their children build their readiness skills (Luther, 2012; Okado et al., 2014). Additionally, some parents who are at the poverty level may not be employed but are unable to maintain a standard of living above the poverty line (Luther, 2012). The stress of not being able to provide for their families at a level above the poverty line, as well as long hours at work, may leave parents too exhausted to spend quality time with their children (Luther, 2012; Okado et al., 2014) or may spend time that is marred by poor parent-child interactions (Okado, et al., 2014). The overwhelmed and stressed parent from a poor home often cannot create a home environment that is conducive to building school readiness skills. This finding is important to consider because the early years of a child's life represent the optimal time to establish a foundation for later reading success (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Therefore, children from poor homes are at a significant disadvantage in relation to educational resources (Jeon et al., 2014; Luther, 2012), social support (Okado et al., 2014), poor living conditions, and parents' feelings of inadequacy in helping their children (Luther, 2012; Okado et al., 2014). Thus, teachers and policymakers should be equipped with a multiplicity of instructional strategies that they can use to address the potential academic deficiencies of children from poor homes.

Problems faced by children who are poor and homeless are noteworthy topics for discussion and further research because one of the major causes of homelessness is poverty (Bassuk et al., 2014). Households headed by females, a lack of affordable

housing, and home foreclosures are risk factors for homelessness (Bassuk et al., 2014). In fact, 45% of children under age six live in low-income homes (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2017), and so the likelihood of these children and their families becoming homeless is quite probable. In consideration of these facts, the environmental factors (e.g., homelessness, maternal level of education, and the family's socioeconomic level) that influence reading development necessitate attention. In the state of New York, the number of homeless children rose from 187,747 in 2011-2012 to 258,108 in 2012-2013, a 37% increase (Bassuk et al., 2014). Out of this homeless population, only 23% of Grade 4 students and 21% of Grade 8 students were at proficient reading levels. These students live in environments that negatively influence the attainment of early literacy skills. Therefore, educators and policymakers should assist these parents in raising their economic levels. With respect to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory about the ecology of human development, the low socioeconomic status of parents must be addressed because the economic environment influences their children's cognitive development.

Maternal education. Maternal education is also a socioeconomic factor that influences the reading development of young students. Hartas (2011) examined socio-economic factors, home learning, and young children's language, literacy, and social outcomes and found that maternal education is more significant than the economic status of the parent in influencing the development of early literacy skills because parents are their children's first teacher (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Parents' level of education, along with race and economic levels, may influence their ability to help their children learn the alphabet, as well as determine the amount of time their children spend

on literacy-related activities (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Raag et al. (2011) found that the reading outcomes of children whose parents had a high school diploma and some college were negatively influenced on the "Reading letter sounds assessment" and only marginally influenced on the "Developing reading assessment" and the "Word reading word recognition assessment". Raag et al. (2011) found that the time children spend engaged with nonliteracy activities, such as television and computers, was related to the level of maternal education and that involvement with these activities had a negative influence on the children's kindergarten readiness skills.

Parent-child interactions. In related research, Baker et al. (2012) examined family and socio-demographic predictors of school readiness among African American male students in kindergarten. Parent-child interactions, Baker et al. contended, are a contributing significant factor in a child's cognitive development, which corroborates Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory about the ecology of human development; children who witness their parents engaged in activities such as reading are more likely to engage in those same activities. Baker et al. found that children of parents who create rich literate home environments demonstrate more positive reading outcomes and approaches to learning or self-regulatory ability than do children of parents who do not create literate environments at home. Baker et al. defined a rich literate persistent environment as one where parents not only read to their children, but also maintain a collection of books for their children's use and spend spent quality time engaging with their children. According to Baker et al., the quality time that children spend with their parents at home engaged in reading aloud is often the foundation for skills that are necessary in school, including task

engagement, task motivation to learn, independence, and flexibility. Han and Neuharth-Pritchett (2014) corroborated the importance of read alouds to improve parent-child interactions. Parent-child relationships or dyads are significant because the theoretical framework of this study was based on an ecological view of human cognitive development that attributes importance to the interactions between individuals within a setting. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner also addressed transitions from one setting to another; therefore, home literacy activities that are successful in transitioning a child to structured literary lessons at school were of paramount importance to this study.

Home learning environment. The level of engagement that children enjoy with their parents influences their readiness to learn and helps cultivate a home environment that may or may not lead to the establishment of a foundation for literacy development. Baker et al. (2012) examined family and sociodemographic predictors of school readiness among African American male students in kindergarten. Conversely, some parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds may not know the importance of building their child's alphabet knowledge or the importance of reading and engaging in conversation with their children (Sawyer, Cycyk, Sandilos, & Hammer, 2018). Sawyer et al. (2018) examined the home literacy beliefs and practices of low-income parents whose preschool children attended Head Start. Family stress was found to negatively influence the quality time that parents spent with their children (Sawyer et al., 2018; Okado et al., 2014). Phillips et al. (2017) found that parents' reading level influenced children's preparedness for early literacy development to a greater degree than did than the parents' educational level.

Parental warmth. In addition to literacy-related activities between parent and child, the parents' emotional well-being also influences early literacy skills. The emotional climate in a home environment often relates to the quality of oral language development (e.g., receptive and expressive language). Han et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine the relationship between family characteristic, home environment, and classroom environment, and early emergent literacy skills. The subjects in the study were 815 children in Head Start, ages 3 and 4 years old, and their families. The family characteristics consisted of positive emotional support, evident in a five-point item scale. Home environment was evaluated according to the frequency of the parent's engagement with the child in literacy activities and the frequency of the parent's self-reading sessions. Classroom quality was measured according to teacher emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. The research team determined the following: that there was a positive association between parent warmth and measures of oral language, that improving the quality of parent-child interactions positively influences children's emerging literacy skills, that teacher's educational level and instructional support improve students' coding skills (letter naming and their sounds) and that high instructional support (e.g., professional development) mediates low-maternal education (Han et al., 2017). Han et al.'s study corroborates Bronfenbrenner's theory about the value of creating other settings (e.g., quality school settings) and the importance of roles (adult/child to child interactions) to influence cognitive development.

Bounded Case Study Approaches

A subset of the literature that is relevant to consider are studies that incorporated a methodological approach similar to the one used in this study. This section includes three such studies. Curry, Reeves, and McIntyre (2016), Christenson (2016), and Mihai, Butera, and Friesen (2017) used bounded case study approaches in their research studies. These studies were methodologically similar to this study because there was an examination of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In a bounded system, "there are limits on what is considered relevant or workable. [These] boundaries are set in terms of time, place, events, and processes" (Harling, 2012, p. 2). The phenomenon under investigation in each of these studies revolved around reading just as the phenomenon in this study was a school's reading program. The common focus was on the collection of data from multiple sources to create a rich description of the phenomenon under study. Other common focuses included the iterative process of data analysis, the coding and categorizing of the data, and the formulation of themes. The researchers in these case studies used an iterative process in the analysis of data collected from multiple sources, effected analysis within and across cases, formulated categories from the coded data, and then developed themes, all of which were also done in this study.

In the first study, Christenson (2016) used a Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) method and a collective case study to describe the read aloud sessions in kindergarten classrooms. Four teachers were purposely chosen to participate in this study based on their years of experience, their expertise in assisting students in reaching grade-level requirements, and their knowledge in reading instruction. Data were collected over

4 months from multiple sources: field notes and observations, informal interview field notes, formal interview transcripts and field notes, CIRA text logs (list of books read), and information sheets that contained the teachers' demographic information. Four read aloud sessions were observed for each teacher. This observation was then followed by an interview, which was transcribed. The field notes from the observation and transcribed interviews were integrated and coded after several rereads and aligned with the research questions. I examined the data for patterns and further analyzed the data within and across the observations, interviews, and field notes, creating a rich description of the read aloud sessions. From these rich descriptions, a collective case study was created using the CIRA lens. The elements of the CIRA lens were *teacher activity, student activity, and text*. Christenson found the most common code in the teacher activity to be Evaluation Feedback, followed by Explain Rules/Procedures, followed by Scaffolding, and low order questioning. In the student activity, the prevalent code was On Task, On topic/Out of Turn, and Simple Answer. In the text element, it was found that most of the texts used were narrative text (Christenson, 2016). Across all elements of the CIRA lens it was determined that the teachers had effective management styles and that these styles reflected "positive and transparent classroom management" (Christenson, 2016, p. 2143).

In the second study, Curry et al. (2016) conducted a collective case study to understand the role of home literacy practices on school literacy development. In a collective case study, the case studies "occur on the same site or come from multiple sites" (Harling, 2012, p. 2). The general thrust of the collective case study is same as that of the case study; it is an examination of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The

subjects in the study were purposely chosen from families who lived below the poverty line and whose preschool children were eligible for participation in the free school lunch program. Three mother-child dyads were chosen, forming the three cases for the study. Data were collected from audio-taped read alouds, parent interviews on home literacy practices, and field notes from the interviews. Each data source was examined several times and coded to determine any patterns and categories. Through the constant comparative method, Curry et al. examined the categorized data to identify themes. Curry et al. identified the following themes categorized under "sophisticated reading behaviors" such as "labeling, schema activation and questioning, adult modeling, correcting/repeating, elaboration, and encouragement" (Curry et al., 2016, p. 73). Although parents' reading behaviors are not analogous to what may occur during reading aloud in the classroom, Curry et al. stated that teachers should build on existing parent literacy practices. Although the study conducted by Curry et al. was a collective case study, it shares some similarities with a multiple case study. Data were collected from several sources: interviews, observations, and home literacy practices, so I was able to read first-hand how Curry et al. handled the data and identified categories and then themes. Additionally, parent-child dyads were the subjects of the study, and the theoretical background of this study stemmed from dyads.

In the last study, Mihai et al. (2017) conducted a multiple case study to examine the use of curriculum among four head start teachers who ranged in experience from novice to experienced. Data were collected from multiple sources: weekly reflection sheets, early literacy concept maps, team meeting with researchers and teachers,

interviews, and a *Preschool Teacher Literacy Belief* questionnaire. The teachers implemented the literacy activities from a curriculum, *Children's School Success Plus*. This curriculum was developed to address the needs of at-risk students, English language learners, and children from low-income families. Data were analyzed during the first year of the study and revised yearly. Four themes were identified for each teacher and data were coded across the multiple sources: observations, interviews, and reflection sheets. Twelve themes from the individual cases were used to cluster the themes into four cross-case categories, *volunteering to change, teachers' perspectives about early literacy, the relationships within teaching teams,* and *the Head Start context.* Mihai et al. found multiple factors influenced the likelihood of the teachers to embrace curriculum change, reflective in the four developed themes. Mihai et al.'s work aided me in the process of going from individual case themes to cross-case themes because they provided a sample of how they went from individual case themes to cross-case themes. Additionally, Mihai et al. stated that the analysis process was an "iterative, ongoing data analysis" (p. 329). I also utilized an iterative process during data analysis.

Interactions between individuals within a setting contribute to their cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Baker and Rimm-Kaufman (2014) used the lens of ecological development to look at how the mother-child relationship determined the socio-emotional functioning of the children: approach to learning (e.g., attentiveness in class, enthusiasm for learning, focus on tasks); self-control; interpersonal relationship (e.g., ability to get along with others, showing emotion empathizing with others; and externalizing behaviors. Baker and Rimm-Kaufman found that maternal warm relationship

was positively related to maternal home learning stimulation and that maternal home learning stimulation was positively related to children's approaches to learning, self-control, and interpersonal skills. Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) is reflected in Baker and Rimm-Kaufman's findings. According to Bronfenbrenner, parents can assist their children in making "ecological transitions" or changes in roles or settings (p. 6) by providing stimulating home environments. Hartas (2015) also examined maternal warmth and "affective parenting" (p. 628). Hartas determined that affective parenting influenced parental engagement with their children (in doing homework). Additionally, parents' engagement with their children (in doing homework) was informed by their engagement in social networks (Hartas, 2015). Bronfenbrenner's theory is reflected in Hartas (2015) findings:

> the interconnectedness is seen applying...within settings but with equal force and consequence to linkages between settings, both with those in which the developing person actually participates and those that he may never enter…and affects what happens in the person's immediate environment (Hartas, 2015. pp. 7-8).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 included a review of the research literature, literature search strategy detail and a discussion of the conceptual framework. I analyzed relevant literature in relation to national and state reading standards, reading instruction, and reading interventions. In the third section, I discuss socioeconomic factors that influence the early literacy skills of kindergarten students who are homeless and at the risk of failure in

reading, including the level of maternal education and home literacy environments as factors influencing early reading skills. In the fourth section, I analyzed literature concerning factors related to teacher effectiveness in reading instruction and student achievement, including the role of professional development and the need for assisting parents in creating a home literate environment.

Several themes were evident from this review. The first theme was that one of the major socioeconomic factors that influence the learning environment of preschool children and their literacy outcomes as they enter school is the education level of the mother. The interaction between the mother and the child is important because Bronfenbrenner (1979) spoke to the importance of dyads in a child's cognitive development, which would include the mother and the child. Therefore, an exploration into the quality of these dyads was important for this study.

The second theme was that homelessness is another socioeconomic factor that influences the development of children's early literacy skills. Homelessness results in problems that further complicate child-parent interactions. These problems include the stress of not having a place of one's own, of environments that are noisy and often characterized by acts of violence, and parents' preoccupation with their social and economic conditions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) addressed the importance of this relationship between family experiences and the child, which is defined as the mesosystem.

The third theme was that teacher effectiveness influences students' early literacy skills. The child's interactions with the teacher, another dyad according to

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, also influences children’s early literacy skills. Transitions from home to school are also a function of culture, which Bronfenbrenner defined as a macrosystem. Teachers should address the macrosystem and the educational risks that may be associated with this system, such as informing parents of activities in which they can engage their children at home and or educational tools that can be created or purchased to improve early literacy skills.

A fourth theme was that most reading programs for K-2 students in schools are driven by the newly adopted Common Core State Standards in English language arts, which include reading standards related to literature, informational text, and foundational skills. The literature standards include key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, range of reading levels, and level of text complexity. Students are to meet the standards with assistance from educators. The informational text standards emphasize how texts are similar and different, as well as assist student in identifying, with prompting and support, the author’s supporting reasons for points made in the text. The foundational skills are particularly important for students at risk in reading. One of these standards for kindergarten students, for example, includes improving students’ print awareness so that students will understand that reading proceeds from the top to the bottom and from left to right. Kindergarten students also need to understand other conventions of print, such as the concept that words are separated by spaces and are structured to represent a complete thought. Another reading standard for kindergarten students is related to improving their phonological awareness skills. By improving phonological awareness, students understand the letter-sound

relationships of the English language and that proficient readers use a systematic pattern to form words.

A fifth theme was that that current instruction for early literacy skills is aligned to the standards-based movement. Instructional strategies in reading, therefore, are often focused on the foundational skills related to the development of print awareness, student identification of letters and sounds (phonics), and the ability to blend, segment and isolate these sound units (phonemes). Instructional strategies are also related to helping students understand the various combinations of phonemes (phonological awareness) and graphemes, building oral language and vocabulary through dialogic reading, and by building fluency through oral reading.

A sixth theme was that play-based learning can be used in the kindergarten classroom to advance the skill sets of students. Through play-based learning, students develop social skills, oral language skills, mathematics, and science skills, as well as a foundation for future literacy skills. Kindergarten teachers should observe students and scaffold their level of involvement as students become acquainted with the various social and literary nuances that can occur in theme-based play.

A seventh theme was that early, systematic, and intensive interventions, such as the RTI model, positively influence the early literacy skills of students identified at risk in reading. Teachers should base the level and intensity of reading interventions on the learning needs of the student. Therefore, assessment of students' reading outcomes (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language development) must be targeted and continuous to determine the direction and the content of the intervention.

These interventions must also include parent involvement in relation to creating a home literacy environment that results in the effective remediation of their children's reading deficiencies.

One gap emerged from this literature review. There was limited research about the beliefs that teachers hold regarding factors that influence the early reading skills of urban students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. This gap was addressed by implementing a case study research design that is described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The choice of research method is directly related to the purpose of the study and arises from the research questions. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about the environmental factors that influence the development of homeless or students at risk in reading, and the instructional and remedial practices used to inform the development of early reading skills in three northeastern school districts. The purpose was also to examine documents and supports, such as professional development and the parent outreach needed for the effective development of early reading skills of students who are identified as homeless or at risk in reading.

To achieve this purpose, I interviewed teachers to determine their beliefs, instructional practices, and the supports that were provided to them. These determinations provided insight into the student-teacher interactions that occurred in the reading classroom. Teacher reports were further supported through observations and the examination of school documents. The rich data that resulted from the interviews, the observations and the inspection of school documents at three research sites helped to ensure the achievement of the study's purpose and a stronger contribution to existing literature. This study was designed to advance understanding about teacher beliefs, instructional and remedial practices, and systems supporting the early reading skills of students. The focused population for this study was the homeless or at-risk reader and what teachers do to mediate reading instruction in consideration of the environmental factors encountered by this population.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research method, the research design and rationale, as well as my role as a qualitative researcher. The chapter includes a discussion of the participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection and data analysis. In addition, the methods taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study are described along with the strategies used to improve the credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity of the findings. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the ethical procedures followed in conducting this study.

Research Design, Rationale, and Research Questions

I utilized a qualitative approach in this study. Merriam (2009) contended that researchers undertake qualitative research to understand the meaning that individuals ascribe to their experiences. Merriam (2009) stated that the researcher is the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 15) and that qualitative design allows a researcher to adapt and respond to participant's responses. Qualitative research is an “inductive process” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), and as such, it allows researchers to gather from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents to build themes. With the understanding that qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning that individuals ascribe to their experiences, as well as produce rich descriptions (Merriam, 2009), the following research questions were designed to guide this qualitative study.

1. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students’ early reading skills?
2. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address needs of students identified as at risk in reading?

3. How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?

4. What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading?

A multiple-case study design was selected based on these research questions. The choice to examine school reading instructional practices and teacher beliefs at three schools offered the three cases that constituted this multiple-case study. Yin (2014) defined case study in two parts, the first as the breadth of the case study, and the second part as the distinguishing features of a case study. Yin defined the breadth of a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a real-word context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and the real-world context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). A case study was appropriate as a research design for this study because the boundaries between the environmental factors related to the home and school and the context of instruction in the school and the home environment are often unclear. In the second part of the two-part definition, Yin detailed the distinguishing features of a case study as an inquiry that copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needs to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 17).

This second part of the definition, which describes the features of a case study supported the choice of this design because data were examined from multiple sources,

including initial and follow-up interviews with kindergarten teachers, observations of reading instruction in kindergarten classrooms, and documents related to the instructional reading practices at three research sites. The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is an appropriate theory to inform this study because it deals with the interrelationships that occur within and across the various settings that students are immersed, such as the school setting, home setting, and the child's overall cultural setting.

For this study, several other qualitative research designs were considered, including phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. Creswell (2007) defined phenomenology as a design that researchers choose when they want to explore participants' lived experiences about a phenomenon. Grounded theory is a qualitative research design that aims to build a theory from the analysis of data (Creswell, 2007). The intent of this study was to understand the interrelationships within and across the settings in which students are immersed and how these interrelationships influenced their reading development. The goal was not to build a substantive theory about reading instruction for students identified as homeless or at risk in reading; therefore, grounded theory was not an appropriate research design. Participants lived experiences about a phenomenon was not being sought, so a phenomenological study was not appropriate. An ethnographic research design was also considered, as this approach describes the attitudes, beliefs, and values of a specific group or culture over an extended period (Creswell, 2007). However, the purpose of this study was not to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and values of a specific group of teachers and parents of kindergarten students

identified as homeless or at risk in reading over an extended period, but it was to examine the beliefs of teachers, who may not share the same cultural background and/or training regarding reading instruction for a population of students who fall under certain identifiers. A multiple-case study, therefore, was the best choice as a research design as it offered the best mechanism for aligning the conceptual framework, the literature review, and the research questions for this study.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was threefold in relation to the collection of data, the analysis of data, and the interpretation of data. As the single researcher for this study, the potential for bias was present in the research process. I address this potential bias and associated process in a later section of this chapter when discussing issues of trustworthiness and describing the specific strategies used to improve the credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity for this qualitative research. These strategies included triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer review.

In terms of any potential conflict of interest in conducting this study it is important to note that while the primary investigator I was also a kindergarten teacher at one of the participating schools. While the participating schools were in three urban school districts, my position was not in conflict with this study because I did not have any supervisory responsibilities or professional relationships with any of the kindergarten teachers who participated in the study at any of the three research sites, and teachers' participation was voluntary. I had three roles in this study: to gather the information, to

examine the case, the school's instructional practices in reading, and interpret information from the seven teachers who participated in the study. The instructional practices is a function of the information gathered from the teachers.

The participants for this study included seven kindergarten teachers at three elementary schools for a total of seven participants and three sites. I selected teacher participants by using a criterion-based purposeful sampling technique to obtain the richest data possible.

I asked the principal at each elementary school for permission to post fliers (see Appendix E) about the study in the teachers' lounge, asking for teacher volunteers. Potential teacher volunteers needed to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) teachers must be employed in this large urban school district, (b) teachers must be employed as kindergarten teachers at one of the elementary schools in this large urban school district, (c) teachers must have at least one student in their class who is identified as either homeless or at risk in reading, and (d) teachers must provide reading instruction for at least 45 minutes of the school day. Teachers expressing interest in participating in the study were given a letter of invitation (see Appendix F) that explained the research study and their roles if they chose to participate. Teachers signed and hand-delivered or mailed a consent form back to me.

Saturation and Sample Size

Researchers must consider attaining data saturation when undertaking a research study. Data saturation ensures the validity of study, as well as the ability for the study to be replicated (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Sample size is not the determining factor for data

saturation in a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers must consider that the central research question is answered, no new themes, and no new coding (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) is revealed in the existing sample size (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Thick and rich data can be achieved through interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Instrumentation

I created three instruments to collect data. I created and used a teacher interview protocol to explore teachers' beliefs about literacy practices for kindergarten students who are homeless or at risk in reading (see Appendix G); a follow-up teacher protocol to continue to explore the teachers' beliefs about reading instruction for students who were identified as homeless or at risk in reading; and an observation data collection form based on criteria that Merriam (2009) recommended for conducting observations in any setting for qualitative research (see Appendix H). An expert panel of two educational colleagues with advanced educational degrees examined these instruments to ensure they aligned with the research questions. I also created an alignment chart between the research questions and the interview questions (see Appendix B).

Interview Protocols

For qualitative research, Merriam (2009) noted that interviews are "systematic activities" directed toward encouraging and sustaining "conversation" between the interviewer and the interviewee for obtaining information on a topic (p. 88). For this study, I used a structured approach for both the initial and follow-up interviews, as opposed to an unstructured interview, because structured questions allow a novice interviewer, such as this researcher, the opportunity to ask probing questions to obtain

detailed responses from participants. These interview questions included the following types: (a) experience and behavior questions, (b) opinions and values questions, (c) knowledge questions, and (d) background questions (Merriam, 2009). Toward the goal of securing information that is as reflective as possible of the interviewees' perspectives, I asked probing questions, which served as a follow-up to questions previously answered by participants that were void of sufficient details and in need of examples for clarification (Merriam, 2009). I asked nine highly structured questions during the initial interviews for teachers and three highly structured questions during the follow-up interviews. This type of question gave the respondents the latitude to formulate answers that were not reflective of my point of view, as well as to respond to the specific question (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), leading questions are reflective of the biases of the researcher and therefore were avoided. I also did not ask yes-or-no questions because they limit the amount of information that the respondent will give, thereby aborting the goal of the research efforts (Merriam, 2009).

Observation Data Collection Form

In qualitative research, observations are eyewitness accounts of what is occurring in an environment of choice and represent data for research when the approach is (a) systematic, (b) centers around a research question, and (c) is constrained by a set of protocols to produce trustworthy data (Merriam, 2009). Observations, Merriam (2009) noted, afford the qualitative researcher an opportunity to observe a phenomenon in its natural setting. By conducting observations in a setting of choice, researchers have an

opportunity to observe an event that participants may have neglected to describe because it is a part of their routine.

Because it is virtually impossible for qualitative researchers to observe all events, behaviors, and actions surrounding a phenomenon in a setting, Merriam (2009) contended that the inclusion of precise criteria should guide observations. The criteria and how they were addressed in the study are as follows: (a) the setting - the use of space, the availability of technology, the use of instructional space, use of available technology, and print and non-print resources found in a kindergarten classroom; (c) activities and interactions - the lesson objectives, instructional intervention strategies, formative and summative assessments, and opportunities for play; (d) student engagement - conversations between students and teacher and among students; and (e) subtle factors - unplanned activities, interruptions, and nonverbal communication among students.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In preparing to recruit participants, I first obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University to conduct this study (IRB Approval Number 07-06-160259363). I also obtained approval from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE, study #1429) to conduct this study. Upon receipt of approval from the NYCDOE, I gave each principal of the prospective research sites an information letter (see Appendix C). I obtained the signature of the principal at each of the three research sites on the form that the NYCDOE required me to submit, which was titled *Approval to Conduct Research in Schools.* I submitted these signed forms from the principals to the

NYCDOE for final approval. I asked the principal at the elementary schools to post fliers (see Appendix E) seeking teacher volunteers.

Originally, parents were to be included in the research study. After submitting several changes in procedures, parents were removed from the study. One change in procedure was asking participating teachers to place a parent invitation letter and a consent form in a self-addressed envelope in all students' folders. Another change in procedure was requesting permission to host an informational meeting in the homeless residences with refreshments and a distribution of school supplies. In place of the parent participants, I submitted a change in procedure to add an additional 3-4 teachers from a third research site, bringing the total number of participants to seven or eight. I also requested a change in procedure to increase the teacher gift to $50. I obtained the third research site in March 2018.

I mailed or hand-delivered an invitation letter to each teacher who fit the inclusion criteria (see Appendix F), along with a letter of consent. In the letter of invitation, I invited each potential teacher participant to participate in this study by discussing the purpose of the study and explaining the data collection procedures. If teachers were interested in participating, I asked them to sign the letter of consent. I selected the first 2-3 teachers at each site who returned signed consent forms.

In relation to data collection, I collected data from September 2016 to January 2017 and then from March 2018 to May 2018, following IRB approval. I first conducted individual interviews with the teachers at each school site during non-instructional hours. Initial interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. On the average, follow-up interviews

lasted 10 minutes. Prior to starting each interview session, I reviewed the data collection procedures with participants. I audio recorded all interviews and reminded participants at the end of the interview that they would be asked to review the tentative findings of this study to ensure accuracy and enhance the study's credibility. When conducting the observations of reading instruction, I observed one instructional reading lesson for each of seven teachers in their classrooms during a time of their choice. I planned to minimize my presence in the classroom as much as possible. Each observation lasted for the entire instructional lesson, which ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. I recorded field notes and researcher reflections using the observation data collection form. The following documents were requested from the participants and reviewed: (a) kindergarten reading standards, (b) instructional guidelines for at-risk readers, (c) parent involvement guidelines related to the development of early reading skills (e.g., homework assignments and parent newsletters), and (d) professional development activities related to reading instruction for at risk students.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis was conducted at two levels. At the first level, I conducted a single case analysis by transcribing, coding, and categorizing the data from each source for each research site. I used a transcription service to transcribe the interview data. I recorded the interviews using a digital recorder. The recorded interviews were downloaded onto a computer as an mp3. The coded data were tallied, within the categories, to determine the number of times similar responses were made by the teachers. The mp3s were uploaded to Same Day Transcription Service and transcribed with 48 hours. The transcribed

documents were returned through email. For both the interview and the observation data, I used line-by-line coding recommended by Charmaz (2006) to stay as close to the data as possible, effecting the coding manually as opposed to using software. I formed verb phrases, starting with a present participle, to code the teachers' responses. After the coding process was completed, I used the constant comparative method that Merriam (2009) recommended to construct categories from the coded data. In addition, I used content analysis when examining the documents collected from each research site, which involved describing the purpose, structure, content, and use of each document. I also created a summary table of constructed categories for each data source. At the second level, I conducted a cross case analysis by examining the categorized data for themes and discrepant data that emerged across all sources for all cases, which formed the key findings for this study. I analyzed the findings in relation to the research questions and interpreted the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important to qualitative studies. Merriam (2009) stated that trustworthiness is important because classroom teachers and other educational practitioners need to believe that these findings are credible. Therefore, qualitative researchers must use well-established strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of their findings. Merriam discussed these strategies in relation to the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that are essential to trustworthy qualitative research.

Credibility

Merriam (2009) defined credibility in qualitative research as alignment or congruence between the research findings and reality. Merriam recommended specific strategies that could improve the study's credibility. These strategies are triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer review. For this study, triangulation was accomplished by "comparing and cross-checking data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 216) collected at different times during the research study. Member checks were completed by asking participants to review the tentative findings of this study for their credibility. I also used the strategy of adequate engagement in data collection by collecting data over a period to ensure saturation (p. 219).

Transferability

Merriam (2009) defined transferability of qualitative research as the ability to transfer the findings from one study to another study that has similar settings and participants. Merriam suggested the use of the following strategies to improve a study's transferability: rich thick description, maximum variation, and a typical sample (p. 227-228). For this study, I used the strategy of rich, thick description by describing the participants and their settings as well as the data collection and analysis procedures in detail. By so doing, other researchers can decide if these findings are transferable to their situation. I also used the strategy of typicality of sample by selecting a kindergarten instructional reading practices at each research site that is typical of other instructional practices in large urban school districts in the United States.

Dependability

Merriam (2009) defined dependability as the degree to which the findings are supported by the data or the extent to which the research findings can be replicated. Merriam suggested the use of the following strategies to increase the dependability of qualitative research: triangulation, peer examination, clarification of the investigator's position, and an audit trail. For this study, I used triangulation by "comparing and cross-checking data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 216) collected during different times and places during the research process. I also used an audit trail by keeping a researcher's journal with detailed notes describing how data were collected and analyzed during the research process and the decisions made during that process.

Confirmability

For qualitative research, confirmability is the objectivity that the researcher maintains. Qualitative researchers use the strategy of reflexivity, which is defined as is the process whereby researchers reveal any preconceived thoughts, ideas, or beliefs that they may have on the research subject, to maintain objectivity (Merriam, 2009). The use of this strategy allows readers of their research to ascertain how the researchers' biases and assumptions may have influenced the study. To demonstrate reflexivity, I maintained a researcher's journal in which were noted any preconceived ideas about the outcomes of this study and as a reminder that discrepant data may emerge in the analysis process that challenges the theoretical proposition of this study.

Ethical Procedures

The overriding concern of a qualitative researcher should be to conduct research ethically, because otherwise findings may be irrelevant and unusable. For researchers to present results that cannot legitimately further knowledge would make the research process a paradox (Merriam, 2009). Ethical procedures in research are also a function of the researcher's ethical standards. Therefore, ethical standards must not only be intertwined within the research process, but also be an integral part of the researcher's personal stance (Merriam, 2009).

For this study, I received approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at Walden University and the NYC DOE to conduct research. As I outlined in the section, Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Collection, along with IRB approvals I sought and received approval from each principal to use their school as research sites to conduct research (see Appendix D). I was then positioned to distribute the letters of invitation and subsequently collect letters of consent from the teacher participants. I assigned pseudonyms to each participant, school, and school district, to ensure the sources remained confidential. I collected and stored data in a password protected personal computer and paper documents in a locked cabinet in my home. During archiving, I kept paper documents and computer-stored data on a dedicated flash drive in a locked cabinet in my home. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the date of collection.

Summary

Chapter 3 included a description of the research design, the rationale for choosing a multiple case study design over other designs, and the research questions that guided the study. I reflected on my role as a researcher and provided specific information about the participants for the study. I described the instruments used in the study, which included teacher and parent interview protocols and an observation data collection form. I outlined procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, followed by the data analysis plan. I shared the strategies that I employed to ensure that the results of this study have credibility, are transferable, dependable, and objective. I concluded the chapter by detailing the ethical procedures followed to further ensure that the findings are usable and advance knowledge in the field of education.

Chapter 4 encompasses the results of the study and includes the setting of the study, the participant's demographics, and the data collection procedures. Herein, I describe the procedures used for the single case and the cross-case analysis and the strategies that I used to improve the trustworthiness of this qualitative research. I conclude Chapter 4 with a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This multiple case study explored and described urban kindergarten teachers' beliefs about the environmental factors that influenced early reading skill development, instructional practices that were effective in developing reading skills and abilities, and the instructional practices that teachers used to remediate for environmental factors experienced by at-risk readers. One purpose was to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about the environmental factors that influenced homeless or at-risk students' early reading skills, and teachers' instructional and remedial practices to influence the trajectory of students' reading skills. The other purpose was to explore and describe documents, training, parental outreach and supports needed to effectively develop the early reading skills of kindergarten students who were identified as homeless or at risk in reading in seven kindergarten classrooms located in three separate schools in three northeastern urban school districts.

In this chapter, I present the results of the study. I describe the setting of the study, participant demographics, and data collection procedures. Also, I describe the procedures and strategies that I used to analyze the data to improve the trustworthiness of my results. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the results stemming from the research questions. The research questions centered on ascertaining teachers' beliefs about: (a) the environmental factors that influence the development of early reading skills, (b) structuring classroom instruction, (c) providing remedial instruction, and (d) providing the necessary supports for early reading skill development for students who are

at risk in reading. Supporting information and insight were gathered from classroom observations and from district and school-level documents. Further, the findings were filtered through considering each school site as a case construct and analyzing the similarities and differences noted within and across sites.

Setting

This multiple case study was conducted at three pre-K through 5 elementary schools located in a large urban school system in the northeastern region of the United States. All schools included students who lived in homeless residences. The first school was Greene Elementary School (pseudonym) in the Keywall School District (pseudonym). The second school was Matte Elementary School (pseudonym) in the Turnerville School District (pseudonym), and the final school was Pavilion Elementary School (pseudonym) in the Ulysses School District (pseudonym). I collected data in 2016 and then again in 2018. In 2018, I added an additional school because I was not able to recruit parents to participate in the study as originally planned. To expand the participant pool, I added an additional research site with three additional teachers. Adding the third research site did not pose any additional organization or personal conditions that would have influenced either the participants in this study or the interpretation of the data.

Keywall School District

During 2015-2016 the Keywall school district was comprised of more than 28,000 students enrolled in elementary, middle, and high schools with the following racial breakdown: 65.0% Black; 14.6% Hispanic; 1.7%White; 15.1% Asian; and 3.6% other. Out of this aggregate, 51.3% were male students, and 48.7% were female students. The

poverty rate for this school district was 77.6%. In the elementary school division, over 13,000 students attended general education, integrated co-teaching, and special education classes.

At Greene Elementary School, 86.1% of the student population was reported as Black, 9.6% Hispanic, and 2% other. In relation to gender, 50.7% were female students, and 49.3% were male students. From this aggregate, 100% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, based on free and reduced lunch statistics. Out of this number, 6% were homeless during school year 2015-2016 and 9% of these students were in elementary school. The school's proficient levels on the 2016 English language arts state assessment, which included reading, were under 50% for Grades 3, 4, and 5 with the highest proficient levels for Grade 3 students at 37% and the lowest for Grade 4 students at 22%. The proficiency level for Grade 5 students was at 31%. The proficient levels for economically disadvantaged students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 were 36%, 25%, and 27%, respectively.

Turnerville School District

In 2015-2016, the Turnerville school district was comprised of more than 46,000 students enrolled in elementary, middle, and high schools with the following racial breakdown: 24.4% Black; 37.9% Hispanic; 10.4% White; 22.9% Asian, and 4.4% other. Out of this aggregate, 52.3% were male students, and 47.7% were female students. The percentage of students at the poverty rate was 80.5%. Out of this number 6% were homeless and 7% of these students were in elementary school. In the elementary school

division, over 13,000 students attended general education, integrated co-teaching, and special education classes.

At Matte Elementary School, during 2015-2016, 61.2% of the student population was reported as Black or African American, 19.3% as Hispanic or Latino, 11.9% as Asian or Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 6% as other, and 1.6% as White. In relation to gender, 49.1% were female students, and 50.9% were male students. From this aggregate, 92.8% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, based on free and reduced lunch statistics. The school's proficiency level on the 2016 English language arts state assessment was under 30% for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5, with the highest proficiency levels for Grade 3 students at 29% and the lowest for Grade 5 students at 20%. The proficiency level for Grade 4 students was at 26%. The proficiency levels for economically disadvantaged students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 were 29%, 25%, and 19%, respectively.

Ulysses School District

In 2015-2016, the Ulysses school district was comprised of 12,440 students enrolled in elementary, middle, and high schools with the following racial breakdown: 49.9% Black; 40.0% Hispanic; 4.3% White; and 2.1% other. Out of this aggregate, 51.7% were male students, and 48.3% were female students. The percentage of homeless students during 2015-2016 was 18%; however, 25% of these students were in elementary school.

At Pavilion Elementary School, during the 2016-2017, 20% of the student population was reported as Black or African American, 75% as Hispanic or Latino, 2% as

Asian, and 2.0% as White. In relation to gender, 47.5% were female students, and 52.5% were male students. From this aggregate, 18% were homeless and 25% of these students were in elementary school during school year 2015-2016. The school's proficiency level on the 2016 English language arts state assessment was under 20% for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5, with the highest proficiency levels for Grade 4 students at 26% and the lowest for Grade 5 students at 12%. The proficiency level for Grade 4 students was at 26%.

Participants

Participants in the study came from three research sites, Greene Elementary School, two participants, Matte Elementary School, two participants, and Pavilion Elementary School, three participants. The seven teachers participated in an initial interview, a follow-up interview, and an observation of a reading lesson, which was at least 45 minutes in length. The teachers were also asked to submit documents that gave information about their school's instructional practices in reading. They were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) teachers must be employed in this large urban school district, (b) teachers must be employed as kindergarten teachers at one of the elementary schools in this large urban school district, (c) teachers must have at least one student in their class who is identified as both homeless or at risk in reading, and (d) teachers must provide reading instruction for at least 45 minutes of the school day.

Participants at Greene Elementary School included two kindergarten teachers: Jonelle (pseudonym) and Rachelle (pseudonym). Both Jonelle and Rachelle have spent their full educational careers at Greene Elementary. Jonelle has taught for 26 years, while Rachelle has taught for 25 years. Jonelle earned a master's degree in technology. Jonelle

has taught kindergarten for 2 years; prior to that assignment she was a cluster teacher in science for students in Grades K-4. Jonelle also served as the team leader for kindergarten teachers at this site and was a member of the school's instructional team. Instructional team members meet with the principal to establish school goals and facilitate communication across the lower and upper grades. Rachelle earned a master's degree in remedial reading. Rachelle has taught kindergarten for 5 years. Each Greene Elementary School participants have less than 5 years' experience as kindergarten teachers and possess masters' degree. Matte Elementary School participants have similar years of classroom experience, experience as kindergarten teachers, and levels of education. Matte Elementary School participants have similar years of experience in teaching kindergarten but differ in areas of educational training.

Participants at Matte Elementary School also included two kindergarten teachers: Joanne (pseudonym) and Renee (pseudonym). Joanne has taught at Matte Elementary School for 16 years. She holds a master's degree in special education and an additional 30 credits. Joanne has taught kindergarten reading for 4 years. Renee holds a master's degree in reading and an additional 30 credits in administrative credits. She has taught for 30 years. Renee taught kindergarten for 2 years. The Matte Elementary School teachers' average years of classroom experience and years instructing kindergarten students is similar to the Greene Elementary School teachers. The educational attainment of the Matte Elementary School teachers is more than that of the Greene Elementary School participants. The average years of classroom experience for the Pavilion Elementary School teachers is less than that of the teachers at Greene and Matte Elementary School

teachers, but the experience in kindergarten instruction is greater than the experience of teachers at the other two research sites.

Participants at Pavilion School included three kindergarten teachers: Mona (pseudonym), Nina (pseudonym), and Opal (pseudonym). Mona has taught for 38 years; however, only 25-26 of those years have been in the United States. She has been a kindergarten teacher for most of her career. Mona earned two master's degrees, one from Spain, and the other one from a college in the United States. She has taught at Pavilion Elementary School for about 5 years. Nina has taught for 13 years, 11 years at Pavilion Elementary. Her experience as a kindergarten teacher is also 11 years. She has a master's degree in early childhood education. Opal has been a kindergarten teacher for 13 years at Pavilion Elementary School. She has a master's degree in early childhood education. Pavilion Elementary School teachers have the greatest number of years teaching kindergarten students than teachers at the other two research sites. Pavilion Elementary School teachers have similar levels of educational training as the teachers at Greene Elementary School but possess a background in early childhood education. Data were collected from the participants over the course of 2 years, but the participant pool changed from the start to the end of the data collection period.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected between 2016 and 2018. The first round of data collection began in December 2016 through June 2017. A second round of data collection began in March 2018 and continued through May 2018 for the third research site. I sought the third research site when a sufficient number of parent participants could not be

found as originally planned. I removed parent participants from the study and added three more teacher participants in March 2018. The final study included seven teacher participants across three research sites. I had not asked Mona Question 4 from the initial interview protocol, so I posed this question to her during the follow-up protocol. I conducted initial and follow-up interviews at the three elementary schools or through telephone conferences, followed by observations of reading lessons. Documents related to reading instruction were collected from the participants at the three research sites. All interviews and observations were conducted by adhering to the protocols set forth for this study to ensure the trustworthiness of this data.

Interviews

Interviews at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools were arranged with the teachers at times convenient to their schedules (Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Interviews' Participants, Times, and Locations

Participant	Date	Interview	Time/Duration
		Greene Elementary School	
Jonelle	December 1, 2016	Initial	3:00 p.m./27 minutes
Jonelle	March 17, 2017	Follow-up	3:10 p.m./5 minutes
Rachelle	January 4, 2017	Initial	11:00 a.m./13 minutes
Rachelle	March 16, 2017	Follow-up	3:20 p.m./5 minutes
		Matte Elementary School	
Joanne	April 21, 2017	Initial	9:10 a.m./ 15 minutes
Joanne	May 1, 2017	Follow-up	8:30 a.m./5 minutes
Renee	April 28, 2017	Interview	9:23 a.m./12 minutes
Renee	May 19, 2017	Follow-up	9:30 a.m./5 minutes

(continued)

Table 2

Summary of Interviews' Participants, Times, and Locations (continued)

Participants	Date	Interview	Time/Duration
	Pavilion Elementary School		
Mona	March 2, 2018	Initial	6:00 p.m./42 minutes
Mona	March 28, 2018	Follow-up	5:00 p.m./9 minutes
Nina	March 2, 2018	Initial	7:00 p.m./18 minutes
Nina	March 28, 2018	Follow-up	6:30 p.m./9 minutes
Opal	March 9, 2018	Initial	6:00 p.m./15 minutes
Opal	April 30, 2018	Follow-up	6:04 p.m./15 minutes

Observations

Observations of instructional reading lessons for teacher participants at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools took place within a month of the initial interviews (Table 2). Reading lessons were observed during the teachers' regularly assigned times for reading instruction.

Table 3

Summary of Classroom Observations

Participant	Date	Time/Duration
	Greene Elementary School	
Jonelle	December 20, 2016	10:10 a.m./35 minutes
Rachelle	February 3, 2017	10:00 a.m./45 minutes
	Matte Elementary School	
Joanne	April 28, 2017	10:00 a.m./45 minutes
Renee	May 1, 2017	10:00 a.m./45 minutes

(continued)

Table 2

Summary of Classroom Observations (continued)

Participant	Date	Time/Duration
	Pavilion Elementary School	
Mona	March 28, 2018	8:45 a.m./45 minutes
Nina	March 28, 2018	9:30 a.m./45 minutes
Opal	April 20, 2018	8:45 a.m./45 minutes

Documents

I collected documents, if available, from the participating teachers at each research site. At Greene Elementary School, I collected the kindergarten reading standards and a sample homework assignment from Jonelle. At Matte Elementary School, I collected two categories of documents from Joanne. One category of documents defined and listed reading skills, such as main ideas and details, author's purpose, and text structure. The other set of documents listed and defined strategies, such as asking questions, visualizing, and making connections. Strategies help students gain meaning from text, whereas skills can be defined as a reader's goals. I collected a two-page document from the lead teacher at Pavilion Elementary school. The document contained information about the instructional program at the school, a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading and writing. This document also contained information about the dissemination of a parent newsletter and the provision of literacy materials for parents. A Pavilion Elementary School teacher submitted a document that stated that teachers received professional development. The document did not provide details about the professional development purportedly received. The documents submitted by Pavilion

Elementary School teachers detailed the school's instructional practices in reading in greater details than documents submitted by teachers at the other two research sites. Documents submitted by Greene and Matte Elementary School teachers do not reflect the breadth and depth of their school's instructional practices in reading. The range of data collected changed during the implementation phase due to changes in the participant pool.

I made several variations and modifications to the data collection plan during the implementation stage. The most substantial modification to the study's original design dealt with the exclusion of parents in the study. Prior to excluding parents from the study, I requested, and received IRB approval for several modifications to the recruitment method in Spring of 2017 (outreach letters to parents through students) and the data collection plan (allowing written responses to interview questions). However, I still encountered difficulties procuring enough parent participants, so modified I the study's design to include only teacher participants. There were also several other variations to the original data collection plan. I omitted an interview question during the initial interview of a teacher participant, so I asked that question during the follow-up interview. After receiving permission from the IRBs at Walden and New York City's Department of Education, participants could respond to interview questions over the telephone. Prior to the removal of parents from the study, I received permission from the respective IRBs to hold a parent meeting in the homeless residence and disseminate school supplies. In the case of a potential non-hearing parent participant, permission from the respective IRBs was received to allow the non-hearing participant to write her responses. Issues arriving

from the implementation of the data collection were varied, and approval was granted by the IRBs at Walden and New York City' Department of Education's as needed. Completion of the data implementation plan was followed by line-by-line coding, which began the analysis stage of my research. In the next section, I discuss the line-by-line coding of the individual cases for my study.

Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss the findings that resulted from a line-by-line coding of the individual cases of my study identified as Greene Elementary School, Matte Elementary School, and Pavilion Elementary School. Data for this analysis came from teacher responses to the interview questions and observations of a reading lesson. Data were also obtained from documents submitted by teachers at each research site.

Line by Line Coding

The cases for this study were the reading instructional practices at the three research sites in the northeastern region of the United States and the participating teachers' beliefs. During the analysis of interview and observation data for each case, I utilized a line-by-line coding approach, a method of analysis espoused by Charmaz (2006) for qualitative research. I followed this initial coding by using Merriam's (2009) constant-comparative method to organize the codes into categories. I used content analysis to conduct an analysis of the documents collected from the research sites. I summarized the categories for each data source, including interviews, observations, and documents, for both cases in three different tables without any computer program.

Analysis was informed by the use of proven qualitative research techniques. Interview questions that informed this analysis are detailed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Analysis of Initial Interview Data: Teachers

Research Question 1. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?

Interview Question 6. What factors do you believe contribute to students' at-risk status in reading? Teachers at the research site noted several factors they believed may contribute to students' at-risk status in reading (Table 3). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle reported that parents who do not read to their children and do not help them complete homework contribute to their children's at-risk status in reading. Rachelle believed, as did Jonelle, that parents are their children's first teachers. However, Rachelle stated that if parents are living in a homeless residence, reading with their children may take low priority to other life concerns. Rachelle also stated that the parents' lack of education may be a contributing factor to their children's at-risk status. She added that a child's status as a foster child may hinder children's reading development. Rachelle stated that other factors, such as parents' marital status or addiction to drugs while pregnant or while caring for children, also encumber children's reading development. Rachelle added that parents may be "more worried about where they are living and sleeping versus learn[ing] in school. Their mind is distracted, and it's a shame because it affects them negatively."

Teachers gave varied responses to the factors that influenced students' at-risk status in reading, but at the core of their statements were parents and students' emotional,

physical, and educational states of being. Matte Elementary School teachers detailed various levels of parent's level of involvement with their children as factors that contribute to at-risk development in reading.

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne stated that students' lack of exposure to academic materials contributes to their at-risk status. In addition, Joanne explained that the students who are at risk may not be exposed to the alphabet, the sounds of the letters, or writing their names prior to school entry. Joanne also stated that some students may not be developmentally ready to learn foundational skills. Renee also believed, as did the teachers at Greene Elementary School, that the home-school connection was a determining factor in students' at-risk status in reading. Parents who work two jobs may not be able to spend any time helping their children complete homework or follow up with other assignments. Renee also believed that students' inattentiveness may account for their at-risk status in reading, as well as their need to be visually stimulated. Matte Elementary teachers detailed contributing factors to students' at-risk development in reading as what the parent does before and during their children's entry into school. Pavilion Elementary School teachers added to the data collected about the factors that influence students' reading trajectory.

At Pavilion Elementary School, the teachers identified contributing factors to students' at-risk status. Mona stated that parents were not aware of how to assist their children at home, whether with helping with homework, reading to their child. or engaging the child in conversation: "but I see that if the parents don't talk with the children, expose the children to books, to stories, [students] don't open their mouths."

Mona also stated that there may be cultural misunderstandings about the parents' role in their children's education. Parents who immigrated to the United States may feel that their children's education is the teachers' responsibility and not a shared responsibility. Nina, another teacher at Pavilion Elementary School, stated that the children's inability to grasp foundational knowledge, including retention of sight words and learning of letters and their sounds, contributed to their at-risk status. Parents' lack of involvement with the child, such as helping their child with homework, contributes to a child's at-risk status. Nina stated that "summer slippage" also accounts for children's status: "Summer slippage is really big concern for me; a lot of parents leave for the summer and they don't feel that they need to reinforce what was learned." Nina believed that students' lack of knowledge in the foundational skills, such as knowledge of letters and their sounds, accounts for students' at-risk status. She also stated that parents' lack of involvement at home, such as assisting with homework, accounts for student's at-risk status. Opal, another teacher at Pavilion Elementary School, stated that a child's speech problems may account for students' at-risk status, along with the students' failure to complete homework assignments. Pavilion teachers cite a gap between what is occurring between home and school and how this intellectual gap has an adverse influence on children's development of early reading skills. Teachers' responses at the three research sites are considered and summarized in the next paragraph.

Table 4

At-Risk Factors: Single-Case Analysis

	Home-School Connection	Socioeconomic Status (parents uneducated)	Lack of foundational skills	Cultural Difference	Marital Status	Inattentiveness in Class
	Greene Elementary School					
Jonelle	2	0	0	0	0	0
Rachelle	1	2	0	0	1	0
Total Frequency	3	2	0	0	1	0
	Matte Elementary School					
Joanne	1	0	1	0	0	0
Renee	1	1	0	0	0	3
Total Frequency	2	1	1	0	0	3
	Pavilion Elementary School					
Mona	7	1	0	1	0	0
Nina	3	0	6	0	0	0
Opal	1	0	1	1	0	0
Total Frequency	11	1	7	2	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	16	4	8	2	1	3

Teachers at the research sites believed that factors influenced students' at-risk status in reading. All the teachers stated that parents' lack of engagement with children at home hindered their children's progress in reading. Parents' lack of engagement can include parents not reading to their child, not helping their child, or not talking with the

child. Two teachers, one from Matte Elementary School and the other from Greene Elementary School, believed that socioeconomic status may lead to student's at-risk status. Additionally, one of these teachers believed that a parent's preoccupation with housing needs may account for their children's at-risk status. Other factors that teachers believed affects children's at-risk status include a parent's marital status and a child's status as a foster child. Students' inattentiveness in class was also considered a contributing factor. Two of the seven teachers believed that the lack of children's maturity for academic pursuits may negatively influence their readiness to acquire grade-level reading skills. Social settings in which a parent is situated that encourage their positive involvement (e.g., reading to their children, helping with their children, or purchasing books) can influence the parent-child interaction, which can then influence the child in the school setting. Bronfenbrenner (1979) called indirect influences *translations.* Teachers can utilize the possibility of indirectly influencing a child by reaching out to the parents in their unique setting(s), perhaps through public announcements. Participants' responses on contributing factors to students' at-risk status in reading should inform school administrators development of services to address these needs. Teachers' beliefs about classroom instruction for students who are at risk in reading are detailed in the next section.

Research Question 2. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading?

Interview Question 1. Please describe the curricular materials that you use in your kindergarten classroom.

The participating teachers from the three districts described the curricular materials in use at their respective schools (Table 4). At Greene Elementary School, teachers reported using a variety of materials to support the reading curriculum. Jonelle noted "we had a curriculum map that was made by teachers in the school that follows Lucy Calkin's reader's workshop." Jonelle also pointed out that she supplemented the curriculum for at-risk students by using *Teachers Pay Teachers* (n.d.) materials, such as flashcards and videos to help students learn sight words. Jonelle also noted that teachers used magnetic letters during phonics instruction. Rachelle added that she used flashcards, sight word bingo, magnetic letters, and other games to support instruction in letter recognition and letter sounds; however, she did not describe a specific reading curriculum. Rachelle spoke of several strategies that she used to reinforce the retention of sight words, noting, "We have our brand-new Wilson's (2012) *Fundations* phonics program. It would be wonderful if we got taught how to use it, and I'm anxiously awaiting that." In addition, Rachelle mentioned that the program included worksheets, dry-erase markers, and boards to help students properly form letters. Teachers at the various research sites used manipulatives, as well as online websites to support reading and phonics instruction. The responses of the Matte Elementary teachers are detailed in the paragraph that follows.

Table 5

Curriculum Materials:Single-Case Analysis

	Teacher's College Reading & Writing	Wilson's Fundations and other phonics programs	Other Curriculum	Materials: Technology	Print Rich materials	Multi-sensory materials
	Greene Elementary School					
Jonelle	2	0	0	0	0	1
Rachelle	0	1	0	0	0	3
Total Frequency	2	1	0	0	0	4
	Matte Elementary School					
Joanne	0	0	1	2	2	0
Renee	0	1	1	2	3	0
Total Frequency	0	1	2	4	5	0
	Pavilion Elementary School					
Mona	0	0	1	0	0	0
Nina	1	0	0	0	0	0
Opal	1	1	0	0	2	0
Total Frequency	2	1	1	0	2	0
GRAND TOTAL	4	3	3	2	5	4

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne reported that they used a reading program titled *ReadyGen* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2016). Joanne also noted that she supplemented *ReadyGen* with other texts and questions that she developed. She also created units of study and a writing program using *ReadyGen* as a foundation. Joanne

pointed out that each week she taught a different reading skill (e.g., main idea, character traits, retelling). Renee stated that she used author studies, “anchor charts” (charts to introduce units of studies), and authentic texts to teach reading skills. Renee also used parts of Ready New York, an instructional program that prepares students to meet the Common Core standards. Renee stated that she used Wilson’s (2012) *Fundations* program and its supporting materials such as letter boards(multi-sensory), magnetic tiles, and workbooks to teach phonics. Renee stressed the importance of teaching rhyming words, along with onsets, rhymes, and word families. Renee added that she supplemented the reading program with online programs such as MobyMax (2019), as well as worksheets from Super Teacher (Super Teacher Worksheets, 2019). MobyMax is an online resource for teachers that offers tiered lessons for students and Super Teachers (Super Teacher Worksheets, 2019) provides worksheets to support reading development. Matte Elementary School teachers used a variety of tools in their kindergarten classrooms. Tools ranged from published curriculum, print-rich materials, self-created tools, and technology materials. In the ensuing paragraph, I discuss Pavilion Elementary teachers’ responses regarding the curriculum tools that they used to foster reading instruction in their classrooms.

At Pavilion Elementary School, Mona, Nina, and Opal spoke of using the Teacher’s College (Calkin, 2015) curriculum, which uses a workshop approach to reading instruction. They supplemented this approach to reading with guided and shared reading. Mona spoke of using interactive writing, interactive reading, guided reading, and read alouds as part of the reading curriculum. Additionally, she spoke of a program called

Estrellita (Myer, 2019) that was used in her bilingual classroom. Nina spoke of some of the elements of the workshop model, such as *turn and talk* and *accountable talk*. “We use a curriculum written by Teacher’s College, usually called Reading and Writing Workshop, which is the workshop model where the teacher conducts a mini-lesson followed by Turn and Talk.” In Turn and Talk, espoused by Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop, students are given the opportunity to turn and talk and build on the conversation of other students around a text. Opal used a phonics program called *Reading Reform* developed by the former Reading Reform Foundation of New York. In this program, the students blended and segmented the sounds in words. Opal also spoke of using emerging books to teach a skill: “It consists of teaching the kids how to read emerging storybooks, just letting them listen to the stories and having them pretend reading using what you’ve taught them.” Opal also spoke of students using leveled books, which progress in difficulty from level AA to level Z. Opal stated that she teaches the reading habits that are necessary for success. “If the skill ... for Level A, for example, I’ll teach like readers look at the book, at the pictures.” The majority of the Pavilion Elementary teachers used published core curriculum, including reading components that reflect a research-based instructional program. I summarize the curriculum tools that I used across research sites in the ensuing paragraph.

The findings showed that teachers at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion elementary schools used a variety of curricular and other materials to teach reading to kindergarten students; however, only five of the seven teachers talked about using Teachers College Workshop model (Calkin, 2015). Teachers at Matte Elementary School stated that they

used the same curriculum, *ReadyGen* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2016), whereas at Greene Elementary only one of the two teachers mentioned that Teacher's College Workshop model was used in the classroom, and at Pavilion Elementary, two of three teachers mentioned that the same teaching model was used. The other class at Pavilion Elementary School, which is a bilingual class, used another program, Estrellita (Myer, 2019). Teachers at Greene Elementary School and Matte Elementary School used Wilson's (2012) *Fundations* and the remaining school used *Reading Reform*. Phonics instruction, if part of a school's instructional practices in reading, should be delivered by all kindergarten teachers. It could have been that one of the two teachers at Greene and Matte Elementary and two of the three teachers at Pavilion Elementary School mistakenly omitted this aspect of the curriculum, but teachers should be equally aware of the components of their school's instructional practices in reading. Renee of Matte Elementary School spoke of teaching rhyming words, onset, and rhymes, but the other teacher at the school did not speak on these aspects of phonological awareness. Guided and shared reading activities were only mentioned by two of the three teachers at Pavilion Elementary School and not by any of the teachers at either Matte or Greene Elementary Schools. Guided reading is an instructional strategy to assist student in building reading comprehension, whereas shared reading is a strategy that teachers can use to expand oral language. A teacher at Pavilion Elementary School stated that she used emergent readers and that she taught the reading habits necessary for early readers. The remaining teachers at Pavilion did not speak of using emergent readers or shared reading activities to model habits of a mature reader. Fidelity of treatment in research studies, which may lead to

advances in reading instruction, can be deduced to be equally important in classroom instruction within a grade. Renee of Matte Elementary spoke of teaching skills and strategies, and Joanne demonstrated the use of several strategies during her observation, such as predicting and sequencing. Renee stated that she used anchor charts, which provided visual clues to students and helped create a print rich environment. Print rich environments may lead to the further development of oral language or assist in the outward manifestation of psychological growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) called the physical manifestation of an inward growth a molar activity. Instructional practices, such as the posting of anchor charts, should be utilized equally by teachers within a school. Jonelle and Renee, teachers at Greene Elementary School, and Renee from Matte Elementary School, supplemented the curriculum with materials from websites. Participants supplemented their school's core curriculum with technological resources or self-made materials. This could mean that a school's instructional practices in reading are lacking necessary components or may represent the resourcefulness of a teacher. Teachers' responses in another key component for reading instruction (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018c), foundational texts, are detailed in the next several paragraphs.

Interview Question 2. Please describe the instructional strategies that you used to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards under the Foundational Skills strand in reading (Table 5). Five of the seven teachers described the instructional strategies used to assist students in meeting the Foundational Skills strand under the Common Core Standards in reading. The remaining teachers spoke on

standards under the Foundational Skills strand, without mentioning any strategies employed. Instructional strategies, for the purposes of this study, are defined as what a teacher does to assist the student in reaching a learning goal (Meador, 2018). Reading or tracking from left to right is a standard under the Foundational Skills strand, so teachers employed several strategies or instructional methods to help their students achieve this standard. There appeared to be confusion among some of the teachers about strategies and standards.

Table 6

Instructional Strategies: Single-Case Analysis

	Instructional strategies	Technology strategies	Group Strategies	Print-rich strategies	Multi-sensory strategies	Standard
Greene Elementary School						
Jonelle	0	1	0	0	1	2
Rachelle	0	0	0	0	5	3
Total Frequency	0	1	0	0	6	5

(continued)

Table 7

Instructional Strategies: Single-Case Analysis (continued)

	Instructional strategies	Technology strategies	Group Strategies	Print-rich strategies	Multi-sensory strategies	Standard
			Matte Elementary School			
Joanne	1	1	1	0	0	3
Renee	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total Frequency	1	0	1	0	0	8
			Pavilion Elementary School			
Mona	0	0	0	1	2	2
Nina	2	0	1	0	1	0
Opal	0	0	1	0	2	0
Total Frequency	2	0	2	1	5	0
GRAND TOTAL	3	1	3	1	11	10

At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle noted she used an online program called *Starfall* (Starfall Education, 2019) to teach students to read from left to right. She also used popsicle sticks to help students focus their eyes in moving from left to right. Rachelle also reported using several strategies to teach foundational reading skills, as well as "various equipment and manipulatives in the classroom to help the children gain more knowledge of the letters." Rachelle asked students to use their hands to blend and stretch the words (phonological awareness), letter tiles to make words (print concepts),

and flash cards to build word recognition, magnetic letters/tiles to build phonics knowledge, and writing boards to reinforce letter knowledge. Jonelle added that she asked students to clap their hands for each syllable in words (phonological awareness). Greene Elementary School teachers used various multi-sensory strategies to develop the students' phonological awareness. They also used strategies that addressed many of the standards with the exception of the fluency standard. In the following paragraph, I detail Matte Elementary School teachers' responses to strategies used for Standards under the Foundational Skills strand.

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne spoke of focusing instruction on beginning sounds and the correct formation of letters, phonics and word recognition. She noted the use of flexible groups, a strategy to teach the Standards falling under the Foundational Skills strand. Joanne also spoke of providing center time each day during reading, as well as combining the teaching of reading and writing. In center time, Joanne used games to reinforce letter knowledge, letter sounds, word formation, listening to an online story, and for small group guided reading. Jonelle also used informational how-to books and writing short narratives during reading/writing instruction; however, these activities do not align with any of the kindergarten reading strands. Renee spoke of teaching students to read from left to right and to understand that spaces separate words, which fall under print concepts. Renee also described teaching students rhyming words and word families (phonological awareness). Reading from left to right, understanding that spaces separate words, rhyming words, and word families, however, are standards and not strategies. Matte Elementary School teachers created what may be a relaxed atmosphere, play, to

teach Standards under the Foundational Skills strand. They also used small groups to expand student knowledge in Foundational Skills. The strategies use by Pavilion Elementary teachers are detailed in the next paragraph.

At Pavilion Elementary School, there was no overlap in the strategies used for teaching Standards under the Foundational Skills strand. Mona spoke on the instructional standards she used versus strategies she employed to teach Foundational Skills. Nina and Opal spoke on strategies they employed to teach, but, in the case of Opal, the strategies did not necessarily target Foundational kills. Mona spoke on the Foundational Standards that dealt with phonological awareness, print concepts, and fluency. Nina spoke on conferencing with students, using guided reading, constantly reassessing students, and using a program called *Reading Reform*, which was developed by the former Reading Reform Foundation of New York. Opal spoke on using pictures to support students' reading of texts and to support their retelling of a story, which is a strategy, but not one for the teaching of Standards under the Foundational Skills strand. Pavilion Elementary teachers used some instructional strategies that were not in use by teachers at the other research sites, such as conferencing with students, ongoing assessment, and guided reading strategies. Teachers across the research sites, used various strategies some of which did not fall under Foundational Skills strand. Teachers' responses across the research sites are summarized in the paragraph that follows.

Many of the teachers across the three research sites were able to clearly describe instructional strategies they used to teach foundational reading skills. A teacher at Pavilion Elementary School spoke of strategies she employed, but the strategies did not

support any of the foundational strategies. The strategies that five of the seven teachers listed fall under the following Foundational Skills strands: Print Concepts and some aspects of Phonological Awareness, but they did not mention any strategies that would fall under Phonics and Word Recognition or Fluency. Flexible grouping and center time are general strategies used by the teachers at Matte Elementary School, which can be employed to teach or remediate students who lack knowledge of foundational reading skills. Flexible grouping refers to grouping students according to their specific instructional need and center time refers to several groups of students engaged in hands-on activities that support reading development. These two strategies, flexible grouping and center time, could also improve the frequency and quality of interactions between teacher and students. Dyad or multi-dyad interactions are important in the consideration of development according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development. These interactions, student-to-student or teacher-to-student occur within flexible grouping and center time. Teachers across research sites used a gamut of strategies to teach Foundational Skills, but most did not address the fluency standard in their responses. Teachers' responses in another key component for reading instruction (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018c), literature, are detailed in the next several paragraphs.

Interview Question 3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you used to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature (Table 6). Teachers had mixed success in teaching the Common Core Standards for literature. At Greene Elementary School, Rachelle noted a variety of literature books, both fiction and nonfiction, were available to students. Rachelle stated she used word webs and graphic organizers to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Graphic organizers and fiction and non-fiction texts are strategies that can be used for standards under the literature strand. Jonelle also reported that she used graphic organizers to assist students in meeting the Common Core State Standards for literature. In addition, Jonelle stated that "with prompting and support," she asked detail questions about the text, which falls under the key ideas and details strand for literature. Jonelle also stated she helped students make connections to the text (e.g., text-to-text and text-to-stories), which falls under the integration of knowledge and ideas strand for literature. Jonelle stated that students asked each other simple, literal questions. Research participants used a variety of strategies to teach the standards that fall under the literature standard. In the paragraph that follows, the strategies used by Greene Elementary School teachers are detailed.

Table 8

Instructional-Strategies-Literature Standards Single-Case Analysis

	Instructional strategies	Technology strategies	Interactions: Individual or group	Print-rich strategies	Multi-sensory strategies	Standard supported activities
			Greene Elementary School			
Jonelle	2	0	0	0	0	0
Rachelle	2	0	0	2	0	0
Total Frequency	4	0	0	2	0	0
			Matte Elementary School			
Joanne	0	0	1	0	0	0
Renee	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total Frequency	0	1	2	0	0	2
			Pavilion Elementary School			
Mona	2	0	0	3	0	4
Nina	0	0	0	1	0	0
Opal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	2	0	0	4	0	4
GRAND TOTAL	6	1	2	6	0	6

The activities (e.g., peer learning and group discussion) reported by Jonelle of Greene Elementary School are viable strategies for teaching standards that fall under the literature strand. The quality of dyad interactions (student-to-student and student-teacher) and multiple interactions (student(s) to student(s) and student(s) to teacher) are important

components of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development, which can be fostered by a teacher's use of strategies. Such interactions promote molar activities and intellectual development. Jonelle stated she used the text structure as a strategy to increase students' comprehension of fictional texts. Students had to identify story features such as the characters, the setting, the plot, the problem, and its solution (key ideas and details). Jonelle also stated she asked students to use "accountable" talk (e.g., I know this because; I (dis)/agree with you because; I would like to add) in group discussions, a strategy which can increase comprehension of a text and build oral language. Jonelle added that she assisted students in using context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words and that she also used rhymes and riddles to reinforce the learning of vocabulary words, which are strategies that can support the learning of unknown words. For fluency, Jonelle stated she did choral and echo reading of texts; however, these strategies support standards under the Foundational Skills strand, not the literature strand. Rachelle noted that she read various fictional texts and sought to build students' comprehension through the use of word webs and graphic organizers. Greene Elementary School teachers used visuals to teach standards that fall under the literature standard, addressing some of the standards under the literature strand. Standards addressed come under "Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity" (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d). I discuss the strategies used by Matte Elementary School teachers in the paragraphs that follow.

At Matte Elementary School, Renee reported that she used "Do Now" (brief activities to complete in class with immediate assessment) with students to review skills

previously taught, to model reading from left to right, and to identify beginning, middle, and ending sounds. These are viable strategies, but they fall under the Foundational Skills strand, not the Literature strand. Renee also used PowerPoint presentations to reinforce and review sight words, a practice that also falls under the Foundational Skills strand for kindergarten students. Joanne spoke of using flexible groups to ensure that students learned specific reading skills, a viable strategy for standards under the literature strand. Joanne added,

> They think they learn better from one teacher than the other…So, we're constantly moving (changing the adult leader of a small group). In this class, there were two teachers and a paraprofessional. And because we're doing that, the kids don't even like realize. They're just learning. And they're just learning different ways.

Teachers at Matte Elementary School did not address many of the standards that fall under the literature strand. Teachers utilized flexible grouping, which is a strategy that can foster knowledge under the literature strand. Teachers did not detail any strategies for use with "Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and the Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity" (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d).

At Pavilion Elementary School, the teachers' responses showed a limited knowledge of strategies that could be used to teach standards in the literature strand. Mona spoke of materials she used to teach the literature standards. She spoke of having texts on varied topics and of having leveled books that ranged in reading difficulty,

strategies for teaching literature standards. Mona also spoke of strategies that fell under the Foundational Skills strand, not the Literature strand. She spoke of covering syllables to decode words, clapping syllables, segmenting and blending the sounds in words, which are strategies that align with the standards under the Foundational Skills strand. Mona spoke of using the arts, singing, and dancing to teach students as well as helping students make connections across the content areas, which are viable strategies for teaching literature. Lastly, Mona spoke on teaching vocabulary words, a literature standard, but did not detail the strategies she employed to teach the words. Nina spoke of using strategies and standards that fall under the literature strand. Using mentor texts and maintaining a print rich environment can be used as strategies. Nina mentioned using mentor texts and maintaining a print-rich environment.

> I use a lot of mentor texts in the mini-lessons to give them a scope and depth of what is expected for them, and a print-rich environment and vocabulary, which they should be using when speaking about a book, like conversational prompts and such.

Opal spoke on a writing activity, such as How to Make a Sandwich, which is not related to any of the literature standards. She did not mention any strategies related to the literature strand. The strategies used by Pavilion Elementary School teachers fell under "Craft and Structure (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d). Teachers did not note any strategies that fall under "Key Ideas and Details", "Integration of Knowledge and Ideas" and "Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity" (Common

Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018d). A summary of strategies used by the teachers at the 3 research sites are detailed in the next paragraphs.

There was more alignment to the strands under the literature standards for teachers at Greene Elementary School than for teachers at Matte Elementary School. Greene Elementary teachers spoke of strategies used to teach literature standards, such as word web and graphic organizers, whereas one teacher at Matte Elementary spoke of a strategy she used, but she did not apply it to any strands under literature standards as she was asked to detail in the interview question. At Pavilion Elementary School, Mona stated more strategies than did the other teachers at her school, such as small group and one-on-one instruction and teaching vocabulary words across content areas. Small group and one-on-one instruction are also components of a balanced literacy approach to reading. A balanced literacy program component was evident by one teacher at Greene Elementary School and one teacher at Pavilion Elementary School: small group instruction and interactive writing, respectively. One teacher at Matte Elementary School and one teacher at Pavilion Elementary School spoke of small group or one-on-one interactions and environments that may create increased learning opportunities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to the responses given during the interview, participants used instructional strategies to teach literature, such as print-rich and technology-related strategies. Teachers, though, did not use strategies across all the standards in this strand. Reading instruction at all schools would improve with systematic and direct instruction of all the standards in this strand. Teachers' responses in another

key component for reading instruction (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018c), informational texts, are detailed in the next several paragraphs.

Interview Question 4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you used to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading.

Teachers at Matte and Greene Elementary Schools spoke of using more strategies than did the teachers at Pavilion Elementary to meet the Common Core State Standards for informational texts (Table 7). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle noted she asked students about the main idea and details in informational texts, which comes under key ideas and details. Jonelle stated she used songs and videos as technology strategies to enhance students' learning. Rachelle noted she read informational texts to students as did Jonelle; however, she also mentioned using graphic organizers as an instructional strategy. Rachelle also had students identify the author, the illustrator, and informational text features, such as noting that the glossary and chapter headings are written with bold print. Identifying the author and illustrator are standards under the key ideas and details for kindergarten students; however, identifying text features, such as glossary and chapter headings are standards for first grade students. Additionally, identifying standards in this strand does not equate to instructional strategies used to teach said standards. Greene Elementary School teachers used print-rich materials, technology, and general strategies to instruct the students in standards pertaining to informational text. They did not indicate strategies for all standards in this strand, such as identifying unknown words in a passage (Craft and Structure), providing supporting evidence for an author's reasoning

(Integration of Knowledge and Ideas), or facilitating conversation on a book's main idea (Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity). Greene Elementary School teachers platformed from less informational standards than did the teachers at Matte Elementary School.

Table 9

Instructional Strategies-Informational Text Standard: Single-Case Analysis

	Instructional strategies	Technology strategies	Print-rich strategies	Multi-sensory strategies	Group	Standards driven activities
Greene Elementary School						
Jonelle	1	0	1	0	0	1
Rachelle	2	1	1	0	0	2
Total Frequency	3	1	2	0	0	3
Matte Elementary School						
Joanne	2	1	1	0	1	1
Renee	1	0	1	0	0	1
Total Frequency	3	1	2	0	1	2
Pavilion Elementary School						
Mona	1	1	1	1	0	2
Nina	1	0	0	0	1	1
Opal	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	4	1	1	1	1	3
GRAND TOTAL	10	3	5	1	1	8

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne also reported using videos, as did Jonelle. Joanne also taught the students about text features. Unlike either teacher at Greene Elementary or Matte Elementary Schools, Joanne described using checklists to teach text features (e.g., table of contents, title, and heading). She also used charts as reminders of concepts and skills taught, revisited concepts taught, taught similar concepts across the content areas, and used flexible grouping for students who experienced learning challenges. These activities noted by Joanne are viable strategies for teaching informational texts. Renee also reported identifying the distinguishing features of informational texts (e.g., headings and pictures) and used charts as reminders of concepts taught, viable strategies for teaching about informational texts. Strategies used by the Matte Elementary teachers fall under print-rich materials, technology and grouping strategies. Engaging students in conversation (Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity) was an informational strategy that Matte Elementary teachers stated was in use as part of their school's instructional practices in reading. Teachers who did not give responses that indicate other strategies that fall under the Informational strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b) were part of their school's instructional practices in reading. Matte Elementary School teachers used charts and checklists to further instruction of the standards under the informational text strand. Although, Pavilion Elementary School teachers did not use charts and checklists, they used explicit teaching (methods) to reinforce strategies falling under the Informational Text strand.

At Pavilion Elementary School, teachers did not provide much information about strategies used to support teaching standards in the informational strand, except for

Mona. Mona stated that she used a multi-sensory approach to teaching informational texts. She also stated that she asked questions and used sight words, a variety of books, and a computer to teach from informational texts. Nina stated standards, identifying the title and the author of books, and the back and the front of a book, which fall under Craft and Structure in the Informational Text strand. Nina also spoke of using illustrations to support text meaning, which is a standard under the Literature strand. Nina did mention explicit teaching, a teaching directed method or strategy, as did Opal. In response to the question, Nina gave another strategy, group reading that she uses in her classroom. She stated that group reading activities "reinforce understanding of what's being read based on the students' interests." Opal stated that she used explicit teaching to point out the differences between informational books and story books: "We show them the difference between an informational text and a storybook." Opal also provided a definition about a feature of informational books: "we use informational text to learn about a certain topic," exemplifying explicit teaching. Pavilion Elementary teachers' responses indicated that they used a greater range of strategies than did the teachers at the other two research but lacks in the coverage of standards in the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b). The research sites' teachers use of strategies from the Informational Text strand are compared and contrasted.

Teachers at Pavilion Elementary School spoke of fewer strategies for teaching standards under the Informational Text strand than the teachers at Matte or Greene Elementary schools. The strategies that teachers at either Matte or Greene Elementary used to teach informational text included graphic organizers, charts, videos, and songs.

Teachers spoke of teaching the main idea of a text and its supporting details (key ideas and details), identifying the author, the illustrator (craft and structure), and other text features. The teaching of text features, such as headings and glossary, is a Grade 1 standard under the Craft and Structure. Therefore, it would be educationally advantageous for teachers to review standards across kindergarten, first, and second grades to understand the standards that are unique to kindergarten. Two of the seven teachers spoke about using small groups as a strategy to further students' understanding about standards under the Informational Text strand. Using small group activities may serve to increase the number and quality of interactions between students and between students in teachers. Dyad and multiple interactions between individuals are integral to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development as he theorized that interactions foster intellectual development. Explicit teaching and videos were strategies used by two of the seven teachers in the teaching of informational texts. Teachers' responses in another key component of their school's instructional practices in reading, interventions used for students at risk in reading are detailed in the next several paragraphs.

Interview Question 5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading to improve their reading skills.

Teachers at the three sites described specific interventions used to help homeless and at-risk students improve their reading skills (Table 8). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle noted that some of the students who lived in temporary residences required additional support, so she would direct and redirect them in their reading activities.

Jonelle also stated that she read to these students frequently and modeled one-on-one correspondence with words while reading. Jonelle also noted that she prompted students by giving them the beginning sound of an unfamiliar word. Jonelle reported using positive reinforcement and "encouraging them and telling them they're doing a good job and trying to get them to feel better about themselves, so they can want to do it." Rachelle spoke of the Academic Intervention Service (AIS) at Greene Elementary School. Rachelle added that students who need extra support get help in reading, including one-on-one instruction in a separate location. Rachelle stated that the one-on-one instruction relates to reading strategies and skills, and letter sounds. The interventions that characterized the instructional practices in reading at Greene Elementary School were limited by teacher modeling and one-on-one intervention by one teacher in Foundational Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). The other teacher's response indicated that one-on-one assistance is limited to help outside the classroom. The practical level of Matte Elementary teachers' responses was varied; one teacher reported that she used one-on-one instruction, whereas the other teacher stated that students were removed for one-on-one instruction. Matte Elementary teachers' responses were also varied as were the responses from Greene Elementary teachers. Greene Elementary teachers, responses however, reflected a wider range of strategy use than the responses from Greene Elementary teachers.

Table 10

Reading Interventions: Single-Case Analysis

	Instructional strategies	Technology strategies	Print-rich strategies	Multi-sensory strategies	Outreach to parents	Strategies target homeless or at-risk students	Group/peer tutoring	Positive Affirmations	Standard driven activities
					Greene Elementary School				
Jonelle	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0
Rachelle	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0
					Matte Elementary School				
Joanne	2	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Renee	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Total Frequency	3	3	1	0	3	0	2	0	0
					Pavilion Elementary School				
Mona	1	1	0	2	1	0	2	0	0
Nina	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Opal	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Total Frequency	2	3	0	2	2	1	4	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	6	**6**	**1**	**2**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**1**	**0**

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne noted that students who had difficulties in learning how to read received assistance in small groups; however, Joanne stated that services were not directed toward students living in homeless residences, but rather toward students who were experiencing reading difficulties. Joanne also described parent

workshops for students at risk in reading, which were led by the school's reading specialist. Joanne noted that for students who were reading below Level A, parents met once a month with classroom teachers to discuss strategies to assist their children, and so teachers could provide parents with word lists to review with their children. Joanne also described online programs to which students had access such as Raz-Kids (2019) and MobyMax (2019). Renee described using small group instruction to focus on specific reading problems as well as using alliteration books to reinforce identification of beginning sounds. Renee noted that worksheets obtained from teacher made websites were used to provide extra practice for students who had reading problems. Responses by Matte Elementary teachers revealed that the instructional practices in reading included intervention on several levels. The intervention included outreach to parents and technological, print-rich, and small group strategies focusing on phonological awareness (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). Matte Elementary teachers used a range of strategies for teaching the standards under the Informational Text strand, and Pavilion Elementary teachers did similarly, but also used several multi-sensory strategies.

Mona, from Pavilion Elementary School, spoke of using guided reading with big books to assist students who needed extra help: "I do the guided reading with big books." She also mentioned having students form letters with clay and other materials: "We make letters with clay. We make the same letter with sticks." Mona spoke of having the students look for and identify objects that have the same sounds, posting sight words around the room, and accessing the Internet to find helpful materials. She also mentioned segmenting and substituting sounds, but this is a standard not a strategy. Mona spoke of

enlisting the help of parents to aid students who required intervention. This type of strategy can help change a dyad or two-person system from an observational dyad to a joint dyad (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 59). In progressing from an observational dyad to a joint dyad, the child advances from observing the parent to participating in a literacy activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parental instruction, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), creates the environment where such a system of mutual benefit is possible. Mona created this system of development by giving instruction to parents about strategies they could use at home. Nina also spoke of enlisting the help of parents in weekly meeting through a citywide initiative called Parent Engagement Day, which occurred on Tuesdays. She also spoke of providing one-on-one assistance with students: "I also used one-on-one instructional support with students." Lastly, Nina mentioned using resources on websites to assist her students who required intervention services. Opal mentioned using guided and shared reading to assist students who were at risk in reading. In addition, Opal stated that she uses school supplied workbooks, as well as resources obtained from an online website.

Opal mentioned accessing materials online, using small group instruction, and word work to remediate students' skills. The small group activities may serve to improve teacher-to-student interactions, student-to-student interactions, or multiple interactions between groups of students or between multiple students and the teacher. These interactions (student-to-student and student-teacher) may create ideal environments for increased student learning according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development. Guided reading is a component of the balanced literacy approach and one

teacher at Pavilion Elementary School spoke of this strategy, while one other teacher spoke of word work, which is also a component of the balanced literacy model (Jordan, 2017). According to the responses received by the Pavilion teachers, the schools' instructional practices in reading consisted of technological and multi-sensory strategies and outreach to parents, but these strategies were not reported equally by the three participating teachers. The instructional practices in reading also incorporated aspects of the balanced literacy model (Jordan, 2017) such as guided reading and vocabulary development. Again, these approaches were not equally reported by the three participating teachers. Teachers across research sites used a variety of strategies and interventions, which helped to define the instructional practices in place at their schools.

Teachers at the research sites described specific interventions used for at-risk students, irrespective of their status in permanent or temporary housing. Small group instruction, though a part of each research site's instructional practices in reading was not reported in use by all teachers at a research site. Technological strategies, such as online sites were reportedly a part of the instructional practices in reading at each research site. Only one teacher out of the seven did not indicate in her responses that online sites supplemented the instructional practices in reading at their school. Outreach to parents was reportedly part of the instructional practices at two of the three schools; however, it was not mentioned by all the teachers. Improving parent-child interactions may be instrumental in positively addressing students' poor reading skills. Most teachers did not speak of interventions services targeted at students who were identified as homeless or at risk in reading except for Jonelle (Greene Elementary School) and Nina (Pavilion

Elementary School). Teacher to teacher interactions centered on effective intervention strategies could be beneficial in remediating the skills of students who are at risk in reading. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development espouses interactions between individuals as the means to foster intellectual development. One teacher, at one school, spoke of a tactile approach to remediating the deficiencies of students, and the same teacher spoke of using alliteration books to reinforce letter-sound knowledge, and strategies to assist in meeting the needs students at risk in reading. Instructional practices within a school should be consistent, especially with the use of strategies that may have been proven to be effective. In the ensuing paragraphs, I detail the responses by the teachers at the three research sites on professional development.

Interview Question 7. What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified at risk in reading?

Teachers at the three research sites gave varied accounts of the professional development sessions in reading they received in their schools (Table 9). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle stated that she had not received any professional development in reading and added that she "needs some professional development in reading. Really we do, for kindergarten. I was kind of thrown into this and not given a life jacket," stated Jonelle. Rachelle also stated that she had not received any professional development in reading and that she would like to receive training in the phonics program. Professional development was not reportedly offered by the teachers at Greene Elementary School. Teachers, therefore, may not be receiving the assistance needed to improve their literacy knowledge and practice. Collectively, teachers at Greene Elementary School stated that

they did not receive professional development, but things were different with Matte Elementary School.

Table 11

Professional Development: Single-Case Analysis

	Professional development	Professional development; at risk students	Professional development; at risk and homeless
	Greene Elementary School		
Jonelle	0	0	0
Rachelle	0	0	0
Total Frequency	0	0	0
	Matte Elementary School		
Joanne	0	0	0
Renee	0	0	0
Total Frequency	0	0	0
	Pavilion Elementary School		
Mona	4	1	0
Nina	0	0	0
Opal	1	0	0
Total Frequency	5	1	0
GRAND TOTAL	5	0	0

Conversely, at Matte Elementary School, Joanne stated that the principal provided numerous professional development opportunities in reading and that she participated in various webinars of her own volition. Joanne also stated that she completed several courses related to reading to earn 30 credits above her masters' degree. Renee noted that she had received training in Response to Intervention (RTI) instruction. Teachers at Matte Elementary School reported that professional development was received, but not professional development to improve literacy services to students at risk in reading.

Matte Elementary School teachers reportedly received multiple professional development sessions, but Pavilion teachers, as a group, did not report the same.

Teachers at Pavilion Elementary School reported participating in a range of professional development sessions, from none to several sessions. Mona stated that she attended the following professional development sessions: working one-on-one with students, conducting shared reading sessions, maximizing phonics instruction, and training to reach at-risk students. Nina stated that she did not attend any professional development sessions, “I have been self-monitoring, and just consistently reflecting on my teaching practices.” She also stated that she is constantly reviewing data, “looking at the assessment data to see how the students have progressed.” Opal stated that has received professional development for students who are dual language learners, but not for at-risk readers. Pavilion Elementary School teachers received professional development and professional development for students at risk in reading; however, all teachers did not report receiving professional development. Professional development may be able to improve teacher-to-student interactions, as well as improve teachers’ literacy knowledge and practices. It would appear to be a disconnect when all teachers are not receiving professional development received by other teachers within a school. Although, professional development can influence teacher practice, the responses of teachers at the research sites were mixed.

Two Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported receiving professional development in reading. The remaining teachers across research sites did not participate in professional development sessions. A Matte elementary school teacher reported

enrolling in courses and webinars related to RTI. Another teacher (from Greene Elementary School) stated that she felt that she had been “thrown into” kindergarten without the benefit of professional development, and another teacher at Greene Elementary School stated that she needed development in the newly adopted phonics program. Five of the seven teachers stated that they had not received any professional development, and another teacher indicated that she had not received any professional development to address the needs of at-risk students, although she received professional development in other areas (e.g., dual language learners, small group, one-on-one, and shared reading). One teacher (Pavilion Elementary School) stated that she engaged in self-reflection. However, self-reflection within a vacuum may not be as advantageous as self-reflection fueled by an increasing knowledge base made possible through professional development. There exists a disparity between teachers who received professional development and those who did not receive professional development within and across research sites. If the instructional practices are to be effective, teachers must be continually equipped to influence the reading trajectory of all students. Schools should also empower parents as another avenue to help students succeed.

Interview Question 8. How would you describe your school’s outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Teachers at the three research sites spoke about the existence of, or lack of, a school outreach program for parents (Table 10). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle stated that she was not aware of any outreach program for parents of children identified as homeless and at risk in reading. Rachelle described the parent coordinator as

"fantastic;" however, she was not aware of the scope of services provided to parents. She added that considering the numbers of students who live in homeless residences, intervention services should be a priority. Outreach services to parents may present opportunities to improve the child-parent interaction around literacy learning. Based on the responses from Greene Elementary teachers, school officials may be missing this opportunity, or the communication lines between school officials may not be adequate to provide teachers with the necessary information (about outreach services) but a different scenario existed at Matte Elementary School.

Table 12

Outreach Programs: Single-Case Analysis

	Interactions: parents to parents	Interactions: parent to teacher
	Greene Elementary School	
Jonelle	0	0
Rachelle	0	1
Total Frequency	0	1
	Matte Elementary School	
Joanne	0	3
Renee	0	3
Total Frequency	0	6
	Pavilion Elementary School	
Mona	1	4
Nina	0	9
Opal	0	0
Total Frequency	1	13
GRAND TOTAL	1	20

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne stated that parents were invited to the school on Tuesdays for Parent Engagement Day. Parent Engagement Day is a system-wide initiative to encourage parent participation. During these times, teachers shared reading strategies with parents. Additionally, Joanne stated that principals also provided workshops for parents. Renee also spoke of parent engagement sessions on Tuesdays. In addition, Renee spoke of speaking to parents during after-school pick-up:

> I think that's one policy that's really good for kindergarten, that you see the parents every day, picking the child up so you can tell them right then and there. So I think that's a really good policy, especially for at-risk students, [be]cause you can tell them right there.

Matte Elementary School teachers reported weekly outreach to parents. Similarly, Pavilion Elementary teachers reported outreach program to parents, as well as programs to enrich the lives of the parents.

Mona, of Pavilion Elementary School, mentioned that a variety of programs were in place to assist parents at her school; however, she did not say that these programs were aimed specifically for students who were homeless and at risk in reading. She spoke of another system-wide initiative, parent-teacher conferences, that is held several times during the school year. Mona also stated that parents are afforded the opportunity to observe classroom instruction throughout the school year. Mona stated there are programs to help parents read and learn English. She also stated there is a program administered through the PTA that involves parents helping parents; however, Mona did not mention the range of this self-help program. Nina stated that the school has an "open

door policy: my school's outreach program, while we are very transparent-we have an open policy, and that's one of the things that I love about the school." She also stated that there are parent workshops. During these workshops, parents are provided with literacy games they can play with their children. Additionally, she mentioned parent newsletters, which inform the parents of what is going on in the classroom and the school. Nina mentioned parent engagement time and Meet the Teacher Night, which are system-wide school initiatives. Nina stated that parents have access to free resources and that she provides her parents with materials and websites for literacy activities:

> We point them in the right direction, towards giving the access to the school's website so that they can access some fee resources. I'm constantly in contact and engaged with them in terms of letting them know things that they can use at home to help their students, using everyday objects to make learning fun at home.

Opal stated that the school provides the students with uniforms and school supplies. However, she did not see any outreach programs to the parents: "Well, for reading, I don't see any outreach, but I do see that they supply them with a uniform. In terms of reading, I don't see any real outreach." Pavilion Elementary School officials may need to establish protocols to ensure that knowledge about outreach programs are known by all teachers within a grade. Teachers at the research sites reported various levels of parent outreach programs at their places of employment.

Considered together, teachers at Greene Elementary School described the limited nature of their school's outreach program to parents, while teachers at Matte Elementary School and two teachers at Pavilion Elementary Schools stated there is training to assist

the parents with their children's development of literacy skills. One teacher at Pavilion Elementary School also stated that there are English as second language classes and literacy programs for parents, and another teacher at Pavilion stated that parents are given access to resources for their children. She also stated that parents are apprised of classroom events through newsletters and parent engagement times on a weekly basis, as well as Meet the Teacher evening. The two Pavilion Elementary School teachers who stated the existence of similar parent programs also stated that the school's open-door policy allows parents to visit their child's classroom. There was a disparity in the Pavilion teachers' recounting of available outreach programs to parents. This disparity was not apparent among the teachers at the other research sites. No teacher at any of the research sites stated that outreach programs were geared toward students who were homeless or at risk in reading. The outreach programs were either informational type meetings to improve the school-home connection or training to assist parents whose children were at risk in reading. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development, improving the school-home connection is advantageous for students' development.

> The capacity of a setting to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between setting, including join participation, communication and the existence of information in each setting about the other. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 5)

Parent outreach services may influence students' literacy practices, but they must be offered, and notice of the services should be disseminated on the teacher level and then

on the parent level. In the next several paragraphs, I detail the teachers' responses from the three research sites on what they believe to be the ideal components of a reading program.

Interview Question 9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Teachers at the research sites described several components of a reading program they believed are needed to support the early reading skills of students (Table 11). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle believed a phonics program with supporting materials would be important, along with training to successfully implement the program. She also stated that opportunities for students to hear language (through books) is an important feature of a reading program and that reading and writing instructions should be interconnected. Rachelle believed that a structured program with basal readers that contain authentic texts was needed. Rachelle also stated that colorful workbooks should be a part of the structured program. Rachelle recalled a basal program that teachers used several years ago that included fiction and nonfiction stories, as well as lessons for the teachers and support solutions for struggling readers. Overall, the Greene Elementary teachers express a limited awareness of the necessary components of a reading program, except for the need for guided reading and oral language development. School officials must equip teachers with the tools to be successful facilitators of literacy knowledge. The responses by Greene Elementary School teachers reflected limited and mixed knowledge about research-based components of a reading program. Although Matte Elementary

School teachers' responses expressed limited knowledge about reading components as did the Greene Elementary teachers, their responses demonstrated knowledge of one necessary component of a reading program, phonics. Similarly, the Matte Elementary teachers also believed that phonics is a critical part of a reading program.

Table 13

Ideal Reading Program Components: Single-Case Analysis

	Print-rich books	Foundational skills	Guided and shared reading, and read alouds	Professional development	Comprehension	Writing	Oral language and the arts	Parent involvement	Games/Mutli-sensory activities
Greene Elementary School									
Jonelle	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Rachelle	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	3	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Matte Elementary School									
Joanne	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Renee	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Pavilion Elementary School									
Mona	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Nina	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Opal	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Frequency	3	2	4	0	0	1	0	1	1
GRAND TOTAL	7	7	6	1	1	1	1	1	1

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne believed, as did Jonelle at Greene Elementary School, that a phonics program such as Wilson's (2012) *Fundations*. was necessary. Joanne added that sufficient time should be given to develop students' abilities to identify individual sounds in words before comprehension skills are taught and leveled books are sent home with students. Renee (Matte Elementary School) believed, as did Jonelle, that phonics is a critical component of a reading program. In addition, Renee believed that sight word instruction, along with fluency training, are also important components of an ideal reading program. Matte Elementary School teachers were not aware of the necessary component of a reading program, except for the need for phonics and the need for adequate time to build student knowledge. The responsibility for equipping teachers may lie with school leadership. While the responses from Matte Elementary teachers were limited regarding the necessary components of a reading program, Pavilion Elementary teachers provided more details about the components of a reading program.

At Pavilion Elementary School, Mona stated there should be books for each child, as well as a book of the same title for each child. She also stated that each child should have a workbook, so that they can practice the skills taught. Nina stated that the program in use for kindergarten students should be a balanced literacy program. However, she did not detail the specific components of a balanced literacy program. She stated there should be print-rich books available in the classroom and in the students' homes. Nina continued by stating that these books should be read by the parents to the child and conversation

should be initiated about key elements of the book. She further stated that the language in the book will help establish a successful foundational track for the students.

> If parents find rich books that are of interest to the child but are rigorous enough to get their thought process going…to build foundational skill, just hearing it, and getting familiar with what speech-language looks like, like dialogue within a book, what are the characters, plot setting, and the different features, [these things will be helpful.

Opal mentioned elements of a balanced literacy program such as shared and guided reading are important components of a reading program. She further stated that assistance should be given to students in small groups.

> I think everything that we do now, which is a lot of shared reading, a lot of guided reading, we pull out little groups and we do another smaller group maybe, like a lesson just to make sure that they got previous skills that they didn't get before.

Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported a greater grasp of the necessary components of a successful reading program, such as guided reading, print-rich books, phonics, parent involvement and a relaxed environment (play) than did the teachers at the other two research sites. There was not equal reporting of this knowledge within Pavilion Elementary School. School leaders, when possible, should make sure that teacher knowledge of research-based practices and knowledge is known and implemented by all teachers.

The teachers' responses reflected some similar beliefs in several different areas. Five of the seven teachers believed that phonics instruction is a critical component of a

reading program. Three of the teachers commented that components of a balanced literacy program are critical in reading instruction. Three of the teachers believed that books with rich or authentic language should be provided for each child. One teacher spoke of the need for sight word instruction and fluency training, and another teacher spoke of the need for a visually appealing program. Another teacher believed that a program with supporting materials and the use of authentic texts is important. One teacher believed that professional development should always precede the implementation of a phonics program. Having the materials necessary to provide reading instruction is important, but equally as important are the perceptions of the teachers regarding their specific roles as early reading instructors.

Analysis of Follow-up Interview Questions

Interview Question 1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading? In Table 12, I enumerate the general roles that the participants noted they play in developing students' early literacy skills.

Table 14

Teachers' Roles in Children's Literacy Development

Teachers should:
• support parents in building quality home-learning environments: • provide parents with necessary materials; • use assessments to drive instruction; • use multi-sensory approaches to meet students' needs; and • teach phonics skills.

Respondents at both sites believed that teachers play a pivotal role in the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students who are identified as homeless and at risk in reading. At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle stated that teachers should be supportive of students who need remediation. Rachelle believed that teachers should teach students the sounds of letters, blends, and how to write letters. Rachelle believed that teachers make a difference in the lives of their students; however, parents should also support their children's learning by reinforcing school lessons at home. In addition, Rachelle believed that teachers should immerse students in various literary genres and model reading to them. Greene Elementary teachers believe that they have a pivotal role in influence the reading trajectories of their students. If teachers are to meet this role, they must be equipped with the knowledge and practices to develop successful readers. Green Elementary teachers' responses indicated that they should have an active role in the instruction of early reading skills, as well as exposing students to varied genres. Matte Elementary teachers also believe that their role in the education of kindergarten students is pivotal to the students' development.

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne believed that teachers and parents have pivotal roles in the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students who are at risk in reading. Joanne stated that teachers should provide parents with strategies and materials to reinforce their child's letter learning, letter sounds, and sight words. Renee believed that teachers should consistently model reading behaviors and foster the adoption of these reading behaviors by their students. She also stated that assessments should be administered frequently and that "we should also be developing ways to help

students who have difficulties defining success." Collectively, the Matte Elementary School teachers' statements about the teacher's role in instructing students who are at risk in reading were more expansive than the responses of the Greene Elementary teachers. One teacher stated the importance of modeling proper reading behaviors, and another teacher believed that her role was also to assist the parents in expanding their literacy knowledge. Matte Elementary School, teachers did not report on similar levels of knowledge. There should be a platform for teachers to share with their colleagues from their wealth of knowledge. The Matte Elementary teachers gave different information about the role of teachers, as did the Pavilion Elementary School teachers.

At Pavilion Elementary School, the participants believed that teachers play an instrumental role in conveying knowledge to their students. Mona stated that students must be guided toward the knowledge and skills they need to attain. She stated that scaffolding is an important aspect of guiding students. As students are guided, Mona stated they should be supported with the appropriate materials to realize the information the teacher wants to impart. Nina stated that explicit teaching should be the vehicle to foster the development of early literacy skills. Nina stated that "explicit modeling sets them up for success so that they are able to make personal connections." Opal was the only participant out of the seven that stated the role of the teacher in developing the literacy skills of students who are homeless. She stated that her role is to build the language skills of students who are homeless because they may not have support at home. Opal stated that students should be read to more frequently and engaged in frequent conversations to build vocabulary knowledge. She also stated that students who are

homeless should have increased contact with word studies. Lastly, Opal stated that letter identification should be a focus, along with word identification through a game platform. Pavilion's teachers provided a synopsis about the role a teacher should play instructing students who are at risk in reading. Explicit teaching is a method that improves instruction (Kuhn, et al., 2017). Collectively, the information given by the teachers at the research sites represents a wealth of knowledge. Cross-school communication may be an excellent vehicle to further the practical knowledge of teachers and thereby influence students' works.

Teachers believed they have integral roles in teaching foundational reading skills to students and that teachers should provide parents with the tools to assist in their children's reading development. Exclusive of other respondents, a Matte Elementary School teacher stated assessment should be common place in the classroom and that instruction should be consistent. A Matte Elementary School teacher distinctly stated that teachers should be instrumental in the development of strategies to foster student success. Two teachers, one from Greene Elementary School and the other from Matte Elementary School, stated that parents should be provided with necessary materials, and one teacher stated that teachers should provide parents with strategies to assist their children in building literacy skills. One teacher from Pavilion Elementary School stated that explicit instruction should be part of instruction in the kindergarten classroom. One of the former teachers stated that students should be guided toward the attainment of knowledge, while three teachers, one from each of the three research sites, stated that modeling should be commonplace in the kindergarten classroom. A Pavilion teacher stated that instruction

should be scaffolded in the classroom so that students can be guided in the attainment of knowledge. Lastly, four of the seven teachers, two at Greene, one at Matte, and one at Pavilion believed that the role of the teachers is to teach phonics skills. Teachers from the three research sites are aware that their role is pivotal to the reading success of their students. They have acknowledged various components that considered together would equate to a quality reading program. A quality reading program for kindergarten students may also capitalize on the parents' role in helping their children acquire early reading skills.

Interview Question 2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading? In Table 1, I enumerated the general roles that the participants noted that parents should play in developing their children's early literacy skills.

Teachers at the three sites believed that parents should be actively involved in supporting the literacy skills of their children (Table 13). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle stated that parents should be involved in the education of their children; however, Jonelle believed that the parent-teacher partnership should be intensive. Jonelle stated that parents should come into the classroom weekly and be a part of their child's literacy instruction: "I think parents should come up into the classroom [and] just be a part of what's going on." Additionally, Jonelle stated that parents should go to their community libraries to find books at their children's reading levels. Parents, according to Jonelle, should also use websites to strengthen their children's literacy skills. Rachelle believed that parents should be involved in teaching their children letters and sounds before they

reach kindergarten. She recommended that parents could direct their children's attention to the focus letter in environmental print. Rachelle also believed that parents should assist children with their homework because homework is "an extension of school." Greene Elementary teachers stated that parents should have an active role in influencing their children's education both at school and at home. Parents' who work alongside teachers may help to improve the quality of the school's instructional practices in reading. The instructional role of the teacher should be defined, so that teacher practices are not inconsistent from class to class as was the case with the Greene Elementary teachers. Matte Elementary teachers' practices also showed variations, but they gave similar responses about the parents' role as their children's first teacher.

Table 15

Parents' Roles in Supporting Children's Literacy Development

Parents should:
• work with teachers to help their children: • help their children with the early learning of letters and their sounds; • assist their children in completing homework; • read to their children; • use technology to help their children develop literacy skills; • reach out to community organizations for literacy help (e.g., library)

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne believed that parents are their children's first teachers, and they should help their two- and three-year-old children to learn the letters in their names, as well as the other letters, and the sounds of the letters. Parents, according to Joanne, should use computer games and videos to engage their children in learning activities. As children approach pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, Joanne believed that

extra time should be devoted to learning these foundational reading skills. At Matte Elementary School, Renee believed that parents should reinforce classroom lessons and assist with homework. Additionally, Renee stated that parents should read and talk with their children, starting from age 1 or 2, to increase their verbal abilities and vocabularies. Matte Elementary school teachers believed that parents should influence their children's pre-literacy development during their pre-school years with literacy activities.
Matte Elementary teachers stressed the importance of parents building their children's literacy skills from an early age, but Pavilion teachers stated that parents might not know how to build their children's literacy skills or realize the importance of early education.

At Pavilion Elementary School, the teachers believed that parents play a significant role in the development of early reading skills. Mona stated that parents should play a key role, but they may not know how to build their children's early reading skills, nor do they know how to access the parent-teacher relationship for their child's educational benefit. Mona also stated that parents may underestimate the importance of kindergarten education, and for example, may undervalue the importance of their children completing homework assignments. Nina stated that parents are their children's first teacher. In their role as their child's teacher, parents should read daily to their children and "foster a love of literacy." Nina stated that parents should expose their children to environmental print to "foster foundational skills in reading, which will set them up for success in school." Pavilion Elementary teachers had similar beliefs as did the teachers at the other two research sites regarding the pivotal role of parents in their children's reading development. Mona's beliefs differed from the beliefs of the other

Pavilion Elementary School teachers. Mona stated that parents may not know how and when to help, but teachers could be the intermediaries between parents and their children. Informing parents of their role in their children's literacy skill development is of primary importance for the classroom teacher. The sum of the teachers' responses provided important insight for the teachers across the research sites.

From the responses recorded in the previous paragraphs it was evident that all seven teachers believed that parents' interaction with their children around literacy activities are vital for their children's literacy development. Three of the seven teachers, two Pavilion teachers and one Greene Elementary School teacher, stated that it is imperative for parents to assist their children with homework. Teachers at both Pavilion and Greene Elementary Schools stated that parents should use technology to enhance their children's education. Exclusive of the other teachers, a Greene Elementary School teacher stated that parents should participate in reading instruction in the classroom, as well as access help in such community organizations as the library: "I think parents need to reach out into the community, maybe libraries, try to work closely with librarians to identify books" for their children. Irrespective of a teacher's school assignment, participant recommendations centered on parents' active involvement in their children's reading development. Parent-child involvement, within or outside of the school, may need to be cultivated according to a neighborhood's culture. Parents should be aware of teacher expectations and given assistance on how to best assist in their child's reading development. In the next several paragraphs, teachers' beliefs, from each of the three

research sites, about the district and school leaders' roles in assisting teachers were detailed.

Interview Question 3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills? In Table 14, I enumerate the general roles that the district and school leaders should play in helping teachers to develop students' early literacy skills.

Teachers at the research sites believed that district and school leaders should play a key role in assisting teachers in the instruction of early reading skills (Table 14). At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle believed that district leaders should be aware of their population's learning needs and choose the appropriate curriculum based on those needs. Jonelle added that school leaders should be responsible for providing appropriate professional development in literacy for teachers, as well as informing teachers of the diverse types of readers present within a school and the appropriate instruction to serve these students. Parent literacy and parenting workshops should also be provided by school leaders, stated Rachelle. Rachelle made a distinction between the major role of district leaders and that of school leaders. She stated that district leaders should defer to school leaders in the decisions about the types of program to be utilized in reading instruction. Rachelle believed that it is the role of the school leaders to provide professional development sessions as well as provide the needed instructional supplies. The success or failure of a school's instructional practices in reading may partly depend on teachers' perceptions of the availability and appropriateness of the professional development offered at a school. Greene Elementary teachers believed that leaders bear

the responsibility of equipping teachers to meet the specific learning needs of their students. Matte Elementary teachers believe that leaders play an important role in assisting teachers as did the Matte Elementary teachers.

Table 16

District and School Leaders' Roles in Children's Literacy Development

District and school leaders should:
• provide professional development and materials; • provide outreach to parents; • create a collaborative environment in schools; and • providing interventions to students.

According to Joanne from Matte Elementary School, kindergarten students need more support than students in other grades. Joanne believed that pull-out programs would be beneficial in assisting students to learn letters and their sounds; however, teachers, parents, and educational leaders should be aware that some children are not developmentally ready to learn these important reading skills. Renee's opinion was that teachers should work alongside district leaders to choose reading programs that meet the needs of their students. As did the Greene Elementary School teacher, a Matte Elementary teacher believed that leaders bear responsibility for providing a curriculum that will meet the students' need. The difference between the statements made is that the Matte elementary teacher believed that teachers should work in conjunction with the leaders to choose an appropriate program. Matte Elementary teachers were varied in their responses about who should chose a reading curriculum for students, but a Pavilion

Elementary teacher stated that the responsibility of choosing a curriculum belongs to the leaders. A Matte Elementary teacher believed that leaders bear responsibility for providing a curriculum that will meet the students' need. Her beliefs were shared by a Greene Elementary teacher. However, the Matte Elementary teacher believed that teachers should work in conjunction with the leaders to choose an appropriate program. Matte Elementary teachers were varied in their responses about who should select a reading curriculum for students, but a Pavilion Elementary teacher stated that the responsibility of choosing a curriculum belongs to the leaders.

At Pavilion Elementary School, the teachers believed that school and district leaders are uniquely positioned to improve teachers' professional capabilities. Mona stated leaders should provide teachers with the necessary tools to assist them in reading instruction. Additionally, Mona stated that teachers should be allowed to use their best judgment to do what is educationally efficient for their students, and they should be apprised of the expectations and standards on which they should focus. Nina stated teachers should be provided with the tools to support explicit instruction. Professional development, stated Nina, is vitally important as are opportunities to engage in intellectual discourse with other teachers about best practices. Nina also stated that the creation of opportunities to visit other classrooms is important. "So, just providing sound, professional development in which teachers not only learn from professional reading experts but bounce ideas and lessons and take always from each other" is important.

Opal stated that school and district leaders should ask teachers what they need to affect literacy instruction. School and district leaders should also match the curriculum to

the needs of the students, allowing teachers the latitude to choose appropriate activities. Leaders, according to Opal, should provide the necessary literacy supplies for classroom use. Pavilion Elementary teachers' responses about the need for professional development paralleled the responses from the majority of teachers at Greene and Matte Elementary schools. Several of the Pavilion teachers expressed a belief that was different from their colleagues and teachers from the other two research sites, regarding interschool visitation and explicit instruction. Educators have a wealth of knowledge and when accessed by district and school leaders may positively influence the school's instructional practices in reading. Research site teachers gave various responses about the role of leaders in assisting teachers in meeting students' needs.

Teachers' from the three research sites responses indicated that teachers should assist leaders in determining the curriculum needs for students. Teachers at all schools concurred that professional development should be a vital part of the school's reading program. Other teachers offered responses heard may have a positive influence on the reading development of their students. District and school leaders may need to receive and consider feedback from the individuals who are at the forefront of the academic battleground, the classroom teachers. In the next section, I detail the participants' responses from the three research sites beliefs on the remediation that teachers provide for at-risk readers.

Analysis of Observation Data

Research Question 3. How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students? Observation data were collected based on criteria

established by a renowned researcher. For this data source, I analyzed the data according to the specific criteria included on the observation data collection form. Merriam (2009) recommended these criteria because they are often found in any observational setting. I adapted these criteria to an instructional setting by using specific sub-criteria and recorded both field notes and researcher reflections on this form. Observational data were collected from seven classrooms at three research sites.

Setting

Classrooms were configured with two different combinations of teachers and students. Instruction in five of the seven classrooms was facilitated by one teacher; however, in the remaining classrooms, instruction was facilitated by one teacher and two paraprofessionals. In another class, a student had a bilingual paraprofessional. Class sizes at the three sites ranged from 20 to 23 students. Kindergarten classrooms within this school system may not include more than 25 students, and paraprofessionals are assigned as needed. The students in classroom were further defined by number, gender, and homeless status.

Participants

The student population in each classroom was analyzed according to the following sub-criteria: number, gender, and homeless status (Table 15). Greene Elementary School teachers each had 18 students. Jonelle had three homeless students and Rachelle had two homeless students in her classroom. Joanne, who had a special education class, had 21 students with two homeless students, and Renee had 19 students with two homeless students. The Pavilion Elementary School teachers (Mona, Nina, and

Opal) had 15, 11, and 10 students respectively in their classrooms. Mona and Opal had one homeless student in their classroom and Nina had two homeless students in her classroom. The greater number of students at Greene and Matte Elementary Schools than at Pavilion Elementary School translated to a larger teacher-to-student ratio, which may mean that the teacher has less instructional time available for each student.

Table 17

Student Population by Teacher and School

	Greene Elementary		Matte Elementary		Pavilion Elementary		
	Jonelle	Rachelle	Joanne[a] +4	Renee	Mona +1	Nina +1	Opal +1
Female Students	12	10	8	5	5	8	5
Male Students	9	10	8	11	11	5	6
Total Students	21	20	16	21	16	12	11
Homeless Students	3	2	2	2	1	2	1

[a]Special Education class

Classroom Learning Environment

I analyzed each setting according to the following sub-criteria: the use of print and non-print materials, the instructional space, and the instructional technology in the classroom. There were three research sites, Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools. I analyzed two kindergarten classrooms at Greene and Matte Elementary Schools and three teachers' classrooms at Pavilion Elementary School according to the pre-determined criteria. The teachers' classrooms at Greene Elementary School were print-rich and as such contained several charts.

Greene Elementary classrooms were print-rich. At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle and Rachelle's classrooms included displays of both teacher-made and commercially-produced charts in reading and mathematics, as well as behavioral charts. In addition, students' work in science, social studies, mathematics, and writing was posted around the room. Their classrooms included books on several reading levels and genres, as well as author studies, and a collection of books written by an author. Greene Elementary teachers' classrooms also contained calendars, daily schedules, birthday charts, months of the year and days of the week posters, and word walls. In relation to the use of space for instruction, in Jonelle and Rachelle's classrooms, students sat at tables rather than individual desks. There were three rows and two tables in each row in Rachelle's classroom, with 3 to 4students at each table. Similarly, in Jonelle's classroom, there were two rows of tables and three tables in each row, with 3 to 4 students at each table. The teachers arranged student tables in this manner to encourage student-led discussions and student-to-student interactions (i.e., cooperative learning). There was also a single desk for one student in Jonelle's class because the child was behaviorally challenged. In the other classroom, 3-4 children sat at each table. Jonelle used the smartboard in the classroom during the observation, but Rachelle did not. Greene Elementary classrooms were arranged for student-to-student interactions. The teachers' classrooms at Matte Elementary School were also print-rich, but the room also contained a collection of learning games.

The classrooms at Matte Elementary school included various visuals and instructional materials. At Matte Elementary School, both teachers displayed teacher-

made and commercially-produced charts in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Teachers also displayed student behavioral and birthday charts, and calendars. Their classrooms included books on several reading levels, author studies, theme books, daily schedules, and behavioral management charts. Additionally, these classrooms included various literacy learning games, literacy and mathematics center assignment charts, and pocket charts with individual letters cards. Renee's classroom also included two table-top charts with sight words on display in the back of the classroom and charts detailing common spellings for the vowel "a", story elements, and comparing and contrasting. In relation to the use of instructional space, rugs were placed near the smartboards in the classroom. In Renee's classroom, the desks were arranged in two groups of 8 individual desks and one group of four individual desks. Students were assigned to each desk, for a total of 21 students. In Joanne's classroom, the desks were arranged in five groups with four individual desks in each group, for a total of 16 students. One student sat at each desk in Renee and Joanne's classrooms. Desks were arranged this way to encourage conversation among the students. Concerning instructional technology, Joanne had a smartboard in her classroom that she used to post a "Do Now" assignment. The Matte Elementary classrooms display reflected an instructional practice in reading philosophy that reflected learning through play, a focus on strategies, instruction that includes the teaching of story structure, and student-to-student interactions. Matte Elementary classrooms were rich examples of print-rich environments. The teachers' classroom at Pavilion Elementary School were also print-

rich, but in addition to teacher-created and commercially-produced charts, the rooms contained a child-sized refrigerator, table, oven and cabinets.

At Pavilion Elementary School, the classrooms were filled with an assortment of books, student work, a meeting area, and a play area. In Mona's classroom, the meeting area contained a rug of sufficient size to accommodate the entire class and a whiteboard easel. Moving counterclockwise from the meeting area, the other half of the room contained a block area (third quadrant) and the student restroom and entry into the classroom (fourth quadrant). Bulletin boards stretched across the wall opposite the smartboard. The section of the room that contained the rug was framed on one side by a smartboard (first quadrant). There was a science bulletin board, as well as one for writing, another that contained student work, and a commercially produced calendar. Flanking the smartboard were alphabet cards and bulletin boards. The bulletin boards were written in English and Spanish and covered two subject areas, mathematics and social studies. A portion of the wall also contained a word wall. On the window side of this section of the room a Positive Behavior Intervention Services (PBIS) chart was posted, detailing ways to deal with conflict. Below the windows were two sets of adjacent bookcases, which contained leveled books and content area books. Low-leveled bookcases, perpendicular to the window, divided the window side of the room into quadrants one and two. These bookcases were also filled with content area books. On the other side of the bookcase, along the window side of the room, was a kitchen area. Opposite the kitchen area were bookshelves that contained wooden blocks and an assortment of books and made-up the third quadrant in the room. Opposite the windows

in the first quadrant was a wall that held a job chart and a commercially created shape poster and the students' table (fourth quadrant). Entry to the classroom was in this area of the room. There was a trapezoid-shaped table, four girls and one boy sat at this table. Adjacent to this table was an octagon-shaped table; four boys and two girls were seated at this table. Adjacent to this table was a rectangular-shaped table; two girls and two boys sat at this table. One child, a boy, sat at a circular table. Below the signs were cubbies labeled math tools, cubes, and math. Big books were also situated near the cubbies on the smartboard side of the wall. Opal's classroom showed similar levels of a print-rich environment as the classrooms at Matte Elementary; however, the classroom contained kitchen furniture that may have provided students opportunities for socially-rich conversations. Unlike the classrooms at Matte Elementary School, the classroom of a Pavilion Elementary School teacher, Nina, contained charts, which indicated a focus on small group instruction.

Nina's room was divided into three areas. The meeting area contained a rug of sufficient size for the students to sit and a smartboard was attached to the wall (first area). On the wall above the smartboard were alphabet cards, a word wall, teacher-created posters detailing: places to shop, food, fruits, and desserts. There was also a pocket chart that contained a focus letter (Gg) and pictures of words that began with the focus letter. A teacher-created PBIS chart was also situated in the first area, and detailed ways to deescalate a situation. On the wall flanking the smartboard area was the following: a teacher's corner, a conference schedule for reading and writing, a behavioral conduct pocket chart, a birthday calendar, a writing bulletin board, and a list of reading and

writing student captains. Also lining the wall were four feet tall cubbies that contained literature books. On the opposite wall, window side, were signs hanging across the window. These hanging signs were labeled with student names, “Write your Opinion,” “What is Ice Cream,” and “Readers Get a Book.” Below these signs were the teacher-created signs: days of the week, months of the year. On the wall adjacent to the smartboard wall were the following signs: Math Center, Flow Chart, and a poster listing students who were in math groups A, B, C, or D. Below this area were bookshelves that contained link, button, and unfix cubes. Dividing the window side into two areas were two computer stations with chairs and an easel. Also, in area two, moving clockwise, were kitchen furniture, two desks facing each other and opposite these desks a kidney shaped table. On the smartboard in the third quadrant were social studies and science bulletin boards. Moving clockwise was the third quadrant that contained bins filled with color tiles, links, and unifix cubes. On the wall perpendicular to the smartboard was a math center bulletin board, which contained student work, a flow chart, and math and reading group designations for students. Students’ desks were in this area. Desks were clustered together in groups of four or six. The group of six desks was parallel to the smartboard side wall and two girls, one boy, and a bilingual paraprofessional sat at this location. In front of this desk configuration were four desks; three boys, and one girl sat at this cluster of desks. Moving clockwise, there was a cluster of four desks three girls and one boy sat at these desks. The next cluster of four desks was occupied by three girls and one boy and two girls sat at the next cluster of four desks. The last cluster of four desks was occupied by two boys and one girl. Similar to the classroom of her colleague,

Nina's classroom was a print-rich environment that contained furniture which could be used to develop students' oral language abilities on events occurring within a home setting. Charts in Nina's classroom showed a focus on scheduling for small groups in reading. Similar to her colleagues' classrooms at Pavilion, Opal's classroom was decorated in a comparable manner.

In Opal's room, the room was divided into four areas: a meeting, area, a student work area, a play area, and restroom area. Flanking the smartboard to the left was a calendar and teacher-created charts categorizing fruits and vegetables. Above the smartboard were teacher-created accountable talk examples ("I agree," "I disagree"). Flanking the smartboard to right was a name chart, which highlighted the first letter of the student's name, a 110-day teacher-created chart, a word wall, teacher-created guided math chart and Ways to a Solve Word Problem, a commercially published numbers chart, and a bulletin board label Math Center. Along the smartboard wall were closed and open cubbies. In the open cubbies were bins labeled unfix cubes and counters. The meeting rug was in this area (quadrant one). Moving to the right, was the student area (quadrant two). Parallel to the rug were two rectangular tables, placed back to back, where two boys sat. Adjacent to these desks were two rectangular desks placed back to back; two boys sat at these desks. Moving to the right was the entry door and on the adjacent wall was a pocket chart which had the daily schedule and a bulletin board entitled, Writing for Readers. Along the wall, perpendicular to the smartboard wall, were student closets. Moving to the right was the student restroom and a sink. Moving to the right was the third quadrant that housed wooden blocks and a kitchen area with a small round table with two chairs. Along

the wall containing the daily chart were low-leveled shelves. On these shelves were name bins for each student and social studies books. Opposite the first set of desks were rectangular desks, also placed back to back, where three girls and one boy sat. Moving clockwise were two other back-to-back tables; one boy and two girls sat at these tables. Moving to the right was the play area, wooden blocks, and a kitchen area. The window wall was on this side of the room. On a line hanging in front of the windows was a teacher-created Word Study Group chart. It had the names of students under the following categories: beginning sounds, vowels, blends, and ending sounds. On this line in front of the window were also teacher-created charts: Readers, Read with a Partner, Writers Plan, and a chart, *We are Super Readers.* Below the windows were open shelf bookcases. On these shelves were bins containing read alouds, leveled books, people and places, and holidays. On opposite ends of the window wall were shelves containing big books. There were also open shelves containing bins for tables, one to four notebooks, and Word Work folders. Collectively, the Pavilion Elementary classrooms reflected the school's reading philosophy. Bins marked with read alouds, charts that displayed reading groups, and word work reflected aspects of a balanced literacy model. Charts that contained categories and their headings and conversational starters for students indicated a reading philosophy that focuses on oral language development. Pavilion Elementary classrooms contained wooden blocks for building and kitchen furniture for social language development, reflective of a learning model that emphasizes play. The teachers within a single research site decorated their classrooms in similar ways, across single research sites, the common characteristic was a print-rich environment.

Teachers in all classrooms prominently displayed a rich variety of print and non-print materials. Concerning the use of space, teachers arranged desks or tables in each classroom at all schools to encourage cooperative learning and conversation among students. In one classroom, a student sat at a single desk so as not to disturb the other students. In relation to instructional technology, all teachers had a smartboard in their classrooms. Teachers used the smartboard to display information in two of the seven classrooms; however, none of the teachers used the boards interactively during the observation. Two teachers at Pavilion Elementary School had charts which detailed students in math and reading groups, with one teacher detailing students in a word study group. These charts served to substantiate the use of small group interventions which teachers stated they used. Teachers at Greene Elementary stated they used group interventions, but there was not any substantiating physical evidence; however, one Matte Elementary teacher showed limited use of small group intervention when she sat with several students at the close of the whole group instruction. The two teachers at Matte Elementary had a chart which detailed reading groups along with a collection of literacy games. Small group charts substantiated the teachers' statements of small groups for intervention at Matte Elementary School. One teacher at Matte Elementary School displayed a pocket chart with letters. This chart verified teachers' interview statements on teaching the beginning of words and or letter identification and letter sound knowledge. All teachers had a word wall bulletin board and three Pavilion teachers had name charts where they highlighted the first letter of each student's name. Word wall bulletin boards, along with teacher and commercially produced charts in the seven teachers' classrooms,

substantiated their interview statements of a print-rich environment. The charts, which highlighted the beginning letter of each student's name, can be classified as a foundational intervention; however, the teachers did not mention this as a strategy during the initial or follow-up interviews. Pavilion Elementary School teachers had bins of read aloud books (books to be read aloud to students), which suggests that they may have been an integral part of the school's instructional practices in reading. The variety of print-rich materials in each classroom verify the efforts to expose students to print as a part of the instructional practices at each of the three research sites. Such exposure should help to increase students' oral language attainment. Along with classroom environments, teachers' use of instructional activities and strategies provide information on their schools' reading practices. In the next section, I discuss the instructional strategies and activities that may provide further evidence of the breadth and depth of each school's instructional practices in reading.

Instructional Strategies and Activities

The sub-criteria included the reading lesson objectives, instructional strategies for all students, intervention strategies for students at risk in reading, progress monitoring, and opportunities for play. At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle's lesson progressed from calling students to the rug, to stating the lesson's objective, to identifying the beginning, the middle, and the end of a story. The instructional strategies that Jonelle used included introducing the book to students by looking at the pictures before reading (book walk), activating students' prior knowledge about cats, using a graphic organizer to chart the details on cats, and asking questions about the content of the book. Other

instructional strategies that Jonelle used included modeling line-by-line reading, asking students to echo her reading, helping students to identify the word pattern in the book, "The big cat….", and asking students to read independently at the end the lesson. With respect to the quality of teacher-student relationships, Jonelle praised students' correct answers. Jonelle addressed several components under Print Concepts for Literature and Informational Texts (tracking words from left to right) and under the Foundational Skill strand. She addressed at least one of the three standards under Key ideas and Details for Literature and Informational Text strands, retelling key ideas, but none of the standards under Integration of Knowledge and Ideas under the Literature or the Informational Texts strands. Jonelle did engage students in conversation about the book, range of reading, and text complexity, but the purpose was not driven by her stated objective. I did not observe any opportunities for play during the observation. Jonelle listened to individual students read, an intervention strategy. The lesson that I observed in Jonelle's classroom gave evidence to strategic development before reading, during reading and after reading, as well as the use of strategies aligned with Print Concepts for Literature or Informational Text strands and under the Foundational Skills strand. In contrast, Rachelle's reading lesson focused more on phonological awareness than the lesson by her colleague Jonelle.

At Greene Elementary School, Rachelle did not state an objective for the lesson, which was about identifying the details of a fictional story. Rachelle also used several instructional strategies to teach the reading lesson, including letter sounds cards and sight words that included picture clues. These words were reviewed before the start of the lesson. Rachelle also asked students to participate in a book walk. Other strategies

Rachelle used included direct instruction of individual sounds in consonant vowel consonant words (CVC), writing CVC words on a dry erase board, modeling finger placement in a book, and turning the pages of the book. With respect to progress monitoring, Rachelle made sure that students had placed their fingers on the spot where reading began and that they had written the individual letters in CVC words. Rachelle used some strategies to address standards under the Foundational Skills strand, such as Phonological Awareness (isolating the initial sound, medial vowel, and final sounds) and Phonics and Word recognition (identification of high-frequency sight words). I did not observe any opportunities for play or interventional strategies. Individually, Greene Elementary School teachers demonstrated instructional strategies that, if combined would result in a lesson with greater areas of support for early literacy learners (covering a greater number of standards). The lessons observed at Greene Elementary School may have reflected instructional practices that have a greater focus on whole group instruction rather than small group instruction. This characteristic was evident through the Greene's teachers' lack of classroom charts detailing small group instruction and through the observed reading lessons. The Greene Elementary School teachers' lesson reflected less of a coherent reading philosophy than the Matte Elementary School teachers' lessons.

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne stated that the objective of the reading lesson was to review the sequencing of events in a nonfictional story and the clue words, if any, that indicated the sequence of events. Joanne activated students' prior knowledge about butterflies, introduced vocabulary words supported by pictures as well as content specific vocabulary, and showed a three-dimensional replica of a butterfly. Another

instructional strategy Joanne used was asking detail questions about the text. Joanne also monitored the students' understanding of the text with a worksheet that they completed after whole group instruction. The worksheet involved the students sequencing the butterfly's life cycle and was completed independently. Following the time for independent work, the teacher summarized the lesson'. Following the reading lesson, Joanne sent all students to the literacy center. At the literacy center, students formed words with magnetic letters, listened to stories on tape, and worked interactively with an online reading program. While students worked at the literacy center, Joanne used several intervention strategies for students at risk in reading. She led five students through a guided reading lesson, helped students decode a word, and helped students understand grade-level vocabulary words in context. Joanne addressed many of the standards in the informational text strand, key ideas and details, craft and structure, two of three of the standards in integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and text complexity (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018b). Joanne's lesson demonstrated and corroborated the focus on small group instruction evidenced through the charts displayed in the classroom. She, also, progressed from whole group instruction, to independent work, to summarizing of the lesson, to small group instruction, and to learning through play (literacy center). The Matte Elementary School teachers had agreed to show different aspects of their school's instructional practices in reading. Joanne's lesson stemmed from an informative text, and Renee's lesson focused on word building or phonics.

At Matte Elementary School, I did not hear Renee state the objective. The lesson had begun when I entered the room. The entire lesson was focused on phonological awareness, specifically identifying the individual sounds/phonemes in three-letter words. In relation to instructional strategies, Renee asked students to identify the individual sounds in CVC words. Students also drew a picture to accompany the decoded word ("Do Now" activity). Other instructional strategies that Renee used were asking students to track words from left to right in a morning message that was written on a dry-erase board, identifying the beginning sound of a word and sight or "tricky" words included in the morning message. Renee monitored students' progress by reviewing the "Do Now" activity, calling students to the board to write a dictated word on the board, while other students were asked if the written word was what they had mentally pictured. She chose specific students whose names were written on popsicle sticks. After whole group instructions, Renee gave dry erase boards and markers to students. They were asked to write the dictated CVC words. Renee monitored their progress by moving around the room as students wrote on the words. Students placed a check next to the word if they had written the dictated word correctly or made corrections on their dry-erase board. Renee also reviewed letters and their sounds with picture cards. Renee modeled by "tapping" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017) the phonemes of a spoken word and writing the word on the board (visual strategy). Renee also reminded students to use the skyline (top line of primary paper), the plane line (middle line of primary paper), and the grass line (bottom line of primary paper) when writing dictated words on their dry-erase boards. Helping students associate the letter sound with the writing of a letters can serve as an

instructional strategy. Renee did not address any other standards under the Foundational Skills strand, such as the addition or substitution of individual sounds in three-letter words (phonological awareness), recognition or production of rhyming words, blending and segmenting onsets and rhymes, or spellings for long and short vowel sounds. I did not observe any opportunities for play during this reading lesson. Collectively, the Matte Elementary School teachers demonstrated instructional strategies and activities that covered a range of standards for the Informational Text and Foundational Skills strands. At Pavilion Elementary School teachers' lessons, except for that of the first teacher (Mona), showed a range of interactions, such as, teacher-to-student and student-to-student. Student-to-student interactions were not evident with Matte or Greene Elementary School teachers' observations.

At Pavilion Elementary School, Mona called the students to the rug and established the objective of the lesson. Students had to identify things that they see during spring. Mona drew a graphic organizer (instructional strategy) on a whiteboard, and she asked the students to count the number of stems coming from the graphic organizer. The students stated there were eight stems, so they would need to identify eight things associated with spring. Students were instructed to draw the graphs in their notebooks (instructional strategy). Mona complemented the students as they drew the graph in their notebooks. Mona encouraged the students by telling them that "everyone is participating." She asked them to tell what they know about spring. She further encouraged the students by reminding them to raise their hands before speaking and to "think." Mona encouraged the students to use complete sentences when responding about

things that they could see in the spring. She modeled segmenting the sounds of the words as they were added to the graph. Mona also informed the students of the proper placement of their tongues when saying the word “this.” Mona repeatedly encouraged students to talk using complete sentences and at one part in the lesson, she told the children to talk to their partners while completing the sentence stem, “In the spring…” She scaffolded her questions (instructional strategy) to lead students to give additional information. “What else do we know about spring?” A student stated that trees are seen in

Spring. Mona followed this response with “What happens to the trees in the spring?” and “How do we know that trees turn green?” Students were instructed to return to their seats and use the information from the graphic organizer (instructional strategy) to complete the sentence, “In the spring, I can see.” Mona instructed the students where to begin writing on the page and reminded them to leave space after each word. Mona circulated among the students (instructional strategy) encouraging them to look at spelling of the words on the graphic organizer so that they could record the correct spelling in their notebooks. She also elicited from the students how to begin and end a sentence. As students worked, students were called to read the generated sentences. Mona from Pavilion Elementary School demonstrated an efficient means to engage her students in a lesson, but the lesson appeared to be a writing lesson. Mona’s lesson did not corroborate information contained on the charts on display in her classroom. Whereas, Mona’s lesson connected reading to writing, Nina, a Pavilion Elementary School teacher, focused her lesson primarily on reading. She used several strategies and interventions that were not demonstrated by any of the six other teachers across the research sites.

Nina from Pavilion Elementary School called the students to the rug and asked them to recall the definition of text features (instructional strategy). She continued by introducing the lesson, “Now readers will think about what is the same and what is different.” She continued by modeling (instructional strategy) to the students as she identified what was the same and different about the covers of two books displayed to the class. Nina asked the students to turn and talk to their partners and inform each other what was the same and what was different, demonstrating guided practice (instructional strategy). Nina used a phrase, “macaroni and cheese” to refocus the students. The students responded, and Nina continued the lesson by asking a student to come to the front and identify the likenesses and differences between the books (instructional strategy). Nina continued to model finding what was the same and what was different by stating, “Can I show you what I found?” She asked the students to sit “crisscross” to share with them what she found in the examination of the two books. Nina continued by modeling how she determined the differences and likenesses between the books on display. She called two students to the front and asked the rest of the students to identify the likenesses and differences between the two students. She informed the students that just as they could indicate what was the same and what was different between students, they could identify the similarities and differences with books. Students were sent to their seats and told to ask themselves, “What is the same?” (palm up) and “What is different?’ (palm down). Students read independently then as reading partners as the teacher rotated from table to table (instructional strategy). Nina employed many strategies as she conducted this reading lesson. She modeled the skill that she wanted her students to

understand using peer-to-peer grouping during the lesson's introduction and during partner reading when the students returned to their seats. Peer-to-peer grouping was not suggested by any of the information contained on charts that Nina displayed in the classroom. The definition of Pavilion's instructional practices in reading continues with a discussion of the lesson observed in Opal's classroom. Opal demonstrated several strategies in her lesson that support standards under the Literature and the Foundational Skills strands and had the potential for student-to-student interactions.

Opal begun her lesson by calling the students to the meeting area. She asked the students about the present unit of study: *Becoming Avid Readers*. She continued by directing the students' attention to the chart hanging in front of the window, *We Are Readers*. Opal directed the children to read the points on the teacher-created chart, "We have pointer power, we have reread power, we have partner power (student-to-student interactions), we have picture power (Literature strand), we have snap word power (Foundational Skills strand), and we have sound power (Foundational Skills strand)."

Opal told the students that "we track the powers that we use when we read." She stated, "Today, we will look at which of these powers we have mastered with a 'thumbs up,' which ones we used sometimes, 'thumb sideways,' and which ones we never use, 'thumbs down.'" Opal modeled reading a big book, *Silly Sally,* and told the students to listen and observe to determine the super power she was using. Opal read the book modeling several super powers: picture power, pointing power, and sound (onset and rime). Several times, Opal made the initial sound and then said the rime, such as /fr/ og and told the students that the ea in leap says e. After sounding out a word, Opal stated

that she would reread the page so it would be smooth. She asked the students to identify which power she was modeling. Opal also asked the students to help her read the next page. She briefly commented about some of the pages: "Look at her," "That's so funny,", and "she's upside down." Opal continued with her lesson by asking the students: "Did I use all my super powers?" She continued by telling her students "Maybe you can become my partner and help me out." Opal continued her lesson by giving the students an opportunity to turn and talk with someone to indicate which super power was used. "I'll give you a paper [with the super powers]. Turn to the person next to you and tell which super power you use, all the time, sometimes, or never." She encouraged the students to join a group. Some of the students returned to their seats. Opal reminded the students to sit down on the rug and reminded them that they were instructed to turn and talk, not to go to their seats. Opal rotated among the students to hear which super power they used. After several minutes, students were instructed to return to their seat and retrieve their book baggies for independent reading. Opal went to assist one student. They took a picture walk through the book after she read the title, *Where is Eric*? She asked the student to identify the places in the book. Opal then directed him to look for the word pattern in the book. He read and reread the book with the teacher's prompting. She informed the student that he needed to remember the pattern. Opal directed the student to look at the picture and the beginning sound when he could not identify a word. She reiterated the importance of remembering the word pattern in the book. Opal moved to another student. She reminded students at a table with whom she had spoken to earlier, that they needed to read. Opal complemented another student who was reading: "I like

the way (student name) is reading." As the student read, Opal asked the student to identify which super power she used, as well as which super power she used the most. The student responded. Opal stated: "That's my favorite. Awesome." She informed another student that the book he was reading was not his level. Opal prompted the student with whom she was working to look at the first sound in words that he did not know. She asked a student to identify a "snap word" (word wall word) that was on the page of her book. After independent reading, students read with a partner. Opal stated, "Now, I want you to use our partner power." Opal continued to move from student-to-student. Opal asked a student to identify another snap word on the page. Opal asked a student at another table if he was listening to his partner read. As a female student read to the teacher, she was reminded of a rule while decoding a word, the silent e at the end of a word, which makes the other vowel say its name. Opal placed her finger over part of a word to assist the student in decoding the word. She gave an additional word clue by pretending to eat the item represented in the book. The child guessed the word, which was fruit. Opal redirected two students who were not reading. Opal moved to another student. She stated that the student was using her "pointing power." She moved to another group. She commented that the word in the book was difficult. She told the student to look at the character's face. She told the student the word, "fierce." At the end of independent and partner reading, Opal called the students back to a rug, and a student shared a book she had been reading. Opal asked the students to identify the super powers the student had used. Opal used standards under the Foundational Skills strand and incorporated grouping strategies to enrich her lesson. The lesson that I observed further

defined Pavilion's instructional practices in reading. Opal demonstrated the use of reading strategies, which are under the Foundational Skills strand (i.e., Phonological Awareness and Phonics and Word Recognition) and further corroborated the school's use of peer-to-peer grouping.

Teachers at Pavilion Elementary School used multiple strategies and taught supporting several standards in their lessons. They used one or more of the following instructional strategies to further the lessons' objectives: phonemic awareness, partner reading, modeling, scaffolding, and encouraging the students' efforts. In the Pavilion classrooms, students were encouraged to focus on the initial sound of words read. In two of the three classrooms, teachers went beyond the initial sound to include the other sounds in the words. I did not witness the pronunciation or identification of vowel teams or other letter combinations in two of the classrooms. In one classroom at Pavilion, the teacher segmented the sounds in words, as well as gave instruction on tongue or teeth position when pronouncing a sound. Teachers gave one-on-one assistance to students in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development. Dyad interactions (e.g., student-to-student and student-teacher) are important in ecological theory and foster the intellectual development of students. Similarities and differences were observed in the reading lesson by the teachers at the three schools. These likenesses and differences are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Five of the seven teachers at the three research sites clearly presented the objective for the lesson to students. Teachers at all schools used instructional strategies for all students that included modeling, asking questions, independent reading, and

reviewing sounds in CVC words. One Greene Elementary teacher and one teacher at Matte activated the students' prior knowledge before reading, and the Greene Elementary teacher used a graphic organizer to record text details. One Matte teacher used small group instruction and direct instruction as intervention strategies for students at risk in reading. Teachers at Greene Elementary School monitored students' progress in reading by asking and answering questions, and the other Greene Elementary teacher had the students complete a multiple-choice comprehension check of the story's details. At Matte Elementary School, students in one classroom completed a sequencing worksheet on the butterfly cycle, while the other class recorded dictated CVC word on dry-erase boards. In terms of providing opportunities for play in these instructional reading lessons, most teachers did not include any play activities; however, one teacher encouraged students to participate in play activities at the literacy center.

Teachers at the research sites used several instructional and intervention strategies to further the day's reading lesson (Table 16). One teacher used graphic organizers, two teachers used small group instruction, and four teachers used one-on-one instruction as an instructional method. Four of the teachers focused on skills to build phonological awareness, and formative assessment was a part of two teachers' lessons. Collectively, teachers across the three research sites used instructional strategies and activities that enhance the quality of reading instruction. In addition to the strategies and interventions, teachers used as part of their schools' instructional practices in reading, interactions between teachers and students were also vital parts of their instructional practices. In the

following section, I analyze the conversation interchanged between students and teachers at the three research sites.

Table 18

Summary of Instructional Strategies and Activities: Cross-Case Analysis

	Lesson Objective	Instructional Strategies	Progress Monitoring	Opportunities for Play	Positive Student-to-teacher Interactions	Small Group/Interventions
			Greene Elementary School			
Jonelle	1	9	6	0	2	1
Rachelle	0	5	0	0		0
Total Frequency	1	14	7	0	8	1
			Matte Elementary School			
Joanne	1	6	15	0	6	4
Renee	0	9	10	1	9	0
Total Frequency	1	15	25	1	15	4
			Pavilion Elementary School			
Mona	1	14	0	0	3	1
Nina	1	11	1	0	3	5
Opal	1	19	4	0	5	5
Total Frequency	3	44	5	0	11	11

Conversation/Engagement

The subcriteria included topics of conversation between students and the teacher and among students. At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle engaged students during the reading lesson by asking various questions about the text. Jonelle elicited information about cats from students and added that information to the graphic organizer, which was on the smartboard. Jonelle complimented students several times on their behavior and their responses to questions. Jonelle did not provide any planned periods of student-to-student engagement during the lesson. Several students appeared to engage in off-task conversation, but Jonelle redirected their attention. Students appeared engaged during the lesson through the questions asked by the teacher. Teacher-to-student engagements are important in a lesson because interactions between individuals can lead to intellectual growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teacher-student interactions in Jonelle's classroom may assist in increasing the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and interventions that she used because they may inform her continuing use (or adjustment) of these instructional strategies and interventions. Rachelle's use of (teacher-student) interactions may also serve to increase her effectiveness in the classroom.

At Greene Elementary School, Rachelle engaged students in the lesson by asking comprehension questions and one analysis question. In addition, Rachelle complimented her students' behavior, as well as their responses to questions. Students were not required to engage in conversation with each other about the text. Rachelle redirected students who attempted to talk with each other. Rachelle appeared to have a good rapport with her students. The interactions evident between teacher and students may help to promote

learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Rachelle's rapport with her students in directing the lesson and helping students to remain on task may have helped create an environment that allowed for the effective use of strategies and interventions. Overall, Greene Elementary School teachers appeared to create an environment that is ripe for the building of early literacy skills. The environment that Matte Elementary teachers created through the teacher-student interactions cultivated in their classroom is discussed in the next several paragraphs.

At Matte Elementary School, Joanne engaged her students in a conversation about the book, *From Caterpillar to Butterfly*. Joanne began her conversation with students by asking them to define sequencing. Joanne then asked students to identify the sequencing clue words and recite them in order. Joanne had picture cards showing how rainbows appear from rain, to light shining through the rain, to a rainbow across the sky. She asked students to place the picture cards in the proper sequence. Joanne continued to engage her students by asking them to "turn and talk" about butterflies. Students engaged in conversation with each other and had the opportunity to share their conversation with her after the "turn and talk" activity. As Joanne read the book, she stopped periodically to ask students questions. During the guided reading lesson, Joanne asked comprehension questions and one question on sentence structure. At Matte Elementary School, Renee reviewed students' responses to the "Do Now" activity. In this activity, students were asked to decode and illustrate several words. As the lesson continued, students were called to the dry-erase board to tap the sounds in CVC words. Several types of interactions, such as teacher-to-student and student-to-student, were evident in Joanne's

classroom more so than in Renee's classroom. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that interactions occurring between individuals can foster intellectual development. I discuss the teacher-student interactions, which informed the strategy and intervention used at Pavilion Elementary School in the paragraphs that follow.

At Pavilion Elementary School, as the students sat on the rug, Mona led students in a conversation about spring. She asked the whole group questions, as well as encouraged individual students to respond to questions. Students were also instructed to talk to their partners. She encouraged students to participate, to talk using complete sentences, and to practice speaking in English. After Mona had the students return to their seats, she circulated among the students, speaking to individual students as they completed the assignment. I observed several interactions in Mona's classroom: teacher-to-students, teacher-to-student, and student-to-student. These interactions can foster intellectual development in the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as well as inform the teacher's use of strategies and interventions. I observed Nina using similar layers of interactions during the time spent in her classroom, but with an added layer of interaction.

Nina of Pavilion Elementary School directed the lesson while students sat on the rug. Nina began by modeling (self-talk) the skill she was teaching, "What is the same, and what is different between two books?" At one point, she explained the skill by explaining the simplicity of identifying what was the same and what was different between two students, stating that the same could be done with two books. She posed questions to the group of students as well as to individual students. Students were instructed to turn and talk to their partner during the lesson. She refocused the students'

attention with a macaroni and cheese chant. When the students returned to their seats, she encouraged students to read and refocused the attention of students who were not on task. She circulated among students in the classroom, stopping to engage in conversation with several individual students about what was the same and different between their two books. Students participated in partner reading with their classmates. Students had several opportunities to engage with their classmates. They engaged with their fellow students both during group discussions and during partner reading. Nina also led the students in a group discussion, which gave students additional opportunities to interact with another individual. The multiple opportunities for interaction with other individuals in this Pavilion classroom would help students to further their understanding (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of the focused topic. The layered levels of interactions in Nina's classroom were mirrored in Opal's classroom.

Opal of Pavilion Elementary School directed the lesson as students sat on the rug. She directed several questions to the students about the super powers used during reading. Opal modeled (self-talked) as she read several pages of a book to the class, identifying or asking the students to identify the super power she used. Students engaged in student-to-student conversation when Opal instructed them to turn and talk about the super power that they mastered, that they used sometimes, or that they never used. Opal returned students to their seats and engaged in conversation with several students as she helped them read and identify the super power used. Opal encouraged student-to-student interactions and teacher to students' interactions. The cultivation of these types of relationships in a kindergarten reading class is beneficial to students as they foster

intellectual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers at the research sites engaged in various types of interactions during the observation of their reading lessons.

All the teachers interacted positively with students in their classrooms by asking questions and making corrective and management statements; however, teachers led all discussions. Teachers asked several types of questions, from comprehension to analysis questions. One teacher asked questions that encouraged students to make connections between two similar texts. Another teacher made a connection between an event in the text with an event from her life, which modeled a text-to-self connection. Most teachers did not encourage students to engage in conversations with each other, except for three teachers who asked students to turn and talk to each other. Several teachers modeled what they wanted their students to learn, identifying (or segmenting) the sounds in a word, identifying the reading strategy used, identifying word patterns, reading a line in a text, and enumerating the parts of a cycle of a butterfly. The interactions occurring in classrooms are important in the development of literacy skills. These interactions help students show evidence of their comprehension pathways and allow teachers to correct any misunderstandings. Student-to-student interactions were important as well because they allow the expression of thoughts from a similarly aged individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that as one member of a dyad undergoes changes/growth so will the other member. There were many interactions observed in the classrooms at the research sites that may promote student learning. There are subtle factors, factors that teachers may or may not plan, but which play a role in the instructional dynamics. In the next section, I discuss the subtle factors observed at the three research sites.

Subtle Factors

The sub-criteria included unplanned activities, interruptions, and nonverbal communication among students. The only unplanned activity I observed occurred at Greene Elementary School when the school's safety officer entered the classroom to congratulate students on their holiday performance. At Pavilion Elementary School, individuals walked into the classrooms of two teachers and had brief conversations with the teachers. In a vibrant environment, such as is the case with a classroom, interruptions are apt to occur. These short breaks in instruction can serve to strengthen student-adult relationships because they may allow students to see the human side of the teacher as she interacts with another adult.

Researcher's Presence

The presence in a setting of unfamiliar individuals may initiate a chain of events interrupting normal operations. It is important for a researcher conducting a classroom observation to be as neutral as possible. To maintain neutrality, a researcher-observer should not interact with individuals in the classroom setting, verbally or visually. Researcher-observer interactions with individuals in the setting may influence the direction of the instructional lesson, adversely influencing the trustworthiness and validity of the data collected. The sub-criteria for making observations included my location in the classroom, my involvement in activities, and students' awareness of my presence in the classroom. During my observations I further saw how the possible influence of my presence in each classroom could be effectively limited by the teacher's management of the students.

At Greene Elementary School, in Jonelle's classroom, one student attempted to engage me in conversation during the lesson, but Jonelle redirected him. The other students did not appear to be distracted by my presence because they remained focused on the lesson. Jonelle did not introduce me to the students because the goal was to minimize my presence during the instruction. I sat diagonally from Jonelle, and students sat on the rug facing the teacher. In Rachelle's classroom, I sat in the back of the classroom. Students did not appear to be distracted by my presence, and the teacher did not introduce me to the students because, again, the goal was to minimize my presence during instruction. I did not participate in any classroom activities. In the classroom environment, individuals may enter periodically. It is the teacher's reaction to individuals coming into the classrooms that influences the students' reactions. Greene Elementary teachers appeared to be successful in focusing or re-focusing the students' attention away from me and centered on the lesson. Matte Elementary School teachers used similar methods to those used by the Greene Elementary teachers to center the students' attention on the lesson.

At Matte Elementary School, in Joanne and Renee's classrooms, the teachers did not acknowledge my presence. However, one student pointed to me. The teacher redirected the student. I sat perpendicular to students who were seated on the rug. In Renee's classroom, students did not appear to notice me. The lesson had started when I walked into the classroom. I sat facing the teacher at a table that was on the opposite end of the rug. I did not interact with any of the students in Joanne or Renee's classroom because the goal was to minimize my presence in the classroom. In contrast to the

teachers at the Greene and Matte Elementary School, Pavilion Elementary teachers maintained the students' attention on the lesson without any admonishments or introducing me to the class, with one exception.

Mona of Pavilion Elementary School introduced me to the class, informing the students that I was in the classroom to observe them. The students, however, maintained focus on the teacher and the lesson she presented. I sat several feet away from the students and was perpendicular to their position on the rug. In Nina's classroom, I set behind the students as they sat on the rug. After the whole-group instruction was over, and the students moved to their seats, I sat at a desk several feet from the nearest student. Nina maintained the students' focus on her and the tasks which were assigned during independent and partner reading. In Opal's classroom, I sat several feet from the students during whole-group instruction and independent reading. At Pavilion Elementary School, teachers appeared to maintain their students' attention on the assigned tasks, so my presence did not appear to disrupt the reading lesson in any classroom.

Reading instruction in a classroom may also be guided by school or district documents, as is discussed in the following section.

Analysis of Document Data

Research Question 4. What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading (see Table 17)?

Teachers were asked to submit documents that detailed their school's instructional practices. A school's instructional practices in reading comprise the primary foundation

for guiding the kindergarten child in the attainment of early literacy skills. When requesting documents from the teachers it was anticipated that they might include information about the following: kindergarten reading standards, instructional guidelines for at-risk readers, parental involvement guidelines, and professional development activities. While all teacher participants were asked to submit documents that described their school's instructional practices, the breadth and depth of these documents, if submitted, varied from school to school. It was unknown if these documents existed at the school level or whether the individual teachers had access to documents that described the school's instructional practices. Table 17 provided a summary of the document type provided by any of the teachers at three research sites.

Table 19

Reading Program Components Evident in Documents Provided

Content Analysis Focus	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School
Common Core Standards	Yes	No	Yes
Reading Instruction/Instructional Guidelines	No	Yes	Yes
School-Home Connection	Yes	No	Yes
Parent Literacy Materials	No	No	Yes
Intervention Program	No	No	Yes

One teacher submitted a two-page document on behalf of the other Pavilion teachers, *Reading Instruction in Kindergarten Classrooms,* that covered the following areas, but not in great detail: standards, instructional guidelines, parent literacy materials, teacher professional development agendas, parent newsletters/communication, and

intervention program (Document focus 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Neither Greene nor Matte Elementary School teachers submitted documents detailing specific information about their school's instructional practices in reading. One Greene Elementary School submitted a published notebook detailing kindergarten standard and a teacher-produced homework sheet (Document focus 1) on behalf of herself and the other Greene Elementary teacher. The homework sheet contained sight and vocabulary words that the students had to learn and a place for parents' signature (Document focus 3). One Matte Elementary School teacher submitted a 7-page document of reading strategies and skills on behalf of herself and the other teacher. Reading strategies and skills were defined and listed in the document (Document focus 2). Documents received for each case were examined for their purpose, structure, and content analysis. The document types are presented in Table 17 and discussed in detail in the upcoming paragraphs. The documents submitted by the participant teachers did not address all of the anticipated focus areas and did not outline a coherent approach to an instructional program in reading.

Document focus 1: Kindergarten reading standards. The first focus for content analysis of the documents was regarding kindergarten standards. I requested any documents guiding reading practices from each teacher interviewed. At Greene Elementary School, Jonelle supplied reading standards that she and the other kindergarten teacher used. The document was a spiral-bound book that contained the English Language Arts (ELA) standards for kindergarten, first, and second grades. I was not allowed to keep the book, only examine it on site. The book was given to the teacher by the school administration. Each page was tabbed and noted the grade-level to which the

standards referred. Jonelle submitted three pages detailing the standards under the Foundational Skills, Literature, and Informational Text strands. On the page for standards under the Foundational Skills strand were the following sub categories/standards: Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Word Recognition and Fluency. On the standards under the Literature strand were the following sub categories/standards: key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity. The sub categories/standards for Informational Text strand were the same as the standards under the Literature strand. The standards on these pages were bulleted with abbreviations for the major category and numbered consecutively. The abbreviations were "R" for reading, "F" for Foundational Skills, "L" for Literature, and "I" for Informational text", followed by a period, the abbreviation "K" for kindergarten, followed by a period and a number. Each set of standards was identified in this manner. Standards are to be used to guide instruction in the reading classroom, providing teachers with a roadmap of what should be covered and mastered, with support, by students. The Common Core Standards should drive reading instruction, but the documents provided by Matte and Pavilion teachers did not include a timeline reference for application of the standards.

Neither Renee nor Joanne, teachers at Matte Elementary School, provided any type of document that detailed any standards used during reading instruction. Pavilion Elementary School teachers, Mona, Nina, and Opal did not submit any documents detailing reading standards; however, there was a section in the document submitted (*Reading Instruction in Kindergarten Classrooms)*, entitled *Standards*. The section was

one sentence and it stated that the school "follows the Common Core Standards for Reading in Kindergarten, which include the Literature, Informational text and Foundational skill strands." The section did not list the standards, nor did it provide a timeline for standard-driven instruction.

Standards may or may not be used at Matte Elementary School to guide reading instruction with respect to foundational skills, reading literature, and informational texts. While Greene Elementary school teachers did submit a document detailing the standards, there was not an accompanying document detailing a timeline for the use of the standards within reading lessons. Pavilion teachers submitted a document that stated that standards were in use within the context of their school's instructional practices, but again, there was no content detailing the standards or a timeline for their use in the context of a reading lesson. As such, the content analysis revealed that while Common Core Standards appeared to be part of the instructional practices in two of the three schools, teachers used the Standards without any guidance regarding when and how specific Standards were used. However, Standard use represents only part of a school's reading instruction program; there are other integral parts of a school's reading instruction, such as its overall context.

Document focus 2: Reading instruction/ Instructional guidelines. Reading instruction guidelines are the components of a school's instructional practices that guide the efforts of the teachers in the teaching of early literacy skills. Reading instruction guidelines may encompass the school's approach to reading (whole language or a balanced literacy approach to instruction), interactive strategies used to foster reading

development, and other strategies (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile or kinesthetic strategies) intended to support teachers in reaching students at various levels of development and ability. The availability of instructional guidelines at a school does not guarantee their use, which is dependent on the discretion of teachers and the vision of other school personnel, and the availability of funds and resources.

Renee from Matte Elementary School provided documents on instructional guidelines on behalf of herself and Joanne. There were not any documents provided by either of the teachers at Greene Elementary School. One document supplied by the teachers at Matte Elementary School was entitled *Strategies* and was used at Matte Elementary School. It consisted of two sheets of paper and contained seven strategies that were centered and written in bold-faced print, followed by definitions. The strategies listed were as follows: make connections, ask questions, make inferences, visualize, determine important information, monitor comprehension, and understand text structure. The next set of documents submitted by teachers at Matte Elementary School was about reading skills. Reading skills were written across four pages. On the first page "skills" was defined, "what you want to be able to do." On the next three pages "skills" were listed, followed by definitions. The skills were as follows: identify main ideas and details, determine author's purpose, identify cause and effect, classify and categorize, and compare and contrast (second page). On the third page the following skills were listed: draw conclusions, determine fact and opinion, can it be proved or is it a belief, describe the story structure, identify explicit information, and summarize. The skills listed and defined on the fourth and final page were: describe figurative language, identify genre,

identify plot, identify point of view, make predictions, and sequence events. These documents are used to build students' comprehension. There were not any documents submitted that described the methodology (i.e., modeling, think alouds, explicit teaching, guided practice, or in dependent practice) for teaching the listed skills and strategies. Additionally, no information on any of the documents stated which skills and strategies targeted kindergarten students. Pavilion teachers supplied a two-page summary of their school's instructional practices in reading. The stated curriculum was Teacher's College Reading and Writing model (Calkin, 2015). A core curriculum aligned with a Tier 2 intervention would be a beneficial aspect of an instructional program for reading (Fien et al., 2015). Reading instruction in a school should be defined and communicated to each teacher who bears the responsibility for instruction, just as information about the school's philosophy guiding the school-home connection should be communicated to teachers and parents.

Document focus 3: School-home connection. A child's home literacy environment or lack of it influences a child's literacy development in the classroom (Chang & Cress, 2014). A school's instructional practices in reading should provide details on engaging parents in early literacy development. Teachers were asked to provide documents that detailed this important aspect of their school's instructional practices.

Greene Elementary teachers submitted several documents. Jonelle submitted a sample homework sheet that was given to students on a weekly basis. The week for which the homework was given was typed on the top of the sheet; the entire document

was typed or generated from a computer. The sample homework sheet was for the week of March 13-17. It had a picture of an owl to the left of the date. The homework sheet was divided into columns headed by the some of the days of the week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The rows began with the subjects for which homework was assigned, and the last row had a place for the parent's signature. In the last box under Thursday, there was a note about upcoming parent/teacher conferences. The subjects were mathematics, vocabulary words, and sight words. Underneath the homework grid was a note to the parents about an upcoming assembly program for which $10 had to be submitted for a costume. School administrators provided the funds for those students whose parents did not submit payment. The homework sheet contained tasks for each subject. In reading, students had to read the book provided by the classroom teachers about penguins with their parents and answer the given questions using complete sentences. For vocabulary and sight words, 4-5 words were given for each type of word, and the students had to write the word several times and use it in a sentence. The homework sheet provides a connection between home and school. Additionally, it informs parents about current topics in subject taught to their children. Documents submitted by Greene Elementary teachers did not give much depth into their instructional practices for at-risk students. Pavilion teachers submitted documents that provided information into the schools' instructional practices; these documents are detailed in the next paragraph.

Documents submitted on behalf of the Pavilion teachers provided a more in-depth look into their instructional practices in reading than did the documents submitted by the

Greene Elementary teachers. The lead teacher at Pavilion supplied a two-page document, "*Reading Instruction in Kindergarten Classrooms*" that gave a description of the reading instruction program. It included the following sections: Standards, Instructional Guidelines, Word Work, Shared Reading, Parent Literacy Materials, Teacher Professional Development Agendas, Parent Newsletters/Communication, and Intervention Program. On average, the descriptions in each section were three sentences in length. According to the document, Pavilion teachers follow a balanced literacy program. Teacher's College Workshop Model supplements the instructional program. As part of Pavilion instructional program, parent literacy materials are provided to parents, as well as parent newsletters. Parents are afforded the opportunity to engage with their child's teacher on every Tuesday afternoon. According to the document, Pavilion teachers also provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions with their students. Teachers improve their skills through "Tech Tuesdays," where students are given opportunity to improve their technology skills. Documents submitted on behalf of Pavilion teachers served to verify several responses made during the interview. For example, teachers stated that small groups were a part of their instructional practices and the documents supported that finding. Two out of three Pavilion teachers stated that they received professional development and the documents supported that finding.

Teachers at Matte and Greene Elementary Schools submitted documents that provided information about kindergarten reading instruction. Teachers at Matte Elementary school detailed and defined reading strategies and skills that may be encountered during reading instruction; however, there was not any document that

indicated where, when, and how, or with what type of texts any of the strategies were introduced during reading instruction. Additionally, neither teacher noted which of the strategies and skills were grade appropriate. The documents submitted also showed that parent involvement was a goal of the reading assignment, as well as reading daily with and to the child. However, there was not any accompanying document that gave parents guidance as to what to do during a read aloud session. The document submitted by the Greene Elementary teacher also suggested that vocabulary and sight word learning were a part of reading instruction, verifying that at least two Standards under the Foundational Skill strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a) were part of the school's instructional practices. In contrast to the documents submitted on behalf of the Pavilion teachers, neither documents submitted on behalf of Greene and Matte Elementary teachers verified (or made mention of) the use of a phonics program, of a print-rich environment, grouping or an instructional model in use. The failure of the Matte Elementary teachers and the semilimited failure of Greene Elementary teachers to submit documents detailing the cultivation of a home-school connection was echoed by their failure to submit parent literacy materials.

Document focus 4: Parent literacy materials. Parent literacy materials are those documents which outline the parent's role in their children's early literacy development. It may include strategies that parents may use to support the development and maintenance of their children's literacy development, such as assisting with homework, reading with the child, and the creation of a home library. These documents may also indicate whether materials are provided to parents and the platform (e.g., workshops)

through which parents are informed about ways to assist their children. The content of the parent literacy material may provide some evidence to the buildings' culture and socioeconomic needs of the students.

Greene and Matte Elementary Schools teachers did not submit documents dealing with parent literacy materials. Pavilion Elementary School educators did not supply a document detailing the information contained in the newsletters or in the parent literacy materials, although the submitted documented alluded to parent newsletters and parent literacy materials. This document was entitled *Reading Instruction in Kindergarten Classrooms* with the following subsections: standards, instructional guidelines, word work, shared reading, parent literacy material, teacher professional development agendas, parent newsletters/communication, and intervention programs. The parent literacy subsection included information about the school's open-door policy, "parent/teacher interactions conferences," as well as daily meetings occurring between teacher and parent. Parent literacy section and parent/teacher conferences were the stated vehicles for the dissemination of information to parents. Greene and Matte teachers and administrators' apparent failure to capitalize on the socio-learning value of parent-student interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) may adversely influence the reading trajectories of their students. The failure of the majority of the research sites to have well-defined protocol to capitalize on the power of parent-child interactions is mirrored by their failure to have succinct plans for student intervention.

Document focus 5: Intervention programs. Documents related to school intervention programs may reveal additional information about how teachers or other

school personnel remediate the skills of kindergarten students who at risk in reading. This information may describe small group instruction delivered by the classroom teacher or other school personnel in the classroom or in a separate location. Intervention services may be applied at the sole discretion of the classroom teacher or based on a school or district-wide mandate.

Neither Greene Elementary School nor Matte Elementary School teachers submitted documents dealing with an intervention program. Despite a suggested format for the implementation of a response to intervention program on the school district's website, teachers did not submit any documents detailing any intervention programs. The intervention subsection of the Pavilion document, *Reading Instruction in Kindergarten Classrooms*, included information about Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions that were offered by teachers as well as small group instruction. Detailed information about the Tier program was not provided. Contained in the document was information that briefly detailed a child's route to receiving special education services. The documents submitted on behalf of the Pavilion teachers provided evidence of an instructional program that aims to remediate the needs of students who are at risk for reading failure. The documents submitted also showed the Pavilion administrator's conformance to suggestions made by such agencies as the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2019). By omitting documents that detailed a small-group approach, Greene and Matte Elementary School leaders may not also realize and capitalize on small-group instruction (Amendum, 2014). Although multiple sources of data were analyzed, this analysis could not account for all of the findings.

Discrepant Data

Teachers at the research sites did not describe interventions that targeted students who were identified as at risk or homeless. Teachers stated that interventions, mainly small group instruction, were delivered to all students at risk in reading. Teachers were not aware which students were homeless in their classroom. It was not until a teacher inquired from the office staff that they were made aware of a student's status. At one research site, a teacher stated that it was when a student needed a school uniform that she became aware of the student's homeless status. Students who are homeless have academic and social needs which are distinct from students who are not homeless such as low vocabulary (Hammer et al., 2017) and executive skills (Masten et al., 2015). A teacher's sensitivity to students' homeless status may lead to improved levels of academic progress (Wilkins & Terlitsky, 2016). Homelessness and frequent moves during children's formative years adversely influence their academic growth (Fantuzzo et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important that teachers are aware of their students' status so appropriate remediation can be in place. Being aware of students' homeless status, even if only that a homeless student is present in a class, can lead to the development of documents containing information vital about meeting the academic needs of homeless students.

Documents submitted by the teachers across the research sites did not detail any information about meeting the needs of students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. At Pavilion Elementary School, the submitted two-page document included information about Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 intervention. The Pavilion document did

not provide detailed information about a research-based intervention program designed for either at-risk students in reading or at-risk students in reading who were also homeless. Based on the examination of documents, observations, and analysis of interview questions, the instructional practices across the research sites were not designed to meet the documented needs of students who were identified as homeless or at risk in reading. Students, for example, who are at risk and homeless may have deficiencies in vocabulary (Cuticelli et al., 2015) and phonemic awareness, Tier 2 level intervention should begin to address these deficiencies. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that there were similarities and differences in the instructional practices in reading at the research sites.

Cross-Case Analysis

I analyzed the responses and data collected related to the research questions were analyzed across all data sources for the three cases and are presented (Table 18). Two lines of analysis were completed with the interviews and observation data, line-by-line coding, a procedure recommended by Merriam (2009) and cross-case analysis. I constructed categories from the coded data, and I then used the constant comparative method to generate categories. I examined the categorized data for discrepant data and themes. In the next section, I discuss the themes that were developed from the analysis of the data.

Table 20

Cross-Case Analysis Summary Table

Themes	Subthemes	Research Questions
Theme1: Teacher beliefs about the influence of environmental factors	*Subthemes: Poor home-school connection; Teachers' confusion of standards and strategies*	**RQ1**: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?
Theme 2: Teacher beliefs about instructing and supporting students	*Subthemes: Small grouping, use of technology/websites, Print-rich environment*	**RQ2:** What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading?
Theme 3: Reading instruction in the classroom	*Subthemes: Small grouping, Class arrangement, Learning Tool/props, Student-teacher engagement*	**RQ3:** How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?
Theme 4: Lack of coherent instructional reading philosophy	*Subthemes: lack of school-home connection, lack of a submitted document on a detailed reading instructional program; professional development not noted*	**RQ4:** What insights do school and district document provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading?

Theme 1: Teacher Beliefs about the Influence of Environmental Factors

This section consists of the theme that I developed from the categorized data. The theme is: the influence of environment factors and instruction for students at risk in reading. The purpose of this section was to discuss the themes and discrepant data that arose from the analysis process, categorized by the research questions and the corresponding interview questions (Table 19).

The first emerging theme, influence of environmental factors, stems from analysis of responses to Research Question 1, which was: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?

Research Question 1 comprised the data pertinent from responses to Interview Question 6, which was: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading have about how to mediate the classroom environment for factors related to the development of early reading skills?

Teachers stated that the environmental factors influencing students' early reading skills include parents' lack of assistance with their children's homework and a lack of parental involvement in academic concerns. Teachers indicated that the two factors contribute to a child's failure to develop early reading skill development. Teachers also stated that parents' low levels of education influenced their development as readers.

Table 21

At-Risk Factors: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Home-school connection	3	2	11	16
Socioeconomic factors	2	1	1	4
Lack of foundational skills	0	1	7	8
Marital status	1	0	0	1
Learning challenges	0	2	0	2
Frequencies per school	6	6	19	31

Theme 2: Teachers Beliefs about Instructing and Supporting Students

The section consists of the theme that I developed from the categorized data. The theme is: instructing and supporting students. The purpose of this section was to discuss the theme that arose from the analysis process, categorized by RQ2.

The second emerging theme, instructing and supporting students, stems from the analysis of responses to Research Question 2, which was: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading?

Teachers provided instruction for students identified as homeless or at risk in reading by providing interventions for students at risk in reading. Instruction was not differentiated for students who were identified as at risk in reading and homeless. Curriculum material at each research site was comprised of a core instructional program and a supplementary phonics program. Most of the teachers at the research sites stated that they used small group instruction for teaching the foundational skills, teaching from fictional and nonfictional text. Teachers across research sites often confused standards for strategies. From their responses, the teachers did not appear to have expert knowledge of the standards for the different types of texts, nor did their responses address many aspects of the standards for foundational skill, fictional and nonfictional texts. For example, none of the teachers addressed the fluency aspect of the strands under the Foundational skills strand or Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity under either the Literature or Informational Text strands. Strategies used for the various types of texts indicated some variety, such as explicit teaching, use of multi-sensory materials, student-to-student

interactions, choral reading, partner reading, and questioning techniques. The instructional practices at each school consisted of print-rich materials to engage the students such as a variety of books on different reading levels, and charts in the classroom. Teachers supplemented the instructional program with either videos or teacher-related websites, such as Teachers Pay Teachers (n.d.) and ABCya.com (2019). Instruction for students at risk in reading consisted of small group and one-on-one instruction. There did not appear to be any systematic and research-based instructional approaches to intervention for students at risk in reading across research sites. Teachers across research sites did note the importance of their role in the classroom, as well as the role of parents in fostering early reading skill development.

Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary School teachers stated the importance of their role in fostering the development of students' early reading skills and the need to be equipped to teach early reading skills. They also stated the importance of the parents' roles in supporting the early literacy skills of their children. Teachers across research sites stated that parents' lack of involvement in the academic lives of their children resulted in their development of at-risk status in early reading skills. Professional development sessions were rare occurrences at most of the research sites. Professional development was not evident across research sites, but building teacher knowledge (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is an important factor in building students' early literacy skills (Markussen-Brown et al., 2017). Teachers, however, were able to use existing curriculum in the attempt to build students' early literacy skills.

Research Question 2. What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading?

Initial Interview Question 1. Please describe the curriculum that you use in your kindergarten class to teach reading.

With respect to the curriculum materials, teachers, across research sites, stated that phonics was a part of their instructional practices in reading (Table 20). The instructional practices at Pavilion Elementary School varied to some degree from class to class; however, more teachers at Pavilion than at either Greene or Matte Elementary Schools stated that the same curriculum, Teachers College Reading and Writing Program, drove their basic reading instruction. The other Pavilion teacher, who has a bilingual class, used a different program, Estrellita (Myer, 2019), that included a phonics component. The instructional practices in reading at Matte Elementary School showed variation from class to class, as one teacher stated that she used *ReadyGen* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2016), while the other teacher stated that Ready NY drove the basic instruction in her classroom. Ambiguity may be evident in the instructional practices at Greene Elementary School because, in one classroom, the teacher stated that Teacher's College Reading and Writing program was in use, but the teacher in the other classroom did not state any program. The instructional practices in reading at Greene Elementary School showed a greater level of consistency concerning the inclusion of a phonics program; both Greene Elementary School teachers stated that they used Wilson's (2012) *Fundations* program. The instructional practices in reading at Matte and Pavilion

Elementary Schools showed variation in phonics instruction across classrooms. One teacher at Matte stated that she used Wilson's *Fundation*s, while the other teacher did not state the use of any phonics program. Although the phonics instruction *Open Court* (McGraw-Hill, 2019) and *Reading Reform* appeared to be in use. The instructional practices at the three research sites consisted not only of a core program and a phonics program in varying degrees, but technology use.

According to the statements made by the teachers, Greene Elementary School's instructional practices included technology (e.g., educational websites) and multi-sensory activities (e.g., sight word Bingo, flash cards, magnetic letters and words). From the statements made by the teachers, technology was also part of the instructional practices at Matte Elementary, but not at Pavilion. Print rich environments (e.g., charts, anchor books, leveled books) were also part of the instructional practices at each research site, but the frequency was greater at Matte Elementary School than at the other schools. The instructional practices across the research sites had similarities and differences as evidenced through the statements of the teachers. The alignment of the programs' recommendations and the teachers' classroom practices were not a part of this study, neither was the degree to which the teachers within research sites (or across research sites) delivered similar levels of instruction in breadth and depth when using the same curriculum, an aspect of this study. Despite these shortcomings, teachers supplemented their school's instructional practices with not only technology, but also instructional strategies in the standards supporting the Foundational, Literature, and Informational Text strands.

Table 22

Curriculum Materials: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Teachers' College Reading and Writing	2	0	2	4
Wilson's Fundations	1	1	2	4
Other phonics program	0	0	2	2
Other programs	0	2	1	3
Technology	1	2	0	2
Print rich	1	2	1	5
Multi-sensory materials	2	0	0	4
Frequencies per school	7	7	8	

Initial Interview Question 2. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the common core standards for foundational skills in reading (Table 21).

Instructional strategies were reportedly in greater use at Pavilion Elementary School than were reported at Matte and Greene Elementary Schools; however, only one teacher at Pavilion articulated the strategies. For the most part, teachers at Pavilion were not able to articulate the standards or the foundational activities that they practiced in their classrooms. Greene Elementary School teachers used more multi-sensory strategies than the teachers at Pavilion and Greene Elementary School. Matte and Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported the use of group work to teach foundational skills, while teachers at Greene Elementary School did not report the use of group work to teach

foundational skills. Matte Elementary School teachers did not state the use of graphic organizers or technology, but they addressed several standards under the Foundational Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). Matte Elementary School teachers did not associate any strategies with the teaching of these standards. Overall, the teachers' responses across all research sites did not articulate strategies for all the standards that come under the Foundational Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a).

Table 23

Instructional Strategies-Foundational Standard: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities)
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Instructional strategies	0	1	5	6
Technology strategies	1	0	0	1
Print-rich strategies	0	0	1	1
Multi-sensory strategies	6	0	0	6
Group strategies	0	1	1	2
Standard	0	5	0	5
Frequencies per school	7	7	7	

Interview Question 3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature (Table 22).

Common Core Standards in the Literature strand include the following: key ideas

and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity. Teachers across all research sites appeared to be limited in their knowledge of standards that fall under the literature strand. As a result, most of the teachers did not identify strategies that could fall under this strand. Teachers often stated information that would come under a different strand, mostly the Foundational Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). Greene Elementary teachers reported different strategies; one used technology and the other used graphic organizers. Pavilion teachers were varied in their responses concerning strategies for the teaching of standards in the Literature strand. They stated a great use of strategies, but they also stated more standards than did the other teachers; however, Pavilion teachers did not appear to connect the standards to strategies.

Table 24

Instructional Strategies-Literature Standard: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School Frequency	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities) Total Frequency
Instructional strategies	4	0	2	6
Technology strategies	0	1	0	1
Interactions/Group	0	2	0	2
Print-rich strategies	2	0	4	6
Multi-sensory strategies	0	0	0	0
Standards	0	2	3	6
Frequencies per school	6	3	6	

Interview Question 4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading (Table 23).

Schools were evenly matched in the stated frequencies of instructional strategies for informational texts. Instructional strategies included accountable talk, questioning techniques, peer-to-peer help, and choral and echo reading. The teachers from Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools also reported the same frequencies for the use of technological strategies. Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported less frequency than teachers at Greene and Matte Elementary School. Print-rich strategies include games, magnetic letters, and flashcards. Despite the reported strategy use by teachers across all sites, as an aggregate, the teachers failed to provide substantial knowledge about strategies that could be used to teach informational texts. Teachers at all sites failed to report on strategies for the range of reading and level of text complexity in literature and the informational standards. Teachers' conducted reading instruction through the lens of some standards across the Foundational, Literature, and Informational Text strands with a focus on various levels of small-group interactions and other interventions.

Table 25

Instructional Strategies-Informational Text Standard: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities)
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Instructional strategies	3	3	4	10
Technology strategies	1	1	1	3
Multi-sensory strategies	0	0	1	1
Print-rich strategies	2	2	1	5
Interactions/Group	0	1	1	2
Standards	3	2	3	8
Frequencies per school	6	7	8	

Interview Question 5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading to improve their reading skills (Table 24).

The responses of the teacher at the research sites concerning interventions used to help students identified as at risk in reading were varied. Matte and Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported the same frequency of technological strategies for interventions used to reach at-risk students. Greene Elementary School teachers did not report the use of any technological strategies. Both Pavilion and Matte Elementary School teachers reported higher frequencies of outreach to parents than teachers at Greene Elementary School. Overall, Pavilion Elementary teachers had a greater range of strategies to assist students who are at risk in reading than did Matte and Greene Elementary School.

Strategy use by teachers may have been informed by their participation in professional development sessions.

Table 26

Reading Interventions: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities)
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Instructional strategies	1	3	2	6
Technology strategies	0	3	3	6
Print-rich strategies	0	1	0	1
Multi-sensory strategies	0	0	2	2
Outreach to parents	0	3	2	5
Strategies target homeless and at-risk students	3	0	1	4
Group/peer tutoring	0	2	4	6
Positive affirmations	1	0	0	1
Frequencies per school	5	12	14	

Interview Question ***7.*** What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified as at risk in reading (Table 25)? Greene Elementary School teachers did not report receiving any professional development for assisting at risk students reach grade-level expectations. Matte Elementary School teachers also did not report receiving any professional development sessions for students at risk in reading but reported other professional development sessions. With exception to the teachers at the other sites, Pavilion Elementary teachers reported attending

professional developments sessions for assisting students at risk in reading meet each grade-level expectations (Mona), but also for assisting dual-language learners (Opal). Professional development helps to improve teachers' interactions with students. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that improved interactions can foster intellectual development. Additionally, research substantiates the value of professional development (Markussen-Brown et al., 2017). Professional development sessions may help improve teacher-student interactions and thereby students' outcomes, but improved parent-child interactions fostered through parent outreach programs may also be important.

Table 27

Professional Development: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities)
		Frequency		Total Frequency
Professional Development	0	2	5	7
Professional Development: At risk students	0	0	1	1
Professional Development: At risk and homeless	0	0	0	0
Frequencies per school	0	2	6	

Interview Question 8. How would you describe your school's outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Teacher responses across the three sites were varied concerning their school's outreach program. Pavilion Elementary School teachers reported frequent occurrences

(13) of parent-teacher outreach to parents whose children were identified as at risk in reading. Matte Elementary School teachers reported slightly less than half the occurrences of parent-teacher outreaches than the teachers at Pavilion Elementary School. There were contradictory reports from the teachers at Greene Elementary School. One teacher reported outreach to parents, and the other teacher did not recall any parent outreach when asked. Assisting parents in strengthening parent-child interactions as it relates to building early literacy skills is important from a theoretical frame of reference (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and from a literature review reference (Chang & Cress, 2014). Parent outreach programs should not exist in a vacuum but should exist within a context of a reading program that includes research-based components.

Interview Question 9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading (Table 26)?

Table 28

Ideal Reading Program Components: Cross-Case Analysis

	Greene Elementary School Frequency	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities) Total Frequency
Print-rich materials	2	1	3	6
Foundational skills/Phonics	1	4	2	7

(continued)

Table 29

Ideal Reading Program Components: Cross-Case Analysis (continued)

	Greene Elementary School Frequency	Matte Elementary School	Pavilion Elementary School	Cross Case Analysis (incidents/ activities) Total Frequency
Guided and shared reading and read alouds	2	0	4	6
Professional development	1	0	0	1
Comprehension	0	1	0	1
Writing	1	0	1	1
Oral language and the arts	1	0	0	1
Parent involvement	0	0	1	1
Games/Multi-sensory activities	0	0	1	1
Frequencies per school	8	6	12	

The responses of the teachers across the three sites were similar. The teachers at Pavilion, Matte, and Greene Elementary Schools believed that print-rich materials were important components to have in a kindergarten reading program for students who were at risk in reading. The teachers, across the three sites, also believed that phonics was an important component of a school's reading program. Matte teachers' responses covered 8 of the 14 standards under the Foundational Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a), while Greene Elementary School teachers' responses covered 5 of

the standards, and Pavilion Elementary teachers' responses covered two of the standards under the Foundation Skills strand (Common Core State Standards and Initiatives, 2018a). Pavilion Elementary School teachers stated that the critical components of a reading program were phonics and the availability of books; however, one teacher stated that shared and guided reading were critical components of a reading program. Guided and shared reading were components that only the teachers at Greene and Pavilion Elementary School teachers indicated were integral parts of a kindergarten reading program. In order to understand the ideal parts of a reading program, it is helpful to acknowledge that the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000) identified the following as critical components for a reading program: phonemic awareness/alphabetics, phonics, fluency, guided oral reading, independent silent reading, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategies. Teachers across the three sites responses did not include many of the components of a reading program as recommended by the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). The lack of vital research-based reading components in a school's reading program can negatively influence its quality, but teachers (and administrators) cannot overlook the potential of human capital and its role in a quality reading program.

Follow Up Interview Question 1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Responses received across research sites reflected teachers' beliefs that their primary role was important to a student's success. These responses included statements

that teachers' roles were to "model," "facilitate," "guide," and "support" children's learning. The perceptions of Matte Elementary teachers regarding their role in creating a comprehensive reading program was an important determining factor in their level of support to students.

The responses given by Matte Elementary School teachers espoused the importance of classroom teachers in providing support to students and parents. Responses at Matte Elementary School included that teachers "should be models and facilitators in the teaching of literacy," and active in the development of "ways to help students who have difficulties defining success" (Renee). Responses received at Matte also included teachers "are the next most important person in supporting the development of early literacy skills" (Joanne). The teacher's role should also be to equip parents to help their children (Joanne). Teachers have important roles when interacting with students. Matte teachers' responses indicated that teachers can form interacting units that influence students' cognitive development by being role models for their students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Matte teachers' responses establish a bar at which to analyze the responses of Greene Elementary School teachers to their role in supporting their students' early literacy skills development.

Greene Elementary School teachers also espoused the importance of teachers' roles in the classroom but spoke of their role in using multi-sensory objects in the fostering of early literacy skills. Responses included the following: teachers must support children who are at risk in reading with "tactile types of things and visual cues ... and hands-on things like *Wikki Stix"* (Jonelle). Responses from Matte Elementary school

teachers did not go the depth of mentioning tool use in their roles as facilitators. Responses made by Greene Elementary teachers resembled the responses by Matte Elementary teachers regarding the teachers' role as facilitators of such early literacy skills as letter and sound knowledge. Jonelle, of Greene Elementary School stated, as did Joanne of Matte Elementary School, that teachers need to teach letter and their sounds, that "phonic elements are important in learning how to read." Responses by Greene Elementary teachers support the importance of teachers' role in providing phonics instruction (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Greene Elementary teachers' responses add to the picture of the teacher's role in supporting the early literacy development of their students. Pavilion Elementary School teachers' responses completed this picture of teachers' roles in the support of early literacy development.

Pavilion teachers stated that teachers had a vital role in reaching students who were at risk in reading, as did Matte and Elementary School teachers. Similar to Matte Elementary School teachers, Pavilion Elementary School teachers espoused the importance of teachers as facilitators of knowledge. Pavilion Elementary School teachers provided specific information on how to be instrumental in fostering academic growth. Teachers should use explicit teaching (Nina), model the foundational and reading behaviors that the students need to acquire or otherwise guide students in the attainment of knowledge (Mona). Explicit teaching is an important element in teacher practice (Callcott et al., 2015), so Matte teachers' employment of the instructional method is important. Matte, Greene, and Pavilion teachers stressed the important role of teachers in the classroom with Pavilion Elementary School teachers providing the "how" to affect

the teacher's role in the classroom. In the examination of a school's instructional practices, not only was the teacher's role to foster early literacy development, parents' roles were also important.

Follow-up Question 2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early learning skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Follow-up Interview Question #2 dealt with the role that teachers believe parents should play in the development of their children's early literacy skills. Teachers across research sites stated that parents' involvement should begin at an early age and continue through a child's school career. Matte Elementary School teachers provided the basis of a comparison model for the responses of the teachers at the other research sites.

Matte Elementary School teachers believed that parents' role was integral to their children's development in early literacy skills, and parents' involvement should start at a young age. Teachers believed that the parents' role is an "integral part in developing literacy skills" (Renee) and "parents are the first teacher, so they should be playing the most important role" (Joanne). Research confirms the integral role of parents in the development of their children's early literacy skills (Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014). Matte teachers' responses helped establish a basis of comparison for the responses of the other teachers regarding parents' role in the development of their children's early literacy skills.

Greene Elementary School teachers stated that the parents' role was dependent on the age of the child and should involve the use of technology, which is different than the

teachers' responses at Matte Elementary School. Both the Greene Elementary teachers, in contrast with one Matte Elementary teacher believed that technology should be used by parents as children get older. Although Matte and Greene Elementary teachers stated that a parent's involvement should begin at an early age, the Greene Elementary School teachers elaborated on the type of involvement. Parents should expose their children to letters and their sounds (Jonelle) and this exposure can be affected through environmental print (Rachelle). Research validates the importance of instruction focused on letters and their sounds (Stanley & Finch, 2018) and technology (Huang et al., 2013), so that the Matte teachers' responses acknowledged awareness of these factors as evidence of potential practices that positively influence early literacy development of kindergarten children who are at risk in reading. Although Greene Elementary teachers provided greater details on the level of parents' involvement with their children than did the Matte Elementary teachers, these teachers essentially agreed on the importance of parents' involvement. Pavilion teachers also believed in the importance of parents' involvement in the development of their children's early literacy skills.

A Pavilion Elementary School teacher also believed that parents play an important role in helping. A Pavilion teacher (Nina) stated, as did a Matte Elementary School teacher (Renee), that parents should read to their children. A Pavilion stated (Nina), as did a Greene Elementary School teacher (Jonelle), that parents should use environmental print to help develop early reading skills. A Pavilion Elementary School teacher (Nina) gave examples of environmental print that may be useful in developing children's reading skills, such as signs, phrases, business slogans, all of which, she stated,

could be used to “foster a love of literacy.” Pavilion teachers, stated as did the teachers at the other sites that parents should help with homework, to “grasp the concepts that they’re learning in school quicker.” (Opal). A Pavilion teacher’s statement (Mona) was different than teachers at the other sites. Parents may not know how to help because of language differences or that they may not realize the importance of kindergarten; however, if the parents did help that “they [students] will improve.” It is academically beneficial for parents to be involved in the building and supporting their children’s development of early literacy skills. Chang and Cress (2014) stated that the home literacy environment is important in the child’s development of early literacy skills. Teachers from Matte, Greene, and Pavilion Elementary Schools stated that parents’ involvement in their children’s literacy development is important. They further shared their belief that district, and school leaders also play a role in children’s literacy development.

Follow Up Interview Question 3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills?

Teachers across all school sites had varied opinions about the role that leaders should play in assisting them in the instruction of early reading skills. Their views converged at one point that leaders should be provisioners by equipping teachers with professional development and supplies and parents with the knowledge to assist in their children’s development of literacy skills. Greene Elementary teachers believed that school leaders’ roles are integral in assisting teacher with literacy instruction.

Greene Elementary School teachers stated that the district and school leaders should ensure that teachers have the necessary supplies for the instruction of early

reading skills, and the need for professional development to equip them for the teaching of reading skills. Greene Elementary School teachers stated that district and school leaders should make sure that parents have necessary supplies such as books to support their children's reading development (Jonelle). Greene Elementary School teachers also stated that district and school leaders bear the responsibility of equipping their teachers for service. They stated that school leaders should provide the professional development necessary to improve the instructional skill of teachers. School leaders "play the role of … providing professional development for the teachers to help them become better facilitators" (Jonelle). Additionally, Greene Elementary teachers stated that "the district should make sure that the teachers are trained in the various programs that they're using," as well as provide workshops for the parents to help them help their children to teach literacy skills." (Rachelle). Increasing instructional knowledge of teachers will help to improve teacher practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Greene teachers' responses about the role of school and district leaders focused on support for teachers so as to provide improved teacher practice. Matte Elementary School teachers gave responses that centered on teachers' input into the choice of curriculum, as well as responses which were decidedly more unique than the Greene teachers' responses.

Matte Elementary School teachers stated that district and school leaders should allow teachers to choose a curriculum, provide support to students, and consider students' developmental maturity. A Matte Elementary School teacher (Renee) in a response that was not articulated within or across research sites was that "not every school should be a cookie cutter because every district and every school has different students and different

needs." Therefore, "Teachers need to have an input ... into what kind of programs that are appropriate for the students that they are teaching." (Renee). Also, expressing an insight that was not shared by teachers at other sites, a Matte Elementary teacher (Joanne) stated that kindergarten students need more intervention programs, and that they may not be developmentally ready to learn. "I think kindergarten children need a little bit more support. Maybe more pullout programs if they are struggling, but sometimes I do feel some kids developmentally aren't ready" (Joanne). Providing extra support to students via Tier 2 and Tier 3 support services may help to change their reading pathways (Swenson, Horner, Bradley, & Calkins, 2017). While Matte Elementary teachers gave responses that expressed their opinions that school and district leaders need to value teachers' input regarding curriculum choice, Pavilion Elementary teachers offered a slightly different perspective.

Pavilion Elementary teachers (Opal and Mona) gave responses that were similar to some of the responses given by Matte and Greene Elementary in that they stated that leaders should trust teachers to use their professional judgment to do what is in the best interest of the student, an opinion echoing that of a Matte elementary teacher (Renee). A Pavilion Elementary School teacher (Nina) and Greene Elementary School teachers (Jonelle and Rachelle) agreed that leaders should provide professional development services to teachers. Providing opportunities for interschool visitation was a potential practice that Pavilion Elementary teacher (Nina) stated that leaders should provide for teachers as along with the opportunity to learn from "professional reading experts," as well as the chance to share with others, to "bounce ideas and lessons and take-aways

from each other" (Nina). The need for teachers to participate in interschool visitation was not a response articulated by other teachers across the other sites.

Theme 3: Remedial Instruction in the Classroom

Many of the teachers across research sites demonstrated various levels of remedial instruction in their classrooms. The remedial instruction strategies could be seen in the whole-group instruction, one-to-one instruction, or small group instruction. Several teachers, one at Greene Elementary School and one at Pavilion did not demonstrate remedial instruction during the observed lesson.

Analysis of Observation Data

This section presents the theme that emerged as I observed an instructional lesson in the classrooms of the participating teachers at the three research sites. The theme is remedial instruction in the classroom. The purpose of this section is to discuss the theme and subthemes that arose from the analysis process, categorized by the related research question: how do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students? The emergent findings and theme resulted from observing a 45 minutes reading lesson in each participant's classroom and analyzing the observations. During the observation, I took notes detailing the teacher's objective, if stated, the lesson's content, and the interactions observed between teachers and students.

Research Question 3. How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?

The remedial instruction provided at the research sites is revealed through various observation data. This data included the setting at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion

Elementary schools, the participants at those settings, and the instructional activities in play. Additional data that gave evidence to the remedial instruction across the three sites also include observed activities, conversation between students and teachers, subtle factors, and my presence on the day of the observation. This discussion begins with an overview of what was observed at the three research sites.

Students in one Greene Elementary School classroom were provided with one-on-one assistance. In the other Greene Elementary School classroom, the instruction was delivered to the entire class, no attempt to small group instruction was observed. One Greene Elementary teacher (Jonelle) used a graphic organizer to increase comprehension of the facts and details of a fictional text. After the completion of whole group instruction, the Greene Elementary teacher (Jonelle) used one-on-one grouping to help students during a period of independent reading. I did not notice a specific focus during these one-to-one sessions, but rather the teacher assisted several students in the reading of a fictional book. Although remedial instruction was limited among Greene Elementary teachers, remediation strategies were more widespread among Matte Elementary School teachers.

Matte Elementary School teachers agreed to demonstrate both a literature-focused lesson and a phonics-based lesson. The teachers used several strategies to address the literacy skills of at-risk students either within the context of whole group instruction or following class instruction. Guided reading instruction (Joanne), accountable talk (Joanne), play through literacy center games (Joanne), and individual students focused on segmenting sounds (Renee) were the remedial instructional strategies used at Matte

Elementary School. Matte Elementary School teachers used a greater variety of remediation strategies than did the teachers at Greene Elementary School, but the Pavilion Elementary School teachers used student capital to address the at-risk status of their students.

Pavilion Elementary School teachers (Nina and Opal) used peer-to-peer grouping, small grouping (Nina), and accountable talk between students (Nina and Opal) to assist in remediating the literacy skills of the kindergarten students. After conducting whole-group instruction, Pavilion Elementary teachers (Nina and Opal) used student-teacher grouping to assist students during independent reading. They rotated among several students in their classrooms. The general focus of these student-teacher sessions appeared to be either building word attack skills or providing student practice identifying the similarities and differences between partner's books.

Teachers across research sites used a variety of remediation strategies. Greene Elementary School teachers were more limited in remediation strategies than the teachers at the other schools. Matte and Pavilion Elementary School teachers used more intensive grouping strategies to remediate the needs of their students. Remediation strategies were used by all teachers, and the settings in each of these classrooms provided additional information about strategies employed. Analysis of the setting at each research site provides insight into the reading instruction at each research site.

Setting

Classrooms across the research sites showed some variance in the print material that was present; however, there were some commonalities across research sites. There

were smartboards in all classrooms, along with rugs used for whole group instruction. Desks were arranged so that most of the students at the three sites sat in groups. Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary school sites had notebooks and or folders for each child in bins. All classrooms contained leveled books for reading: fiction and non-fiction, along with books of various genres, content area books, and collections of books written by the same author. Pavilion and Matte Elementary School had a collection of books for read alouds, Greene Elementary School classrooms did not have these books. Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary classrooms contained word walls (bulletins boards depicting sight and or vocabulary words in alphabetical order) as well as charts of a general nature, such as days of the week, months of the year, and behavioral charts. The variance in print material in the classroom was at Pavilion Elementary and Matte Elementary Schools. Pavilion Elementary school had posters that depicted a behavioral system, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Matte Elementary classrooms had charts for guided reading, as well as charts that detailed the students who need support in the learning of some phonetic elements.

Greene Elementary teachers did not display any teacher-created phonics' charts, phonics related games in the room, guided reading charts, or charts that indicated students who required support in learning the phonetic elements, as did the teachers in Pavilion Elementary classrooms. However, Greene Elementary teachers posted phonics charts from Wilson's *Fundations* Program, but not any teacher-created charts identifying phonetic elements. Greene Elementary school classrooms did contain charts directing students on "How to Pick a Just-Right book" (Rachelle) a "Writers' Checklist" (Rachelle)

and a chart that detailed traits of a writer (Rachelle) while the other had a single chart posted on "Ways to Read a Book" (Jonelle). The teachers (Jonelle and Rachelle) at Greene Elementary School each had a behavioral chart in their classrooms that depicted ranges of children's behavior during the day but did not denote behavioral interventions and supports as were evident by the Pavilion kindergarten teachers. While the teachers at Greene Elementary School displayed charts in their class, the charts were not as detailed in that they did not indicate student placement in smaller groups or participation in literacy play as was observed in the charts at Matte Elementary School.

Classrooms at Matte Elementary School had charts for literacy center/play times that included schedules for guided reading groups. The classrooms also contained a supply of literacy games that may have served as alternative ways to help improve students' early literacy skills. The layout and materials found in several classrooms were particularly distinct, both within and across sites. Matte Elementary classrooms had charts that focused on building phonetic skills and text structure. These charts detailed short and long vowel spellings and lists detailing the initial sounds in words (Renee). Matte Elementary school classrooms also had charts that described the elements of a story: stories have problems and solutions; stories have a beginning, middle, and end, as well as that stories, have settings and characters. Matte Elementary School teachers also displayed phonics related games to a greater degree than did the teachers at the other research sites. Matte Elementary teachers' room were richer in content than the teachers' room at Greene Elementary School, but the Pavilion Elementary School teachers'

classroom reflected a richer reading philosophy than did the teachers' classroom display at both of the other schools.

The Pavilion teachers' classrooms, as a group, were richer in print and educational resources than the classrooms at the other sites. The print posted in the Pavilion classrooms consisted of, in part, big books, word walls, calendars, a PBIS chart, word work folders, category charts related to phonics, and children names' chart with the first letter of their names distinguished by a distinct color, and categorization charts. Pavilion teachers had various charts or pocket charts showcasing phonetic elements, such as a pocket chart highlighting the beginning sound of a word that also listed words beginning with the focused letter (Nina) and a list of word families and a pocket chart detailing word families (Mona). Each Pavilion teacher also had their own unique teacher-initiated materials such as a poster detailing strategy for super readers and a chart entitled, "Readers Read with Partners" (Opal), and a pocket chart detailed words that began with the focus letter (Nina). In Pavilion's bilingual classroom, the bulletin board headings were written in Spanish and English (Mona). Pavilion Elementary classrooms also contained kitchen and living room furniture, along with blocks for building. The number of participants was different in each classroom. In the next section, I discuss the cross-case analysis of participants at the research sites.

Participants

The personnel supporting each of the classrooms across sites varied. In one of the Pavilion classrooms, there were two adults, one teacher and one paraprofessional. In another Pavilion classroom, there was another adult, but her schedule across classrooms

rotated. She left the classroom several minutes after I arrived for the observation. In one Matte Elementary classroom, there were two adults, one teacher and one paraprofessional. There was one teacher in each of the classrooms at Greene Elementary. The number of participants varied in each of the research sites. Instructional activities are a function of the number of adult-to-student participants in a classroom.

Instructional Activities. The instruction in each classroom, within and across research sites, showed some variance. In each of the classrooms at Pavilion, there were one-to-one interactions between the teacher and the students. These observations were supportive of the Matte and Pavilion teachers' interview statements that they used small group and guided reading groups as intervention strategies. A Greene Elementary School teacher stated that students were pulled out for Academic Interventions Services (AIS) (Rachelle). While I did not observe any students being pulled out for AIS, I did observe small group or one-to-one interactions with students in one Greene Elementary (Jonelle). Greene Elementary School teachers did not display any charts that would have evidenced small group instruction through interview or observational data (setting). Matte Elementary teachers had agreed to demonstrate different aspects of their school's reading instruction: a phonics lesson (Renee) and a reading lesson comprised of whole group instruction, guided reading, and literacy center time (Joanne). The instructional activities of Matte Elementary School teachers were corroborated through their interview responses and observational data (setting). Instructional activities at Pavilion Elementary School demonstrated explicit and small-group instruction (Nina), a reading/writing lesson integrated with the instruction of phonetic elements (Mona), and a reading lesson

integrated with phonetic elements and word knowledge (Opal). These instructional activities were evidenced through interview responses and observational data (setting). Classroom instruction is realized through the interactions occurring between the individuals in the classroom. The level of these interactions occurring at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools are important aspects in the instructional practices at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools.

Conversation/Engagement

Teachers' engagement with students was apparent across and within all research sites. Students at Greene, Matte and Pavilion Elementary Schools were encouraged to participate during whole-group instruction. At Pavilion Elementary School students were encouraged to respond to the teacher's questions using grammatically correct sentences (Mona). Teachers at Matte, Greene, and Pavilion Elementary Schools appeared to have a good rapport with their students. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development, dyad relationships are important sources of development, because as one member of the dyad undergoes development, the other will, too. In the midst of the interactions are events occurring, which cannot be planned. These interactions are the subtle influences, which also influence the direction of the lessons as observed at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary Schools.

Subtle Factors

The subcriteria included unplanned activities, interruptions, and nonverbal communication among students. The only unplanned activity I observed occurred at Greene Elementary School when the school's safety officer entered the classroom to

congratulate students on their holiday performance. At Pavilion Elementary School, individuals walked into the classrooms of two teachers and had brief conversations with the teachers. In a vibrant environment, such as is the case with a classroom, interruptions are apt to occur. Teachers' ability to manage these unexpected events influence the direction of a lesson, and in the case of what may be a planned interruption, teachers' ability to successfully manage such interruptions positively influences the direction and quality of an instructional reading period.

Researcher's Presence

My presence in the classrooms at Matte, Greene, and Pavilion Elementary Schools appeared to be inconsequential. The sub-criteria included location in the classroom, involvement in activities, and students' awareness of my presence in the classroom. At Greene Elementary School, students were either not allowed to engage me in conversation (Jonelle) or the students did not appear to be distracted by my presence in the classroom (Rachelle). At Greene Elementary School, I sat in inconspicuous places, either in the back of the classroom (Rachelle's classroom) or diagonally from the teacher (Jonelle's classroom). I did not participate in any classroom activities. In the classroom environment, individuals may enter periodically. It is the teacher's reaction to the entrances that influences the students' reactions. Greene Elementary teachers appeared to manage my presence in the classroom. Matte Elementary School teachers had similar levels of success managing my presence in the class even though in one class the teacher introduced me.

At Matte Elementary School, teachers did not acknowledge my presence even when students inquired of my presence (Joanne's classroom). In the other Matte Elementary School classroom (Renee's classroom), students did not appear to notice my presence. I sat perpendicular to students in one classroom and facing the teacher in the other Matte Elementary School classroom. The lesson had started before I entered the classroom. I did not interact with any of the students in either of the Matte Elementary School classrooms. At Pavilion Elementary School classrooms, I was introduced to one class, but not to the students in the other classroom. Students did not appear to be distracted by my presence in any of these classrooms. Teachers at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary School effectively managed my presence in their classrooms during the reading lesson observations. Reading lessons are not only influenced by unplanned and planned interruptions, but also by documents defining a school's instructional philosophy or characteristics.

Theme 4: Lack of a Coherent Instructional Reading Philosophy

The fourth theme, lack of a coherent instructional reading philosophy, stems from Research Question 4: What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading? This research question comprised data from documents collected. Pavilion Elementary School teachers submitted documents that gave information about their instructional practices. Documents submitted by the other teachers at Greene and Matte Elementary Schools revealed less information about their instructional practices.

Students who may require assistance to make meet minimum grade-level requirements should receive intervention services. The Response to Intervention document by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2019) gives guidance in establishing and maintaining three tiers of instruction in the classroom. The document outlines and defines instruction that should be delivered to children at the various stages of intervention, Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 (not addressed in this study). However, neither data from neither the interviews nor the observations, from teachers at the research sites, evidenced the adoption of any of these guidelines for intervention services for students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. Although Pavilion teachers did submit a document that mentioned that students received intervention services, the document lacked specific implementation details. Intervention services, especially multi-tiered interventions, are academically beneficial for at-risk students (Fien et al., 2015). Overall, teachers across research sites did not seem to detail the implementation and management of different tiers of intervention. However, Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary School teachers did address the importance of involving parents in the early literacy development of their children in their interview responses.

Students who are at risk in reading may be helped by the creation of opportunities for parent and teacher interactions/exchanges (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Several opportunities exist for parents within and across the research sites to engage with their child's teachers at the district level. These opportunities are system-wide, so Matte, Greene, and Pavilion Elementary School teachers participate. Parent-teacher conferences are held several times a year in November, March, and May. The school system also

instituted Parent Engagement Tuesdays, which offers 30-minute sessions where parents can inquire about their child's progress. The school system also provides parent coordinators who act as liaisons between the parent and the school. Parent coordinators can help resolve issues between parents and schools. Parent-teacher conferences and other opportunities for parents and teachers to interact can have positive influences on children's reading performance (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The school system, in which the research sites are located, has mandated parent to teacher exchanges during the school year. There are also federal mandates to which teachers at Greene, Matte, and Pavilion Elementary School teachers are subject.

Children who have additional risk factors have assurances mandated by the federal government. A federal law, the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987, ensures that all homeless students, not just homeless students who are also in kindergarten, have protected rights. Under the law, homeless students are entitled to remain in the school they were attending before becoming homeless. Homeless students are also entitled to bus services to and from their neighborhood school and to receive free school meals. Through the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987 family assistants are available either at the school or the shelter to assist parents in meeting students' educational needs. Greene and Matte Elementary teachers did not submit any documents that reflected steps taken to meet the specific needs of students who are homeless and at risk in reading. Documents submitted on behalf of Pavilion Elementary teachers did reflect the system-wide initiatives, parent-teacher conferences and Parent Engagement Tuesdays. Information contained in the Pavilion documents reflected the school's instructional practices and

parent outreach activities. Matte Elementary School teachers submitted documents that reflected skills and strategies for reading. Documents submitted by Matte Elementary teachers, also did not reflect attempts to improve on interactions that may foster students' cognitive development. Greene Elementary School teachers submitted a homework documents and standards, however, there were not any documents that reflected school administrators attempts to improve the parent-teacher or teacher-child interactions, interactions which may foster child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 When collecting data from various sources, documents included will be meaningless unless members of academia can place a level of trust in the findings.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is necessary because individuals in academia must be able to depend on the credibility of the results (Merriam, 2009). Educators and policy makers should be able to depend on the study's results so that recommendations may be implemented in their schools or districts. Merriam (2009) stated that trustworthiness in qualitative studies is related to constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I followed the procedures outlined in Chapter 3 to improve trustworthiness through data collection and analysis and addressed each of the four constructs as described below.

Credibility

Credibility of a study equates to the "truth value" of a study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 312), so the study's findings fit with reality (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) recommended the following as strategies to improve a study's credibility:

triangulation, member checks, peer review, reflexivity, and engagement in data collection. Two post-graduate students reviewed the alignment of the interview questions with the research questions. I achieved triangulation by "comparing and cross-checking data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 216) obtained through interviews with the information supplied through the document and the information observed (triangulation). This information was collected over several months; I reflected on the data throughout the process of collection and analysis.

Transferability

Transferability, according to Merriam (2009), is the ability to transfer the findings from one study to a similar setting with a similar population. Merriam recommended the following strategies to improve a study's transferability: rich, thick description; maximum variation; and a typical sample. I achieved rich, thick description by detailing the settings, participants, and the data collection and analysis methods. I chose kindergarten classrooms that were "typical or modal" (Merriam, 2009, p. 228) of the ones that possible researchers could find in urban areas located in the northeastern part of the United States.

Dependability

Dependability of a study refers to the degree that the study's findings are supported by the data or the degree to which the study's findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) recommended several strategies that can be employed to improve a study's dependability. The strategies are triangulation, peer examination,

clarification, “investigator’s position” (p. 222) and audit trail. I used triangulation by “comparing and cross-checking data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the maintenance of objectivity by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). A strategy recommended by Merriam (2009) was the maintenance of a journal. The journal contained my preconceived ideas about the outcome of this study. The maintenance of a journal also served as a reminder that discrepant data might arise in the analysis process that would challenge the theoretical propositions of this study.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the results of this study. The chapter began with a detailed description of multiple case analysis, followed by descriptions of the data collection method and participant demographics. I detailed the setting of the research study and continued with an analysis of interview questions, the observation data, and the document data. Cross case analyses, which revealed the themes, followed the single case analysis. The chapter ended with a discussion of the evidence of trustworthiness in the research study and is followed by the interpretation of the findings of the study in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 5, I include an interpretation of the findings of the study through the lens of the literature review and the conceptual framework. The chapter also contains a discussion of the limitations of the study, and a discussion of the implications for social change. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice and research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about the factors that influence the development of early reading skills, teacher instructional and remedial practices fostering early reading skills, and the documents, training, parental outreach and supports needed for the effective development of early reading skills of students who are identified as homeless or at risk in reading in three schools in three northeastern school districts. To achieve this purpose, I interviewed teachers to determine their beliefs, instructional and remedial practices, and the supports that were provided to them. These determinations provided insight into the student-teacher interactions that occurred in the reading classroom. This teacher-focused belief system was further revealed through class observations and the examination of school documents. The rich data that resulted from the interviews, and the observations and the inspection of school documents at three research sites helped to ensure the achievement of the study's purpose and a stronger contribution to existing literature.

The conceptual framework was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development. The premise of this theory is that individuals (in this case, children) are influenced by what occurs in the various settings they occupy, be it school or home. Children are also indirectly influenced by what occurs in the settings in which their parents are situated, such as parents' jobs. Interactions occurring within these settings and across these settings influence a child's intellectual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Informed by this framework, I anticipated that teachers held some beliefs about the interactions needed to remediate the skills of students at risk in reading. This study may

help teachers of children who experience homelessness, a risk factor that interferes with academic development (Bassuk et al., 2014), build early literacy competencies. I designed a study that would allow me to examine kindergarten instructional practices for at-risk readers (the phenomenon) and their contexts (environmental factors related to home and school and instruction in the home and the school) through the collection of data from multiple sources.

The study was conducted using a multiple case design in which data were collected from interviews, observations, and documents. Teachers who lived in the Northeastern part of the United States participated in this study. Data were collected from interviews with seven teacher participants (initial and follow-up), observations of a 45-minute reading lesson in each classroom, and content analysis of documents submitted by the teachers. I described the purpose, structure, and content of each document submitted by the participants. I used a two-level analysis of the data from the interviews. First, I conducted a line-by-line coding of the teachers' interview responses, a method recommended by Charmaz (2006). Second, I used the constant comparative method recommended by Merriam (2009) to construct categories of the coded data. I tallied the responses within each category to determine the frequency of participants' responses within the categories. At the second level of analysis, I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine the trends and discrepant data. The cross-case analysis was informed by the literature I reviewed.

I found limited research on the beliefs that teachers have regarding factors that influence the early reading skills of urban kindergarten students identified as homeless or

at risk in reading. A multiple-case study was identified as an effective means to address these gaps, the problem and the research questions associated with this study.

Interpretation of Findings

This section focuses on sharing the findings for this multiple-case study through the lens of the conceptual framework and the literature review (Table 27).

Table 30

Summary of Research Findings

Section Titles related to Themes (& RQs)	Findings	Confirmed
Teacher beliefs about factors influencing early reading skills (RQ 1)	Parent involvement is important	Research confirms that parental involvement is important (Baker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2014)
Teacher beliefs about instructing and support students (RQ 2)	Print-rich environment; graphic organizers; technology use Multi-sensory strategies in place; phonics instruction	Phonics instruction and core program in place; print-rich environments are important (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014), graphic organizers (Grünke & Teidig, 2017); technology in the classroom (Huang et al., 2013)
Remedial Instruction in the classroom (RQ 3)	Print-rich environments; Small group instruction; classroom arranged for peer-to-peer interactions	Print-rich environments are beneficial to a child's reading development (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013); Small group instruction helps to developed early literacy skills (Savage et al., 2018; Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013)
Support documents from state, local or school-levels (RQ 4)	Standard-based instructional practices; lack of a submitted document on detailed instructional practices Lack of a submitted document on detail school-home connection; lack of document supporting professional development	Research confirms the importance of: standards-based curriculum (Porter et al., 2011); home-school connection (Pillinger & Wood, 2014); important components of a reading program (January et al., 2017; McGeown, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000) Professional development (Wanzek, et al., 2014)

Teacher Beliefs about Factors Influencing Early Reading Skills

RQ1 was: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills? The findings for this question suggested that teachers believed that parental involvement influences the development of the early reading skills of kindergarten children. This finding is supported by the framework and past research. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological development substantiates the relevance and importance of the interactions that occur between parents and their children. According to Bronfenbrenner, parents play an integral role as students transition from preschool status to school status. Children who see their parents place importance on their education are more likely to embrace the aspects of education that the parents deem important such as completing homework and reading books and magazines. As students copy what they have seen their parents' model, they are transformed. This transformation is called a molar activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This molar activity or intellectual development can be learning to read and or write.

This study was further informed by the literature review. Research substantiates the importance of parent involvement as a determining factor in a child's development (Baker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2014; Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014; Sim et al., 2014). Baker and Rimm-Kaufman (2014) sought to determine how the home environment influences the socioemotional functioning of kindergarten students. Findings indicated that children who had a strong mother-child interaction exhibited engaged approaches to learning, self-control, interpersonal skills, and less externalizing behavior. Sim et al. (2014) conducted a study on the influence of dialogic reading in a child's development

of oral language. Sim et al. determined that parent engagement influences students' development of early reading skills. Students' development of early reading skills is not only influenced by interactions between parents and children, but also by their interactions with their teachers. In the next section, I discussed the teachers' responses about how to structure classroom instruction.

Teachers Beliefs about Instructing and Supporting Students

RQ2 was: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address the needs of students identified as at risk in reading? The findings identified teachers' beliefs on how to mediate the classroom environment for factors related to the development of early reading skills. The underlying connection between the instructional strategies used in the classroom is that the teacher-student relationship can be a surrogate for the parent-child relationship (Baker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2014). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the interactions (e.g., student-to-student and student-teacher) that occur within the nested systems of school and family are integral parts of children's development. As Bronfenbrenner stated, "[a] child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and the home" (p. 3). Workshops for the significant adults in children's lives may help to improve children's intellectual development. It is the role of the administrators and teachers to seize on the wealth of the adult-child interactions that may influence academic development. Administrators can establish policies and address scheduling concerns to support the building of adult-child interactions. Teacher, generally, do not have the authority to establish these pathways that

may improve adult-child relationships, but through the system-wide, Parent Engagement Tuesdays, can create and offer workshops to help parents improve their home literate environments. The quality of teachers' interactions can be influenced by their participation in professional development, and also by parents' involvement in workshops designed to improve interactions between parents and their children within an educational context. The findings indicated that school officials across research sites did not consistently capitalize on these possible assets.

The findings for this research question indicated that all schools did not provide professional development for teachers and outreach to parents, which could help to improve the teacher-child and parent-child interactions. The one exception to this finding was at Pavilion Elementary School where one out of the three teachers reported that professional development was offered. Professional development improves teacher effectiveness in the classroom and thereby improves the quality and frequency of students' levels of engagement (Wanzek et al., 2014) and student performance (Amendum, 2014; Bingham & Patton-Terry, 2013). The interpersonal relationships between parent and child are also subject to the developmental influence of one person in the dyad. Outreach to parents serves to improve the quality of parent-child interactions, a practice proven to prepare children for the building of early reading skills (Chang & Cress, 2014; Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory corroborates the developmental influence of one individual with another individual in the setting: "if one member of a pair undergoes a process of development, the other does also" (p. 5). The developmental influence occurring between one individual and another extends to what

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified as the N + 2 system, to include "triads, tetrads, and larger interpersonal structures" (p. 5). The developmental influence of interpersonal interactions is of great importance to the kindergarten-age student, especially one who is at risk in reading. Also, important were the instructional dynamics in the classroom.

The findings of this study demonstrated that teachers across the research sites had mixed, but limited use of instructional strategies for teaching foundational skills, teaching various genres, such as literature and information texts, and the use of interventions to mediate the classroom environment for factors related to the development of early reading skills. The strategies used by the teachers included, but were not limited to, the creation of multi-sensory focus to improve phonemic awareness (Pieretti, Kaul, Zarchy, & O'Hanlon, 2015), varied text and other print-rich materials to improve early reading skill readiness (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014), and small group techniques to reach students at risk of delayed literacy skills (Stanley & Finch, 2018). However, researchers indicated that explicit teaching (Dubé et al., 2013), the use of graphic organizers and text structure (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013), and the use of scaffolding improve student learning (Einarsdottir, 2013; Hansel, 2015). The findings showed that teachers had a core curriculum and a phonics/alphabetic principal curriculum, although the core curriculum and phonics program were different at the research sites. Across research sites, teachers did not note the same core curriculum or phonics program. Greene and Matte Elementary teachers did not note the same core or phonics program; Pavilion teachers noted the same core curriculum, but different phonics programs. It is beneficial for instruction within a school across a grade be delivered with fidelity (Hamm & Harper, 2014; Savage et al.,

2018). Instruction in the classroom, especially for kindergarten children who are at risk in reading, teachers may need to offer remedial instruction. In the next section, I discuss the findings regarding the remedial instruction teachers believed that they provided for students who were at risk in reading.

Remedial Instruction in the Classroom

RQ3 was: How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at risk students? The findings for the question outlined how teachers provide instruction for students in reading. However, it is important to note that no distinctions were made for students who were identified as homeless and at risk in reading. Small group instruction, including guided instruction and teacher-to-student interactions, was observed in several classrooms. Small group instruction allows instructional differentiation to support learning (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014) and improves the targeted focus of the small group instruction, such as alphabetic knowledge (Stanley & Finch, 2018). Considering Bronfenbrenner's (1979) focus on the interactions between individuals as the means for cognitive development, the smaller student-teacher ratio available in small group instruction offers increased interactions between teachers and students and students and students and provides opportunities for increased student practice on the focused instructional subject matter. The interactions (e.g., student-to-student, student-teacher, parent-child) occurring between the school and the home, as well as within these settings, are hallmarks of Bronfenbrenner's systems theory. In this systems model, individuals experience life in nested structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interactions (e.g., student-to-student and student-teacher) occurring within the neighborhood, home, or

school settings (microsystem), as well as the interactions occurring in the settings in which a student is not a part (exosystems) exert an influence on students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The success or failure of individuals “depends on the role demands, stresses, and supports” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7) that come from the other individuals in the various settings. The interactions observed in the classrooms included exchanges between teachers and students, as well as small group/guided instruction in several classroom (Greene and Matte Elementary Schools) and peer-to-peer interaction (Pavilion Elementary School). These interactions (student-to-student and teacher-to-student), especially the small group interactions (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014), observed in the classrooms could assist students in making academic gains. In a Pavilion classroom (Nina), students read with partners as they compared and contrasted the content between two books. These peer-to-peer interactions (student-to-student) could also provide support within the school setting to assist students in meeting grade-level demands (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). Both parent and student supports are in the school or in the homeless residence, and the alleviation of role demands, like being a teacher or peer homework helper, can further students’ academic achievement in the classroom. Students who may live in a homeless residence may not have a quiet place to study. Administrators who provide a quiet study room at school for these students may help relieve some of the associated stresses for students living in a homeless residence. The provision of a quiet place for study in an additional setting may even relieve parental stress so that parents may be more apt to spend quality time with their children at either the school’s homework room or afterwards at the shelter (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The

placement of personnel in these new settings, creating additional roles, may also help reduce stress in families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Remedial instruction is comprised of many components, in and out of the classroom, but of primary importance are the instructional strategies and interventions employed by the classroom teacher. Teachers across and within research sites displayed charts in the room that contained information previously taught to children. The arrangements of students' desks or tables may cultivate opportunities for students to interact with one another.

The findings demonstrated that teachers supported the overall development of their students through various instructional strategies and interventions in various degrees. A strategy used across the research sites was the arrangement of the classrooms. Teachers at the three research sites arranged their classrooms so that students would be able to interact with each other. This finding shows that the teachers organized their classrooms in a way that is conducive to peer-to-peer interactions, which can improve academic performance (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). However, peer-to-peer interactions were only observed in three of the seven classrooms. The classroom environments across research sites were print-rich, but to varying degrees. The teachers provided print supports as visual reminders of topics covered, words learned, information that students need to know (e.g., months of the year, days of the week, daily schedule), classroom libraries, meeting areas, and technological assistance. According to Templeton and Gehsmann (2014), classroom environments could be used to support children in their emotional, social, and intellectual development. Documents displayed in classrooms as visual reminders to promote student learning are important.

Support Documents from State Local or School Levels

RQ4 was: What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at risk in reading? The findings for RQ4 indicated what state, district, and school documents revealed about providing support for the teachers and families of kindergarten students identified as homeless or at risk in reading. Documents provided to guide the adults who are responsible for promoting student learning are important. The ecological environment in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory consists of nested structures. One of these nested structures is the macrosystem, identified in this study as the school system consisting of state, district, and school levels. None of the three research sites submitted state or district level documents. Two of the three elementary schools submitted documents with information about their school's instructional practices. One teacher at Pavilion submitted a document that contained information about their school's instructional practices, while a teacher at Greene Elementary School submitted a more limited document about their school's instructional practices. The document submitted by the lead teacher at Pavilion Elementary School listed the school's instructional practices s falling under a balanced literacy program that used explicit teaching as the method to move the lessons. Explicit instruction is a viable instructional method that Callcott et al. (2015) stated is of "synergistic benefit" (p. 209) in the literacy development of children. A Greene Elementary School teacher submitted a document that espoused the benefit of teaching sight words (January et al., 2017) and vocabulary words (Gonzalez et al., 2014) and phonics instruction (McGeown, 2015) while encouraging the home-school

connection (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Common Core Standards have been adopted by the state to set goals for literacy development; however, the findings indicate that only teachers at two of the three research sites, Greene Elementary School and Pavilion Elementary School submitted document detailing a reliance on Standards. An integral part of a school's instructional practices may consist of Standards, which provide a means to assist students to read and comprehend increasingly difficult texts (Porter et al., 2011).

The grade leader at Pavilion Elementary School submitted a document that contained information about professional development sessions at the school. Documents submitted by teachers from the research sites provided useful information about the direction of instruction in each of the respective sites. Conversely, documents not submitted may be evidence of the lack of cohesiveness in the instructional direction of a site's instructional practices. Variety in each school's instructional practices is evident through documents collected, observations made, and responses from interviews.

Site-Based Similarities and Differences

Cross-case analyses between the three research sites showed varied responses to teaching early reading skills. The findings for RQ1 showed that Pavilion Elementary School teachers detailed more factors that contributed to students' at-risk status in reading than did the teachers at the other research sites. Low maternal education (Phillips et al., 2017), homeless status (Chang & Gu, 2018), and inadequate home literacy environments (Robins et al., 2014) are some of the risk factors that interfere with the attainment of early literacy skills. Pavilion Elementary School teachers also noted that students' lack of foundational skills was a contributing factor to their at-risk status in

reading, whereas the teachers at the other research sites did not mention this during their interviews. Foundational knowledge, consisting of phonological awareness, an umbrella term, should be key components in a reading program (Paciga et al., 2011). It is important to know students' risk factors to find appropriate means to remediate for them. Concurrently, teachers, armed with this knowledge, need to employ the appropriate instructional strategies to meet the students' needs.

The findings for RQ2 reflected activity within the classroom directed toward students. The findings showed that teachers reported similar levels of instructional strategies when teaching foundational skills, and from literature and informational texts. Teachers at Matte and Pavilion Elementary Schools used similar levels of small group activities when teaching foundational skills and from informational texts, whereas teachers at Greene Elementary School did not report the use of small group activities until they reported on the instructional strategies for interventions. Teachers at Pavilion Elementary School consistently reported frequent use of small group activities across the teaching of all types of texts. Researchers such as Stanley and Finch (2018) corroborated the importance of small group instruction as an intervention strategy. Pavilion and Matte Elementary had scheduling charts for guided reading and the learning center (i.e., reading related games), but Greene Elementary teachers did not display any scheduling or learning center charts. Small group activities and immersing students in print-rich environments is advantageous to their growth in reading skills.

Teachers, parents, and district and school leaders play important roles in the development of students early reading skills. Teachers across the three research sites

reported different levels of outreach at their places of employment. Teachers across two of the research sites, Matte and Pavilion Elementary Schools, reported similar levels of outreach to parents; however, one teacher at Matte Elementary School stated that she was not aware of any outreach to children who had the two identifiers: at risk in reading and homeless. The grade leader at Pavilion Elementary School submitted a document that corroborated the existence of outreach to parents. There were no documents submitted by any of the teachers at either Greene or Matte Elementary Schools to substantiate outreach to parents. One teacher at Greene Elementary School gave contradictory statements about the parent coordinator conducting outreach to parents in reading. Teachers across all research sites stated that the role of the teacher and parent was to support the development of children's early reading skills. Teachers reported that the role of school and district leaders was to provide the necessary materials and appropriate curriculum for the development of early reading skills. There were no documents submitted by any of the teachers from the three schools that addressed the role of any leader on the school or district level. The teachers' role can be to give assistance to parents in the building of early literacy skills through dialogic reading training for parents (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Parents, as first teachers to their children, should provide deeper knowledge about using letters to build words (Robins et al., 2014) and using dialogic reading to build oral language and preparedness for literacy development (Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014). Individuals within a child's circle of influence play important roles in their reading development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Documents submitted by the teachers across the research sites were limited in content.

There were not any documents submitted by any of the teachers that detailed the reading curriculum except the documents submitted by the grade leader at Pavilion Elementary School. Print-rich material helps create a literate environment in the classroom that aids the development of early literacy skills (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014) and contributes to a school exemplary performance in literacy instruction (Lloyd, 2016).

Matte Elementary School teachers showed evidence of learning centers with students placed in groups according to challenges in foundational skills. Pavilion Elementary School teachers had blocks and kitchen furniture for social play (see Holmes et al., 2015) in the classrooms. Blocks are used to develop literacy skills through thematic units that focus on the recreation of social interactions and related buildings (Einarsdottir, 2013).

Limitations

The limitations in the study resulted from research design, interview protocols, observations, documents, and personal bias. As a kindergarten teacher conducting research among kindergarten teacher participants, I brought preconceived biases that may have influenced the interpretations of the data collected. I controlled these biases through reflexivity by acknowledging these biases regarding how other teachers and schools interpret reading instruction as well as assessing my role as researcher (Merriam, 2009). My biases dealt with preconceived ideas about the quality of a school's instructional practices at the research sites and the administrators' roles in providing the necessary materials to implement a quality reading program. Peer evaluation ensured alignment

between research questions with interview questions and triangulation of data from multiple sources to enhance the validity of findings (see Merriam, 2009).

The study's limitation also dealt with participants' responses that showed their confusion between strategies and standards. Interview questions that asked participants to name a standard and give an instructional strategy that supported that standard may have eliminated the misperception. Participants could have been given a copy of the standards and asked to give strategies used for each strand.

Another limitation of this study was in the design of the follow-up questions. The follow-up questions were designed to elicit information that was distinct from the interview questions. Another limitation of this study was the number of observations. I collected rich data during the observations to offset the limited numbers of observations. It would have been ideal if a series of observations could have been conducted over a period of several months beginning at the start of the year. Observations conducted over a period of several months would have yielded a collection of richer data regarding teachers' instructional practices.

While the goal of the broader case study design was to be able to identify documents support for reading instructional practices, the documents submitted by participants were limited in number and breadth. Without documents that fully detail the instructional practices in each school, I was unable to triangulate the information collected through interview and observations.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change for children who are transitioning from home life to a school environment occur on the parent-child and teacher-student levels. Mother-child relationships are vital to a child's preparedness for early literacy skill development because parents are in a pivotal position to be their child's first teacher (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Children who see their parents or other significant individuals in their lives place a priority on reading will likewise place a priority on reading. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), children who witness their parents engaging in certain activities are likely to engage in those activities, too. "Active engagement in, or even more, mere exposure to, what others are doing often inspires the person to undertake similar activities on her own" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 6). Children who are read to by their parents and who are exposed to letters and their sounds by their parents are better prepared for the development of literacy skills than children who are not so exposed (Baker et al., 2012; Pillinger & Wood, 2014). The home literate environment that parents create by exposing their children to these and other activities, such as participation in alphabet and cultural and historical activities, are instrumental in a child's literacy development (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Children who have positive relationships with their parents are positioned to learn (Okado et al., 2014). Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological development, positive social change can be affected through helping parents to provide richer home learning environments for their children, as well as providing them with the necessary materials. The findings indicated that policymakers and school leaders should focus on developing parents' knowledge of

strategies for teaching letters and their sounds, as well as engaging in conversation on texts read. As leaders provide the knowledge and the materials for the development of foundational knowledge, students may be better prepared to transition from home to school and from kindergarten to the first grade.

Teachers who can be surrogates for the parent-child relationship can be instrumental in improving children's literacy skills (Baker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2014). Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that parents' stressful environments can be offset by the development of new settings and roles in other settings to influence children's development.

> The availability of supportive settings is, in turn, a function of their existence and frequency in a given culture or subculture. This frequency can be enhanced by the adoption of public policies and practice that create additional settings and societal roles conducive to family life. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7)

Teachers who are trained to provide the foundation for early literacy skills through book reading (Christenson, 2016; Dubé et al., 2013; Gonzalez et al., 2014) and other instructional strategies (Brown, 2014; Huang et al., 2013; Stanley & Finch, 2018), including small group intervention (Vukelich, Justice, & Hau, 2013), are instrumental in improving the literacy of students who are at risk in reading. Professional development provides the impetus to improve student performance (Amendum, 2014; Oostdam et al., 2015; Porche et al., 2012). Improved early literacy skills lead children to the attainment of grade-level requirements in reading (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Positive social change can result from policymakers' and school leaders'

investment in professional development for teachers in foundational knowledge, instructional strategies for fictional and nonfictional text, and intervention strategies.

Children who reach grade-level requirements in reading through intervention and instructional strategies used by teachers, and through the creation of improved home literate environments, may be better positioned to become productive members of society. Early intervention leads to the development of social, academic, and emotional capital that aid children as they mature (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017). Early intervention "has long-term benefits for brain development when its architecture is most pliable" (Bakken et al., 2017, p. 268). The creation of enhanced school and home literate environments may be conducive to positive social change in the lives of the participating children.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the study findings and related literature, I present the following recommendations. The recommendations made fall under two categories: Findings from this Study and Recommendations from the Research Literature. Under the Findings from this Study section, I detail recommendations that reflect the findings of this research study. There are five recommendations under Findings from this Study section and ten recommendations under the Recommendations from the Research Literature section.

Findings from This Study

1. To inform teachers kindergarten reading practices, it is recommended that teachers create a list of research-based instructional strategies to use for kindergarten reading standards. Other research findings support this

recommendation (Cuticelli et al., 2015; Thompson, 2017; Whitehurst et al., 1988) as well as indicating that strategies should include multisensory interventions (Mohamad & Tan Abdullah, 2017).

2. The majority of the teacher participants (71%) stated that they did not receive professional development. At one school (Pavilion), two of the three teachers reported receiving professional development, but only one received professional development for student at risk in reading. To assist teachers in improving literacy practice, teachers' knowledge of the elements of early literacy instruction should be assessed at the beginning of the year and professional development sessions arranged to expand their knowledge of instructional strategies (McKenzie, 2014) and interventions (Bingham & Patton-Terry, 2013; Porche et al., 2012). Embedded professional development (Amendum, 2014) is a method of professional development that has shown to improve pedagogical practice, so it may be helpful to implement this method of professional development.
3. Although play with blocks and pretend social play support early literacy development (Hansel, 2015; Holmes et al., 2015) as well as opportunities for the development of fine and gross-motor skills for improved reading proficiency (Callcott et al., 2015; Chang & Gu, 2018), play was not an observed activity at two of the research sites. School and district leaders should structure play within the school day.

4. Provisions to provide parents with the strategies to help their children was noted by only 43% of the teachers interviewed, two at Pavilion (Nina and Mona) and one at Matte (Joanne). Other researchers have indicated the importance of providing parents with materials, such as story books and writing material (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011) and training to improve home-literature environments (Chang & Cress, 2014), specifically in foundational skills and exposure to quality read alouds. It is recommended that school leaders should try to assist parents through the creation of quiet areas on school grounds for students to complete homework to decrease stressors related to noise levels that may exist in temporary housing (Willard & Kulinna, 2012). It is also recommended that school leaders provide parent training programs to improve adult literacy and parental skills (Hinton & Cassell, 2013; Robins et al., 2014). These parent training sessions might prove beneficial in improving parent-child interactions that are vital to building early literacy skills (Robins et al., 2014).
5. Only 29% of the teachers, all from one school (Pavilion Elementary School) indicated the use of the same core curriculum. There were not any teachers across or within research sites who reported the use of the same phonics program. It is recommended that the schools' use of curriculum and instructional plan include a research-based tier 1 (core instructional program) and small group intervention (Hamm & Harper, 2014). It is also

recommended that instruction be delivered with fidelity for optimum results (Savage et al., 2018).

Recommendations from the Research Literature

1. Teachers should have an intimate and workable knowledge of the Common Core Standards, and its use should be systematically utilized across the curriculum (Porter et al., 2011).
2. Early literacy programs should consist of the components recommended by the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). The components are as follows: phonemic awareness, phonics, silent and guided reading, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension strategies.
3. Read alouds or dialogic reading (Christenson, 2016) should be an everyday part of the instructional program to increase vocabulary knowledge (Zevenbergen et al., 2018).
4. Oral language activities should be a part of the instructional program. These activities should include the teaching of nursery rhymes and finger plays (Brown, 2014).
5. Reading lessons should be explicit (Callcott et al., 2015; Earle & Sayeski, 2017) and follow themes (Gonzalez et al., 2014), including teacher modeling and teacher think alouds. Lessons should be segmented into three parts: before reading, during reading, and after reading (Dubé et al., 2013).
6. Schools should adopt a multitiered system of support (Cuticelli et al., 2015) that starts with a research-based core instructional program. In a multitiered

system, the intervention program aligns with the core curriculum. The utilization of a core program should give students additional and intensive practice with the core curriculum skills. The grouping of the students should be flexible (Dubé et al., 2013).

7. Children who live in temporary residences may have poor self-regulation (Masten et al., 2015) and behavioral challenges (Cutuli et al., 2013; Herbers et al., 2012; Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014). It is recommended that teachers be trained to offset students' poor regulation abilities.
8. Children who come to school with vocabulary deficiencies (Cuticelli et al., 2015) may benefit from a synthetic phonics approach (McGeown, 2015) that is aligned with the core curriculum (Fien et al., 2015). In synthetic phonics, students are taught to identify the sounds of letters (phonemes) and combine the phonemes into words (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).
9. As children who are homeless may be from a low socioeconomic level and may enter school with vocabularies that are less developed than their peers (Cuticelli et al., 2015) it is recommended that vocabulary words (content and others) be explicitly taught (Gonzalez et al., 2014).
10. It is recommended that attention be given in the development of fine and gross motor skills, along with the development of early literacy skills (Hamm & Harper, 2014).

Recommendations for Research

Having discussed recommendations for improving practice, it is important to also address recommendations for future study that could build upon this research study. Three opportunities for extending this study are recommended. First, extending the study for at least 6 months would allow for additional interviews and observations which could capture richer data about teacher beliefs and practices. Extending the study to include pre- and post-test foundational skills scores of the students would help to determine the influence of teacher strategy and intervention use on student outcomes. Finally, extending the study to include an analysis of teacher-student interactions, along with pre- and post-student outcomes in the foundational skills would help to determine the types of teacher-student interactions, which may lead to greater student outcomes in reading.

Conclusion

The literature supports many of the instructional strategies that teachers used in their classrooms including varied texts and small group instructions. However, there were other instructional strategies, such as explicit instruction, graphic organizers, dialogic reading, and vocabulary instruction that were not used equally within and across the three research sites. Some teachers within a school setting possessed a greater level of knowledge about contributing factors to students' at-risk status and were able to articulate strategies to improve student performance. Professional development could be undertaken to offset these potential deficiencies in knowledge.

Additionally, some teachers within the same school were not aware of professional development for teachers and outreach to parents that school or district

leaders offered in the school. Teachers at some research sites also did not use the same core curriculum as other teachers in the school or were not able to articulate its name. Most importantly, many teachers were not aware that children who are homeless and at risk in reading have challenges that other students who may be at risk in reading do not possess, nor were they aware that homeless students may have academic challenges such as self-regulation (Chang & Gu, 2018; Masten et al., 2015), behavioral problems (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014) negative parent-child interactions (Hinton & Cassell, 2013), feelings of demoralization (Okado et al., 2014), and less than adequate home literacy environments (Robins et al., 2014). The findings of this study represent an opportunity for school and district leaders to meet the needs of not only students who are at risk, but students who are homeless through the establishment of targeted parent outreach services, professional development, and parent support services.

References

ABCya.com. (2019). ABCya home page [Educational computer games and apps for kids]. Retrieved from https://www.abcya.com/

Altinkaynak, S. O., & Akman, B. (2016). The effects of family-based literacy preparation program on children's literacy preparation skills. *Education & Science, 41*(186), 185–204. doi: 10.15390/EB.2016.6711

Amendum, S. J. (2014). Embedded professional development and classroom-based early reading intervention. Early diagnostic reading intervention through coaching. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 30*, 348–377. doi:10.1080/10573569.2013.819181

Baker, C. E., Cameron, C. E., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Grissmer, D. (2012). Family and sociodemographic predictors of school readiness among African American boys in kindergarten. *Early Education and Development, 23*, 833–854. doi:10.1080/10409289.2011.607359

Baker, C. E., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2014). How homes influence schools: Early parenting predicts African American children's classroom social-emotional functioning. *Psychology in the Schools, 51*, 722–735, doi:10.1002/pits.21781

Bakken, L., Brown, N., & Downing, B. (2017). Early childhood education: The long-term benefits. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 31*, 255–269. doi:10.1080/02568543.2016.1273285

Baroody, A. E., & Diamond, K. E. (2016). Associations among preschool children's classroom literacy environment, interest and engagement in literacy activities, and early reading skills. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 14*, 146–162. doi:10.1177/1476718X14529280

Bassuk, E. L., DeCandia, C. J., Beach, C. A., & Berman, F. (2014, November). *America's youngest outcasts: A report card on child homelessness*. Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Research. Retrieved from https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Americas-Youngest-Outcasts-Child-Homelessness-Nov2014.pdf

Bingham, G. E., & Patton-Terry, N. (2013). Early language and literacy achievement of early reading first students in kindergarten and first grade in the United States. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 27, 440–453. doi:10.1080/02568543.2013.822952

Brand, S. T., Marchand, J., Lilly, E., & Child, M. (2014). Home-school literacy bags for twenty-first century preschoolers. *Early Childhood Educational Journal, 42*, 163–170. doi:10.1007/s10643-013-0603-8

Breit-Smith, A., Olszewski, A., Swoboda, C., Guo, Y., & Prendeeville, J. (2017). Sequence text structure intervention during interactive book reading of Expository picture books with preschool children with language impairment. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 33*, 287–304. doi:10.1177/0265659017702206

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown, C. S. (2014). Language and literacy development in the early years: Foundational skills that support emergent readers. *Language and Literacy Spectrum, 24*, 35–49. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1034914

Broz, N. A., Blust, E. L., & Bertelsen, C. D. (2016). SWIFT reading: Sight word instruction is fundamental to reading. *Literacy Practice & Research, 41*(3), 38–46. Retrieved from http://oter.coedu.usf.edu/

Buckner, J. C., Bassuk, E. L., & Weinreb, L. F. (2001). Predictors of academic achievement among homeless and low-income housed children. *Journal of School Psychology, 39*, 45–69. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(00)00059-5

Calkin, L. (2015). *Unit of study for teaching reading Series*. *Teachers College reading and writing project.* Retrieved from https://readingandwritingproject.org/resources/publications-for-teachers

Callcott, D., Hammond, L., & Hill, S. (2015). The synergistic effect of teaching a combined explicit movement and phonological awareness program to preschool aged students. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *43*, 201–211. doi:10.1007/s10643-014-0652-7

Chang, M., & Gu, X. (2018). The role of executive function in linking fundamental motor skills and reading proficiency in socioeconomically disadvantaged kindergarteners. *Learning & Individual Differences, 61*, 250–255. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2018.01.002

Chang, N., & Cress, S. (2014). Conversations about visual arts: Facilitating oral language. *Early Childhood Educational Journal 42*, 415–422.doi:10.1007/s10643-013-0617-2

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Chavez, J. N., Martinez, J., & Pienta, R. S. (2015). Effects of story mapping on third-grade students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Journal of Pedagogy (6)*1, 95–121. doi:10.1515/jped-2015-0006

Chen, V., & Savage, R. (2014). Evidence for a simplicity principle: teaching common complex grapheme-to-phonemes improves reading and motivation in at-risk readers. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *37*, 196–214. doi:10.1111/1467-9817.12022

Christ, T., & Wang, X. C. (2010). Bridging the vocabulary gap: What the research tells us about vocabulary instruction in early childhood. *YC: Young Children, 65*(4), 84–91. Retrieved from https://eroc/ed/gpv/?id+EJ898727

Christenson, L. (2016). Class interactive reading aloud (CIRA): A holistic lens on interactive reading aloud sessions in kindergarten*. Educational Research and Reviews, (11),* 2138–2145.doi:10.5897/ERR2016.2874

Common Core State Standards and Initiatives. (2018a). *English language arts standards, reading: Foundational skills, Kindergarten*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/K/

Common Core State Standards and Initiatives. (2018b). *English language arts standards, reading: Informational text*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/K/

Common Core State Standards and Initiatives. (2018c). *Key shifts in English language arts*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/

Common Core State Standards and Initiatives. (2018d). *English language arts standards, reading: Literature, Kindergarten*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/K/

Common Core State Standards and Initiatives. (2019). *Common Core state standards initiative: Preparing America's student for college & career*. *About the standards.* Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oak, CA: Sage Publications.

Curry, D., Reeves, E., & McIntyre, C. (2016). Connecting schools and families: Understanding the influence of home literacy practices. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education, 4*, 69–77. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1121638.pdf

Cuticelli, M., Coyne, M. D., Ware, S. M., Oldham, A., & Loftus Rattan, S. (2015). Improving vocabulary skills of kindergarten students through a multi-tier instructional approach. *Intervention In School & Clinic, 50*, 150–156. doi:10.1177/1053451214542041

Cutuli, J., Desjardins, C. D., Herbers, J. E., Long, J. D., Heistad, D., Chan, C.-K., Hinz, E., & Masten, A. S. (2013). Academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students: Resilience in the context of chronic and acute risk. *Child Development, 84*, 841–857. doi:10.1111/cdev.12013

Di Santo, A., Timmons, K., & Pelletier, J. (2016). Mommy that's the exit: Empowering homeless mothers to support their children's daily literacy experiences. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 16*, 145–170. doi:10.1177/1468798415577872

Dombek, J., Crowe, E. C., Spencer, M., Tighe, E. L., Coffinger, S., Zargar, E., & Petscher, Y. (2017). Acquiring science and social studies knowledge in kindergarten through fourth grade: conceptualization, design, implementation, and efficacy testing of content area literacy instruction (CALI). *Journal of Educational Psychology, 109*, 301–320. doi:10.1037/edu0000128

Dubé, F., Dorval, C., & Bessette, L. (2013). Flexibles grouping, explicit reading instruction in elementary school. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, *10*(2013) 1-13. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ109714

Dupere, V., Leventhal, T., Crosnoe, R., & Dion, E. (2010). Understanding the positive role of neighborhood socioeconomic advantage in achievement: The contribution of the home, child care, and school environments. *Developmental Psychology, 46*, 1227–1244. doi:10.1037/a002021

Durham, S. R. (2015). Blocks: “Standard” equipment for today’s primary classrooms (cover story). YC: *Young Children*, *70*(1), 52–58. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/i24640804

Dykeman, B. (2011). Intervention strategies with the homeless population. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 38*(1), 32–39. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ952148

Earle, G. A., & Sayeski, K. L. (2017). Systematic instruction in phoneme-grapheme correspondence for students with reading disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *52*, 262–269. doi:10.1177/1053451216676798

Einarsdottir, J. (2013). Play and literacy: A collaborative action research project in preschool. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 58*, 93–109. doi:10.1080/00313831.2012.705321

Elleman, A. M., Lindo, E. J., Morphy, P., & Compton, D. L. (2009). The impact of vocabulary instruction on passage-level comprehension of school-age children: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 2*(1), 1–44. doi:10.1080/19345740802539200

Enemuo, J., & Obidike, N. (2013). Assessment of parental involvement in children’s literacy development. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 4*, 807-814. Retrieved from www.jeteraps.scholarlinkresearch.org

Fagan, J., & Lee, Y. (2013). Explaining the association between adolescent parenting and pre-schoolers’ school readiness: A risk perspective. *Journal of Community Psychology, 41*, 692–708. doi10.1002/jcop21565.

Fantuzzo, J., LeBoeuf, W., Chen, C.-C., Rouse, H., & Culhane, D. (2012). The unique and combined effects of homelessness and school mobility on the educational outcomes of young children. *Educational Researcher, 41,* 393–402. doi:10.3102/0013189X12468210

Fien, H., Smith, J. L. M., Smolkowski, K., Baker, S. K., Nelson, N. J., & Chaparro, E. (2015). An examination of the efficacy of a multitiered intervention on early reading outcomes for first grade students at risk for reading difficulties. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 48*, 602–621. doi:10.1177/0022219414521664

Foorman, B., Dombek, J., & Smith, K. (2016). Seven elements important to successful implementation of early literacy intervention. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development, 2016*(154), 49–65. doi:10.1002/cad.20178

Förster, N., Kawohl, E., & Souvignier, E. (2018). Short- and long-term effects of assessment-based differentiated reading instruction in general education on reading fluency and reading comprehension. *Learning and Instruction, 56*, 98–109. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2018.04.009

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2017). *Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Retrieved from http://www.heinemann.com/fountasand

Froiland, J., Powell, D., Diamond, K., & Son, S.-H. C. (2013). Neighborhood socioeconomic well-being, home literacy, and early literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers. *Psychology in the School, 50*, 755–769. doi:10.1002/pits.21711

Froyen, L., Skibbe, L., Bowles, R., Blow, A., & Gerde, A. (2013). Marital satisfaction family emotional expressiveness, home learning, environments, and children's

emergent literacy. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 75*(1), 42–55. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.01035.x

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*, 1408–1416. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/QR/QR20/9/fusch1.pdf

Gibbon, J. M., Duffield, S., Hoffman, J., & Wageman, J. J. (2017). Effects of educational games on sight word reading achievement and student motivation. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education, 13*(2), 1–27. Retrieved from http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Duffield_JoLLE2017.pdf

Goldstein, H., Olszewski, A., Haring, C., Greenwood, C. R., McCune, L., Carta, J., … Kelley, E. (2017). Efficacy of a supplemental phonemic awareness curriculum to instruct preschoolers with delays in early literacy development. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, *60*(1), 89–103. doi:10.1044/2016_JSLHR-L-15-0451

Gonzalez, J. E., Acosta, S., Davis, H., Pollard-Durodola, S., Saenz, L., Soares, D., … Zhu, L. (2017). Latino maternal literacy beliefs and practices mediating socioeconomic status and maternal education effects in predicting child receptive vocabulary. *Early Education & Development, 28*(1), 78–95. doi:10.1080/10409289.2016.1185885

Gonzalez, J. E., Pollard-Durodola, S., Simmons, D. C., Taylor, A. B., Davis, M. J., Fogarty, M., & Simmons, L. (2014). Enhancing preschool children's vocabulary:

Effects of teacher talk before, during and after shared reading. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29,* 214–226. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.11.001

Goodson, B., Layzer, C., Simon, P., & Dwyer, C. (2009, January). *Early beginnings: Early literature instruction and knowledge*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center. Retrieved from https://www.nichd.nih.gov

Grünke, M., & Teidig, T. (2017). The effects of an intervention combining peer tutoring with story mapping on the text comprehension of struggling readers: A case report. *Educational Research Quarterly, 41*(1), 41–60. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1166637

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59–82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903

Haggard, G. (2014). Setting the stage for purposeful communication: Fostering emergent literacy. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 80*(3), 45–48. Retrieved from http://www.deltakappagamma.org

Hallett, R. (2010). Homeless: How residential instability complicates students' lives. *About Campus, 15*(3), 11–16.doi:10.1002/abc.20023

Hamm, E. M., & Harper, K. A. (2014). The role of RTI in a kindergarten enrichment program. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 30*(1), 32–50. doi:10.1080/10573569.2012.702044

Hammer, C., Morgan, P., Fargas, G., Hillemeier, M., Bitetti, D., & Maczuga, S. (2017). Late talkers: A population-based study of risk factors and school readiness

consequences. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research, 60*, 607–626. doi:10.1044/2016_JSLHR-L-15-0417

Han, J., & Neuharth-Pritchett, S. (2014). Parents' interactions with preschoolers during shared book reading: Three strategies for promoting quality interactions. *Childhood Education, 90*(1), 54–60. doi:10.1080/00094056.2014.872516.

Han, J., Schlieber, M., & Gregory, B. (2017). Associations of home and classroom environments with Head Start children's code-related and oral language skills. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 22*, 200–219. doi:10.1080/10824669.2017.1347044

Hansel, R. (2015). Bringing blocks back to the kindergarten classroom. *Young Children, 70* (1), 44–51. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/24641327

Harling, K. (2012). An overview of case study. Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2141476

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Hartas, D. (2011). Families' social backgrounds matter: socio-economic factors, home learning and young children's language, literacy and social outcomes. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*, 893–914. doi:10.1080/01411926.2010.506945

Hartas, D. (2015). The social context of parenting: Mothers' inner resources and social structures. *Research Papers in Education, 30*, 609–634. doi:10.1080/02671522.2014.989177

Heath, S. M., Bishop, D. V. M., Bloor, K. E., Boyle, G. L., Fletcher, J., Hogben, J. H., … Yeong, S. H. M. (2014). A spotlight on preschool: The influence of family factors on children's early literacy skills. *PLoS ONE*, *9*(4), 1–14. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0095255

Hebert, M., Bohaty, J. J., Nelson, J. R., & Brown, J. (2016). The effects of text structure instruction on expository reading comprehension: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108*, 609–629. doi:10.1037/edu0000082

Hemmerechts, K., Agirdag, O., & Kavadias, D. (2017). The relationship between parental literacy involvement, socio-economic status and reading literacy. *Educational Review, 69*(1), 85–101. doi:10.1080/00131911.2016.1164667

Herbers, J., Cutuli, J., Supkoff, L., Heistad, D., Chan, C., Hinz, E., & Masten, A. (2012). Early reading skills and academic achievement trajectories of students facing poverty, homelessness, and high residential mobility. *Educational Researcher 41*, 366–374. doi10.3102/0013189X12445320

Hinton, S., & Cassell, D. (2013). Exploring the lived experiences of homeless families and young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 41*, 457–463. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0562-5

Holmes, R. M., Romeo, L., Ciraola, S., & Grushko, M. (2015). The relationship between creativity, social play, and children's language abilities, *Early Child Development and Care, 185*, 1180–1197. doi:10.1080/03004430.2014.98391

Hope-Southcott, L. (2013). The use of play and inquiry in a kindergarten drama center: A teacher's critical reflection. *Canadian Children, 38(1*), 39–46. doi:10.18357/jcs.v381i1.15437

Huang, S., Clark, N., & Wedel, W. (2013). Teaching tips: The use of an iPad to promote preschoolers' alphabet recognition and letter sound correspondence. *Practically Primary, 18*(1), 24–26. Retrieved from https://www.thefreelibrary.com

Jalongo, M., & Sobolak, M. (2011). Supporting young children's vocabulary growth: The challenges, the benefits, and evidence-based strategies. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*, 421–429.doi:10.1007/s10643-010-0433-x

January, S.-A. A., Lovelace, M. E., Foster, T. E., & Ardoin, S. P. (2017). A comparison of two flashcard interventions for teaching sight words to early readers. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 26*, 151–168. doi:10.1007/s10864-016-9263-2

Jeon, L., Buettner, C., & Hur, E. (2014). Family and neighborhood disadvantage, home environment, and children's school readiness. *Journal of Family Psychology, 28*, 718–727. doi:10.1037/fam0000022

Jiang, Y., Ekono, M., & Skinner, C. (2017). *Basic facts about low-income children: Children under 6 years, 2013.* New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

Jordan, V. (2017, January 24). 8 components of a strong balance literacy program [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blog.flocabulary.com/8-components-of-a-strong-balanced-literacy-program/

Jung, E. (2016). The development of reading skills in kindergarten: Influence of parental beliefs about school readiness, family activities, and children's attitudes to school. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 48*(1), 61–78. doi:10.1007/s13158-016-0156-2

Kocaarslan, M., & Yamac, A. (2015). A teaching tool for classroom teachers: Interactive word walls and word walls activities. *Journal of Theory & Practice in Education*, *11*, 834–850. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr

Kozla, S. B. (2015). "Too long, didn't read." Children & Libraries: *The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children, 13*(4), 33–35. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org

Kropp, L. G. (2013). Chew that book: Why babies belong in libraries *School Library Journal, 59*(11), 1. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org

Kuhn, K. E., Rausch, C. M., McCarty, T. G., Montgomery, S. E., & Rule, A. C. (2017). Utilizing nonfiction texts to enhance reading comprehension and vocabulary in primary grades. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 45*, 285–296. doi:10.1007/s10643-015-0763-9

Lewis, K., Sandilos, L. E., Hammer, C. S., Sawyer, B. E., & Méndez, L. I. (2016). Relations among the home language and literacy environment and children's language abilities: A study of Head Start dual language learners and their mothers. *Early Education and Development, 27*, 478–494. doi:10.1080/10409289.2016.1082820

Lloyd, M. (2016). Achievement and growth on standard tests: Commonalities among exemplary teachers' practices. *Literacy Practice & Research,* 17–22. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=116543368&site=eds-live&scope=site

Lonigan, C., Farver, J. M., Phillips, B. M., & Clancy-Menchetti, J. (2011). Promoting the development of preschool children's emergent literacy skills: A randomized evaluation of a literacy-focused curriculum and two professional development models. *Reading and Writing, 24*, 305–337.doi:10.1007/s11145-009-9214-6

Luther, V. (2012). The riches of literacy: Teaching reading skills to young children living in poverty. *California Reader, 46*(2), 35–41. Retrieved from https://alamedareading.org/the-california-reader

MacDonald, K., Milne, N., Orr, R., & Pope, R. (2018). Relationship between motor proficiency and academic performance in mathematics and reading in school-age children and adolescents: A systematic review. *Internal Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(8), 1–28. doi:10.3390/ijerph15081603

Magnuson, K. (2007). Maternal education and children's academic achievement during middle childhood. *Developmental Psychology, 43*, 1497–1512. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1497

Maguire, M., Schneider, J. M., Middleton, A. E., Ralph, Y., Lopez, M., Ackerman, R. A., & Abel, A. D. (2018). Vocabulary knowledge mediates the link between

socioeconomic status and word learning in grade school. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 16*, 679–695. doi:10.1016/j.jecp.2017.10.003

Mahdavi, J. N., & Tensfeldt, L. (2013). Untangling reading comprehension strategy instruction: Assisting struggling readers in the primary grades. *Preventing School Failure, 57*, 77–92. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2012.668576

Markussen-Brown, J. J., Juhl, C. B., Piasta, S. B., Bleses, D., Højen, A., & Justice, L. M. (2017). The effects of language- and literacy-focused professional development on early educators and children: A best-evidence meta-analysis. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 38*, 97–115. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.07.002

Masten, A., Fiat, A. E., Labella, M. H., & Strack, R. A. (2015). Educating homeless highly mobile students: Implications of research on risk and resilience. School *Psychology Review, 44*, 315–330. doi:10.17105/spr-15-0068.1

McGeown, S. (2015). Synthetic phonics vs. an eclectic approach to reading instruction: Implications for predicting early reading acquisition and development. *The Psychology of Education Review, 39* (2), 31–36. Retrieved from https://shop.bps.org.uk/publications/publication-by-series/psychology-of-education-review/the-psychology-of-education-review-vol-39-no-2-autumn-2015.html

McGraw-Hill. (2019). Open Court Reading [Reading program]. Retrieved from https://www.mheducation.com

McKenzie, E. (2014). Vocabulary development using visual displays. *Dimensions of Early Childhood, 42*(2), 12–17. Retrieved from www.southernearlychildhood.org

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11301 *et seq*. (1987).

McWayne, C., Hahs-Vaughn, D., Cheung, K., & Green Wright, L. E. (2012). National profiles of school readiness skills for Head Start children: An investigation of stability and change. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*, 668–683. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.10.002

Meador, D. (2018, March 5). Building an arsenal of effective instructional standards. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/building-an-arsenal-of-effective-instructional-strategies-3194257

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

Mihai, A., Butera, G., & Friesen, A. (2017). Examining the use of curriculum to support early literacy instruction: A multiple case study of head start teachers. *Early Education and Development, 28,* 323–342.doi:10.1080/10409289.2016.1218729

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Millah, R. (2018). Utilizing story mapping strategy to improve students' reading comprehension in finding main idea. *Nobel: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching, 9*(1), 57–72. Retrieved from www.jurnalfahum.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/nobel/

MobyMax. (2019). Find and fix learning gaps. [Online learning program]. Retrieved from https://www.mobymax.com/

Mohamad, M., & Tan Abdullah, S. J. (2017). Using tactile letters as an assistive technology in teaching alphabet for dyslexic children: A case study. *ELearning & Software for Education,* 1, 167–173. doi:10.12753/2066-026X-17-025

Moore, W., Hammond, L., & Fetherston, T. (2014). Strengthening vocabulary for literacy: An analysis of the use of explicit instruction techniques to improve word learning from story book read-alouds. *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties, 19*, 153–172. doi:10.1080/19404158.2014.964992

Morgan, P. L., Li, H., Farkas, G., Cook, M., Pun, W. H., & Hillemeier, M. M. (2017). Executive functioning deficits increase kindergarten children's risk for reading and mathematics difficulties in first grade. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 50*, 23–32. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2016.01.004

Myer, K. (2019). Estrellita: Accelerated Beginning Reading Spanish Program. Retrieved from http://www.estrellita.com

Myers, J. M., & Ankrum, J. W. (2016). Interactive read-alouds: A vehicle for explicit instruction. *Making Literacy Connections*, *31*, (2016-2017), 53–62. Retrieved from http://gwread.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2016j.pdf

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2019). What is RTI? Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti?tmpl=component

National Coalition for the Homeless. (2009, July). *How many people experience homelessness?* (Fact sheet). Retrieved from http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/index.html.

National Education Association [NEA]. (n.d.). Using text structures. Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/tools/using-text-structure.html

Neugebauer, S. R., Chafouleas, S. M., Coyne, M. D., McCoach, D. B., & Briesch, A. M. (2016). Exploring an ecological model of perceived usability within a multi-tiered vocabulary intervention. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 4*(13), 155–171. doi:1.1177/1534508415619732

Neuman, S., Kaefer, T., & Pinkham, A. M. (2016). Improving low-income preschoolers' word and world knowledge. *Elementary School Journal, 116*, 652–674. doi:10.1086/686463

New York State Department of Education [NYSED]. (2014). NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards. Retrieved from http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/standards-assessments/ccls.html

Niklas, F., & Schneider, W. (2015). With a little help: Improving kindergarten children's vocabulary by enhancing the home literacy environment. *Reading & Writing, 28*, 491–508. doi:10.1007/s11145-014-9534-z

Niklas, F., & Schneider, W. (2017). Intervention in the home literacy environment and kindergarten children's vocabulary and phonological awareness. *First Language*, *37*, 433–452. doi:10.1177/0142723717698838

Niklas, F., Cohrssen, C., & Tayler, C. (2016). Home learning environment and concept formation: A family intervention study with kindergarten children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 44*, 419–427. doi:10.1007/s10643-015-0726-1

Nuendorf, K. (2001). *The Content analysis guidebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

NYC Department of Education. (2016, December 10). *McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Assistance Act: Students in temporary housing guide for parents and youth*. Retrieved from https://1.cdn.edl.io/xPMeAbay0S67zann64YRZdNPqsolbceDe41zdEDAHLcgCb98.pdf

Okado, Y., Bierman, K., & Welsh, J. (2014). Promoting school readiness in the context of socio-economic adversity: Associations with parental demoralization and support for learning. *Child Youth Care Forum, 43*, 353–371. doi:10.1007/s10566-013-9242-x

Oostdam, R., Blok, H., & Boendermaker, C. (2015). Effects of individualized and small-group guided oral reading interventions on reading skills and reading attitude of poor readers in grades 2–4. *Research Papers in Education, 30*, 427–450. doi:10.1080/02671522.2014.953195

Ortiz, M., Folsom, J. S., Al Otaiba, S., Greulich, L., Thomas-Tate, S., & Connor, C. M. (2012). The componential model of reading: Predicting first grade reading performance of culturally diverse students from ecological, psychological, and cognitive factors assessed at kindergarten entry. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 45*, 406–417.doi:10.1177/0022219411431242.

Oslund, E. L., Hagan-Burke, S., Taylor, A. B., Simmons, D. C., Simmons, L., Kwok, O., & Coyne, M. D. (2012). Predicting kindergarteners' responses to early reading

intervention: An examination of progress monitoring measures. *Reading Psychology, 33(*1/2), 78–103. doi:10.1080/02702711.2012.630611

Oslund, E. L., Hagan-Burke, S., Simmons, D. C., Clemens, N. H., Simmons, L. E., Taylor, A. B., … Coyne, M. D. (2017). Predictive Validity of Curriculum-Embedded Measures on Outcomes of Kindergarteners Identified as At Risk for Reading Difficulty. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 50(6), 712–723. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219416664866

Ozturk, G., Hill, S., & Yates, G. (2016). Family context and five-year-old children's attitudes toward literacy when they are learning to read. *Reading Psychology, 37*, 487–509.doi:10.1080/02702711.2015.1066909

Paciga, K., Hoffman, J., & Teale, W. (2011, November). The National Early Literacy Panel and preschool literacy instruction: Green lights, caution lights, and red lights. *Young Children*. *Children, 66*(6), 50-57. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ959807

Pearson Education, Inc. (2016). *ReadyGen: A new generation of literacy instruction.* Retrieved from https://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PS2eUe&PMDbProgramId=141261

Peterson, S. S., Forsyth, D., & McIntyre, L. J. (2015). Balancing play-based learning with curricular mandates: Considering the views of Northern Canadian teachers and early childhood educators. *Canadian Study, 40*(3), 40–47. Retrieved from https://www.cayc.ca/content/canadian-children-vol-40-no-3

Phillips, L., Norris, S., Hayward, D., & Lowell, M. (2017). Unique contributions of maternal reading proficiency to predicting children's preschool receptive vocabulary and reading proficiency. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 45*(1), 111–119. doi:10.1007/s10643-014-0632-y

Pieretti, R. A., Kaul, S. D., Zarchy, R. M., & O'Hanlon, L. M. (2015). Using a multimodal approach to facilitate articulation, phonemic awareness, and literacy in young children. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, *36*, 131–141. doi:10.1177/1525740114545360

Pillinger, C., & Wood, C. (2014). Pilot study evaluating the impact of dialogic reading and shared reading at transition to primary school: Early literacy skills and parental attitudes*. Literacy, 48*, 155–163. doi:10.1111/lit.12018

Porche, M., Pallante, D., & Snow, C. (2012). Professional development reading achievement: Results from the Collaborative Language and Literacy Instruction Project (CLLIP). *Elementary School Journal, 112*, 649–671. doi:10.1086/665008

Porter, A., McMaken, J., Hwang, J., & Yang, R. (2011). Common core standards: The new U.S. intended curriculum. *Educational Researcher, 40*, 103–116. doi:10.3102/000013189x11405038

Posny, A. (2019). National Center for Learning Disabilities*. RTI Action Network.* Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=emailform&id=249&itemid=1

Pyle, A., & Bigelow, A. (2015). Play in kindergarten: An interview and observational study in three Canadian classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 43*, 385–393. doi:10.1007/s10643-014-0666-1

Raag, T., Kusiak, K., Tumilty, M., Kelemen, A., Bernheimer, H., & Bond, J. (2011). Reconsidering SES and gender divides in literacy achievement: are the gaps across social class and gender necessary? *Educational Psychology, 31*, 691–705. doi:10.1080/01443410.2011.599835

Raz-Kids. (2019). Raz-Kids home page [Online interactive reading program]. Retrieved from www.raz-kids.com

Ready, D. D., & Chu, E. M. (2015). Sociodemographic inequality in early literacy development: The role of teacher perceptual accuracy. *Early Education & Development, 26*, 970–987.doi:10.1080/10409289.2015.1004516

Robins, S., Ghosh, D., Rosales, N., & Treiman, R. (2014). Letter knowledge in parent-child conversations: Differences between families differing in socio-economic status. *Frontiers in Psychology 5*, 1–11. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00632

Rodriguez, E. T., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2011). Trajectories of the home learning environment across the first 5 years: Associations with children's vocabulary and literacy skill at prekindergarten. *Child Development, 82*, 1058–1075. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01614.x

Samiei, S., Imig, D., Bush, A. J., & Sell, M. (2016). Examining the association between the Imagination Library Early Childhood Literacy Program and kindergarten

readiness. *Reading Psychology, 37*, 601–626. doi:10.1080/02702711.2015.1072610

Savage, R., Georgiou, G., Parrila, R., & Maiorino, K. (2018). Preventative reading interventions teaching direct mapping of graphemes in texts and set-for-variability aid at-risk learners, *Scientific Studies of Reading, 22*, 225–247.doi:10.1080/10888438.2018.1427753

Sawyer, B. E., Cycyk, L. M., Sandilos, L. E., & Hammer, C. S. (2018). 'So many books they don't even all fit on the bookshelf': An examination of low-income mothers' home literacy practices, beliefs and influencing factors. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 18*, 338–372. doi:10.1177/1468798416667542

Schick, A. A., & Melzi, G. (2016). Print-related practices in low-income Latino homes and preschoolers' school-readiness outcomes. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 16*, 171–198.doi:10.1177/1468798415592009

Sim, S. S., Berthelsen, D., Walker, S., Nicholson, J. M., & Fielding-Barnsley, R. (2014). A shared reading intervention with parents to enhance young children's early literacy skills. *Early Child Development Care, 184*, 1531–1549. doi:10.1080/03004430.2013.862532

Sim, S., & Berthelsen, D. (2014). Shared book reading by parents with young children: Evidence-based practice. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(1), 50–55. doi:10.1177/183693911403900107

Simmons, D. C., Coyne, M. D., Hagan-Bourke, S., Kwok, O., Simmons, L., Johnson, C., … Crevecour, Y. C. (2011). Effects of supplemental reading interventions in

authentic contexts: A comparison of kindergarteners' response. *Exceptional Children, 77*, 207–228. doi:10.1177/001440291107700204

Skibbe, L., Gerde, H., Wright, T., & Samples-Steele, C. (2016). A content analysis of phonological awareness and phonics in commonly used Head Start curricula. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 44*, 225–233. doi:10.1007/s10643-015-0703-8

Smart-Morstad, K., Triggs, S., & Langlie, T. (2017). An education foundations course and teacher research: Addressing the impact of local homelessness on education. *Critical Issues in Education, 8*(1), 51–66. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1129658.pdf

Stanley, L., & Finch, M. (2018). Instructional strategies to enhance to alphabet knowledge in kindergarten. *Journal of Teacher Action Research, 4*(2), 31–46. Retrieved from www.practicalteacherresearch.com

Starfall Education (2019). Starfall home page [Online teacher resource]. Retrieved from https://www.starfall.com/h/

Super Teacher Worksheets (2019). Super Teacher Worksheets home page. [Online teacher resource]. Retrieved from https://www.superteacherworksheets.com/

Swenson, S., Horner, R., Bradley, R., & Calkins, C. (2017). In recognition of Hill Walker's contributions to multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). *Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Blog: U.S. Department of Education*. Retrieved from: https://sites.ed.gov/osers/tag/multi-tiered-system-of-supports/

Teachers Pay Teachers. (n.d.). Teachers pay teachers home page [Online teacher resource]. Retrieved from www.teacherspayteachers.com

Templeton, S., & Gehsmann, K. M. (2014). Effective literacy instruction: Principles and practices. In B. Miller, P. McCardle, & R. Long (Eds.), *Teaching reading and writing: Improving instruction and student achievement* (pp. 71–76). New York, NY: Pearson.

Thompson, M. (2017). Unpacking instructional strategies of early childhood teachers: Insights from teachers' perspectives. *Educational Research and Reviews, 12*, 1199–1207. doi:10.5897/ERR2017.3370

Tichnor-Wagner, A., Garwood, J. D., Bratsch-Hines, M., & Vernon-Feagans, L. (2016). Home literacy environments and foundational literacy skills for struggling and non-struggling readers in rural early elementary schools. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 31*(1), 6–21. doi:10.1111/ldrp.12090

Trivette, C. M., & Dunst, C. J. (2007). Relative effectiveness of dialogic, interactive, and shared reading interventions. *CELLreviews, 1*(3), 1–12. Retrieved from http://www.earlyliteracylearnerning.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes for Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/product/247?from=&pubs_id=88

Vukelich, C., Justice, L., & Hau, M. (2013). Impact of supplemental tutoring configurations for preschoolers at risk for reading difficulties. *Child Youth Care Forum, 42,* 19–34. doi:10.1007/s10566-012-9184-8

Wade, M., Jenkins, J., Venkadasalam, V. P., Binnoon-Erez, N., & Ganea, P. P. (2018). The role of maternal responsiveness and linguistic input in pre-academic skill development: A longitudinal analysis of pathways. *Cognitive Development, 45*, 125–140. doi:10.1016/j.cogdev.2018.01.005

Wanzek, J., Roberts, G., Al Otaiba, S., & Kent, S. C. (2014). The relationship of print reading in tier I instruction and reading achievement for kindergarten students at-risk for reading difficulties. *Learning Disability Quarterly: Journal of the Division for Children with Learning Disabilities*, *37*, 148–160. doi:10.1177/0731948713518334

Weisberg, D. S., Zosh, J. M., Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2013). Talking it up play, language development, and the role of adult support. *American Journal of Play, 6*(1), 39–54. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1016058.pdf

Whitehurst, G. J., Falco, F. L., Lonigan, C. J., Fischel, J. E., DeBaryshe, B. D., Valdez-Menchaca, M. C., & Caulfield, M. (1988). Accelerating language development through picture book reading. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 552–559. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.24.4.552

Wiescholek, S., Hilkenmeier, J., Greiner, C., & Buhl, H. M. (2018) Six-year-olds' perception of home literacy environment and its influence on children's literacy

enjoyment, frequency, and early literacy skills, *Reading Psychology, 39*(1), 41v68, doi: 10.1080/02702711.2017.1361495

Wilkins, J. J., & Terlitsky, A. B. (2016). Strategies for developing literacy-focused family-school partnership. *Intervention in School & Clinic, 51*, 203–211. doi:10.1177/1053451215589181

Willard, A. L., & Kulinna, P. H. (2012). Summer literacy intervention for homeless children living in transitional housing. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 17*(1), 15–21. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ978516

Williams, J. P., Kao, J. C., Pao, L. S., Ordynans, J. G., Atkins, J. G., Cheng, R., & DeBonis, D. (2016). Close analysis of texts with structure (CATS): An intervention to teach reading comprehension to at-risk second graders. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108,* 1061–1077. doi:10.1037/edu0000117

Wilson, B. (2012). *Fundations teacher's manual, level k.* Oxford, ME: Wilson Language Training Corporation.

Woolley, M. E., & Bowen, G. L. (2007). In the context of risk: Supportive adults and the school engagement of middle school students. *Family Relations, 56*, 92–104. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00442.x

Xu, Y., & De Arment, S. (2017). The effects of summer school on early literacy skills of children from low-income families. *Early Child Development & Care, 187*(1), 89–98. doi:10.1080/03004430.2016.1151419

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zevenbergen, A. A., Worth, S., Dretto, D., & Travers, K. (2018). Parents' experiences in a home-based dialogic reading program. *Early Child Development and Care, 188*, 862–874. doi:10.1080/03004430.2016.1241775

Ziol-Guest, K. M., & McKenna, C. C. (2014). Early childhood housing instability and school readiness. *Child Development, 85*, 103–113.doi:10.1111/cdev.12105

Zoski, J., & Erickson, K. (2017). Multicomponent linguistic awareness intervention for at-risk kindergarteners. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 38*, 161–171. doi:10.1177/1525740116660817

Appendix A: Common Core Standards, K-2

K-2 Foundational Skills Standards

RF.K.1a: Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

RF.K.1b: Recognize the spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.

RF.K.1c: Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.

RF.K.1d: Recognize and name all upper-and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

RF.K.2a: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

RF.K.2b: Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.

RF.K.2c: Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-spoken words.

RF.K.2d: Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds in three-part phonemes (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC words. This does not include CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/).

RF.K.2e: Add or substitute individual sounds in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

RF.K.3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

R.F.K.4: Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

K-2 Literature Standards

RL.K.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL K.2: Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

RL.K.3: Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

RL.K.4: Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

RL.K. 5: Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems)

RL.K.6: With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

RL.K.7: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear.

RL.K.8: (not applicable to literature).

RL.K.9: With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stores.

RL.K. 10: Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

RL.K.11: With prompting and support, make connections between self, text, and the world around them (text, media, social interactions.

K-2 Informational Text Standards

RI.K.1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RI.K.2: With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

RI.K.3: With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

RI.K.4: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

RI.K.5: Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.

RI.K.6: Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

RI.K.7: Describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts)

RI.K.8: Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

RI.K.9: Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures)

RI.K.10: Actively engaged in group reading activities with purpose and understanding upper-and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

Appendix B: Alignment of Research Questions with Data Sources

All the following data sources will be used to answer the research questions.

Teacher Initial Interview Questions

1. Please describe the curricular materials that you use in your kindergarten classroom to teach reading.
2. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for foundational skills in reading.
3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature.
4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading.
5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading improve their reading skills.
6. What factors do you believe contribute to students' at-risk status in reading?
7. What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified as at risk in reading?
8. How would you describe your school's outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at-risk in reading?
9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Follow-up Teacher Questions

1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?
2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?
3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills?

Observation Criteria

Setting

Participants

Instructional activities

Conversation/engagement

Subtle factors

Researcher presence

Reading Program Documents

Kindergarten reading standards

Instructional guidelines for at risk readers

Parental involvement guidelines

Professional development activities

Research Question 1: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?

Initial Interview Questions:

6. What factors do you believe contribute to students' at-risk status in reading?

Research Question 2: **What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address needs of students identified as at risk in reading?**

Initial Interview Questions

1. Please describe the curricular materials that you use in your classroom to teach reading.

2. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for foundational skills in reading.

3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature.

4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading.

5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading to improve their reading skills.

7. What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified as at risk in reading?

8. How would you describe your school's outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at-risk in reading?

9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Follow Up Interview Questions

1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills?

Research Question 3: How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?

Observation Criteria

Setting

Participants

Instructional activities

Conversation/engagement

Subtle factors

Researcher presence

Research Question 4: What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at-risk in reading?

Reading Program Documents

Kindergarten reading standards

Instructional guidelines for at risk readers

Professional development activities

Appendix C: Informational Letter for Principals

Deborah A. Clark
Deborah.clark@waldenu.edu

September 6, 2016

Dear Principal,

I would like to invite the kindergarten teachers at this elementary school to participate in a research study entitled *An Ecological View of a Reading Program for Urban Kindergarten Students Identified as Homeless and At Risk in Reading.* My name is Deborah A. Clark, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University and a kindergarten teacher at one of the elementary schools in this district. In the sections that follow, I provide you with key details of my proposed study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe how school reading programs for kindergarten students in three large school districts influences the early reading skills of students who are identified as homeless and at-risk in reading. To accomplish that purpose, the beliefs that teachers of kindergarten students identified as homeless or at risk in reading have about the factors that influences the early reading skills of these students will be described. In addition, how these kindergarten teachers mediate the classroom environment for these factors will be described. This study will also include descriptions about how kindergarten teachers provide instruction for students identified as homeless and at risk in reading. In addition, what district and school documents reveal about providing support for the teachers and families of kindergarten students who are homeless and at risk in reading will be described.

Research Design

This study will use a qualitative approach and a case study design. Yin (2014) defined case study in two parts. In the first part, Yin (2014) defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a real-word context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and the real-world context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). A case study is appropriate as a research design because the boundaries between the environmental factors related to the school and the context of instruction in the school are often unclear. In the second part of the definition, Yin (2014) noted that case study as an inquiry that copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data point, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014, p. 17).

This second part of the definition supports my choice of this design because data will be examined from multiple sources, including initial and follow-up interviews with kindergarten teachers of students identified as homeless and at risk in reading, observations of reading instruction in kindergarten classrooms, and documents related to the instructional reading programs at the three research sites. This study will also benefit from the theoretical proposition for this study that the kindergarten program in an urban school district, positively influences the early reading skills of kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading.

Recruitment and Participation

In relation to recruitment, I will first obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University to conduct this study. I will also obtain approval from the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) to conduct this study. When I receive this approval from the NYC DOE, I will obtain the signature of the principal at the three research sites on the form that the NYC DOE requires me to submit, which is titled *Approval to Conduct Research in Schools*. I will submit these signed forms from the two principals to the NYC DOE for final approval.

In relation to teacher participation, after permission is granted, I will post a flier in the teacher's lounge. I will mail an invitation letter to each kindergarten teacher who fits the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria is as follows: (a) teachers must be employed in this large urban school district, (b) teachers must be employed as kindergarten teachers at one of the elementary schools in this large urban school district, (c) teachers must have at least one student in their class who is identified as both homeless and at risk in reading, and (d) teachers must provide reading instruction for at least 45 minutes of the school day.

In this letter, I will invite each potential teacher participant to participate in this study by discussing the purpose of the study and explaining the data collection procedures. If teachers are interested in participating, I will ask them to sign a letter of consent. When I receive the signed letters of consent, I will schedule the individual interviews and observations with each teacher.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in This Study

The benefit of teachers participating in this study is that they may develop a deeper understanding of the environmental factors related to the home and the school that influences the early reading skills of kindergarten students who are homeless and at risk in reading. Teachers may also learn about instructional strategies that could be used to improve the early learning reading skills of these identified students. The risks of participating in this study are minimal, but teachers may find some of the interview questions challenging.

The benefit of teachers participating in this study is that they may develop a deeper understanding of the environmental factors related to the home and the school that influences the early reading skills of kindergarten students who are homeless and at risk in reading. Teachers may also learn about instructional strategies that could be used to improve the early learning reading skills of these identified students. The risks of participating in this study are minimal, but teachers may find some of the interview questions challenging.

Confidentiality

Any information provided by teachers will be kept confidential. I will not use the personal information of any teacher participant for any purposes outside of this research project. I will also not include teachers' names or anything else that could identify participants in the study reports. I will also use pseudonyms for the participants, the schools, and the school district. Data will be kept secure on a password-protected computer, and paper documents will be stored in locked file cabinet. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact me via phone at XXX XXX-XXXX or at deborah.clark@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Clark, PhD Candidate

deborah.clark@waldenu.edu

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation for Elementary Schools

September 6, 2016

Dear Deborah A. Clark,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *An Ecological View of a Reading Program for Urban Kindergarten Students Identified as Homeless and At Risk in Reading* at this school. As part of this study, I authorize you to (a) send a letter of invitation to teachers who meet the inclusion criteria for this study, (b) ask these teachers to sign a letter of consent indicating their willingness to participate in the study, (c) conduct individual interviews with these teachers, (d) conduct observations of reading instruction in the classrooms of these teachers, (e) collect documents related to reading instruction for this study,(f) ask these teachers to review the tentative findings to check for credibility, and (g) disseminate the findings of the study to the teachers in this study and the principal of the school.

I understand that my responsibilities include (a) providing the names of teachers who meet the inclusion criteria for this study, and (b) providing a private room to conduct interviews with the teacher participants.

I reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization’s policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sincerely,

Authorization Official
Contact Information

Appendix E: Teacher Flyer

I am seeking kindergarten teachers who are interested in participating in a study about reading practices in the home and at school for kindergarten students who reside in temporary residences and who are experiencing challenges in learning to read.

This study will be conducted by Deborah A. Clark, a PhD candidate at Walden University and a first-grade teacher in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Schools. This study is separate from my role as a NYCDOE Teacher.

In order to be selected for this study, you must be: (a) employed in this large urban school district, (b) employed as a kindergarten teacher at one of the elementary schools in this large urban school district, (c) have at least one student in their class who is identified as both homeless and at risk in reading, and (d) provide reading instruction for at least 45 minutes of the school day.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at the phone number below. I will then send you a letter of invitation and a consent form that explains the data collection process. I will select the first four teachers who return signed consent forms to me. If you are selected, you will be asked to (a) participate in two brief interviews, (b) allow me to observe one instructional reading lesson in your classroom, and (c) review the tentative findings of the study for their credibility.

After you have participated in this study, you will receive a $50 classroom gift for a project or resources at the conclusion of their participation in this study. The gift will be made available through DonorsChoose.org.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Boards of Walden University and the NYC Department of Education.

Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*	Contact: Deborah Clark *[phone # deleted]*

Appendix F: Letter of Invitation

September 6, 2016

Dear Teacher,

I have received permission from the New York City Department of Education to collect data for my research study titled *An Ecological View of a Reading Program for Urban Kindergarten Students Identified as Homeless and At Risk in Reading.* I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University, a North Central Association institution of accredited higher learning. I am also currently employed as a kindergarten teacher with the NYC Department of Education.

I am inviting you to participate in this study because you are a kindergarten teacher at the school site selected for this study. Teachers participating in the study must meet the following criteria: (a) teachers must be employed in this large urban school district, (b) teachers must be employed as kindergarten teachers at one of the elementary schools in this large urban school district, (c) teachers must have at least one student in their class who is identified as both homeless and at risk in reading, and (d) teachers must provide reading instruction for at least 45 minutes of the school day.

The benefit of participating in this study is that you may develop a deeper understanding of the environmental factors related to the home and the school that influences the early reading skills of kindergarten students who are homeless and at risk in reading. You may also learn about instructional strategies that you can use in your classroom to improve the early learning reading skills of these identified students.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign the attached letter of consent, which describes the data collection plan, and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope within a few days.

I would be pleased to share the results of this study if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Clark, PhD Candidate

deborah.clark@waldenu.edu

Appendix G: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Demographic Questions

1. What is the highest level of education that you have attained?
2. How many years have you been a teacher?
3. How many years have you taught kindergarten reading?

Initial Teacher Questions

1. Please describe the curricular materials that you use in your kindergarten classroom to teach reading.
2. Please describe the instructional standards that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for foundational skills in reading.
3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature.
4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading.
5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading improve their reading skills.
6. What factors do you believe contribute to students' at-risk status in reading?
7. What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified as at risk in reading?

8. How would you describe your school's outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at-risk in reading?
9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Follow-up Teacher Questions

1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?
2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?
3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills?

Appendix H: Observation Data Collection Form

Field Notes	*Researcher Reflections*

Setting

--use of space

--use of print and non-print materials

--use of technology

Participants

--Number of students

--Number of male and female students

--Number of adults and their roles

Instructional Activities

--Objectives

--Instructional and intervention strategies

--Assessments or progress monitoring (formative and summative)

--Opportunities for play

Conversation/Engagement (group only)

--Between teacher and students

--Among students

--Other

Subtle Factors

--Unplanned activities

--Interruptions

--Nonverbal communication among students

Researcher Presence

--Location in the classroom

--Involvement in activities

--Student awareness of presence in the classroom

Reading Program Documents

Kindergarten reading standards

Instructional guidelines for at risk readers

Parental involvement guidelines

Professional development activities

Research Question 1: What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about factors that influence students' early reading skills?

Initial Interview Questions:

6. What factors do you believe contribute to students' at-risk status in reading?

Research Question 2: **What beliefs do teachers of kindergarten students have about how to structure classroom instruction to address needs of students identified as at risk in reading?**

Initial Interview Questions

1. Please describe the curricular materials that you use in your classroom to teach reading.

2. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for foundational skills in reading.

3. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for literature.

4. Please describe the instructional strategies that you use to help kindergarten students meet the Common Core State Standards for informational text in reading.

5. Please describe the specific interventions that you use to help students identified as homeless and at risk in reading to improve their reading skills.

7. What professional development have you recently received in reading instruction for students identified as at risk in reading?

8. How would you describe your school's outreach program to parents of children identified as homeless and at-risk in reading?

9. What components of a reading program do you believe are needed to support the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

Follow Up Interview Questions

1. What role do you believe teachers should play in supporting the development of early literacy skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

2. What role do you believe parents should play in supporting the development of early reading skills for kindergarten students identified as homeless and at risk in reading?

3. What role do you think district and school leaders should play in assisting you in the instruction of early reading skills?

Research Question 3: How do kindergarten teachers provide remedial instruction for at-risk students?

Observation Criteria

Setting

Participants

Instructional activities

Conversation/engagement

Subtle factors

Researcher presence

Research Question 4: What insights do school and district documents provide about teacher pedagogy and educational support provided for parents of kindergarten students who are at-risk in reading?

Reading Program Documents

Kindergarten reading standards

Instructional guidelines for at risk readers

Professional development activities

Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this study titled *An Ecological View of Reading Instruction for Homeless Kindergarten Students*, I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: