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Understanding Teachers' Experiences Implementing an Innovative Early Literacy Program

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Nova Southeastern University, 2002

BS, Central Michigan University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of effective literacy interventions for the development of reading skills for primary students who are at-risk for dropping out of high school. The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in a literacy intervention program known as the supporting literacy model. The conceptual framework was based on sociocultural learning theory and self-efficacy theory. The main research question for this qualitative multiple case study addressed the experiences of teachers and instructional coaches who implemented the supporting literacy model. Purposive sampling was used to identify 8 educators who taught kindergarten through 2nd grade in the literacy intervention program. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, a reflective journal topic response, and curriculum artifacts. The data were analyzed through thematic inductive analysis using the cross case analysis to identify codes, patterns, and emerging themes that described these educators' experiences. The results of this study indicated that the teachers were confident in their abilities to implement a differentiated literacy curriculum into their classroom. Additionally, they described intensive, ongoing professional development that supported their work with students and provided them with the skills and knowledge to implement an innovative early literacy program. The implementation of effective early literacy interventions may decrease the risk of high school dropout and support student success beyond graduation.

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Acknowledgements

Dedication

To my son, Channing, you have lived your life with mom forever a student. I dedicate this work to you in honor of the sacrifices made so that I could reach this pinnacle. From my heart, thank you.

This work is also dedicated to Mrs. Cohen, a kindergarten teacher who ignited my love for teaching and learning. Mrs. Cohen carried out her service in public education with great esteem. She remains a fixed image of who I want to be as an educator.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There is a critical need for young children to acquire literacy skills. A child not reading on grade level by the end of third grade is 25% less likely to graduate high school than a child who is a proficient reader (Hernandez, 2011). Additionally, a child who has lived in poverty for a year or more is at greater risk of leaving high school without a diploma (Hernandez, 2011). Intensive early literacy interventions are shown to support these at-risk students toward high school graduation, aptitude for 21st Century skills, and college or workforce readiness (Hernandez, 2011).

Students who acquire foundational literacy skills in primary grades are better equipped to maximize future educational and life experiences. Educators use early literacy development as a mechanism to predict students' educational development (Gullo, 2013; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). Delays in emergent literacy development set a course of poor academic adjustment and create the need for ongoing intensive literacy intervention (Hilbert & Eis, 2014). In recent decades, intervention programs to correct literacy deficits have resulted in less time for students reading whole text, a declined focus on reading comprehension, and fragmented skill instruction (Ortlieb, 2012). To reduce these barriers to learning and to eliminate early literacy gaps as soon as possible, instruction must be highly effective and developmentally engaging (Gage, MacSuga-Gage, Prykanowski, Coyne, & Scott, 2015).

Previous research has shown that addressing student behavior and classroom culture is also needed to enhance students' motivation to learn and to improve the efficacy of intervention pedagogy (Gage et al., 2015). Al-Hendawi (2013) described the need to create an optimal match between the school environment and a student's

temperament to achieve the greatest educational outcomes. A classroom culture created around shared accountability, consistent procedures and routines, and collaboration is needed to give students positive opportunities to respond to intervention reading instruction and receive the benefits from immediate, specific praise for accomplished benchmarks (Gage et al., 2015).

The supporting literacy model (SLM) used a dual focus on intensive well designed reading instruction and positive behavior support to address the academic and social demands of learning to read. This school-within-a-school model provides unique conditions of teaching and learning that differ from the traditional instructional program. While much is known about teaching children how to read, no peer-reviewed studies were found on the SLM approach to building capacity for effective literacy instruction and understanding how these strategies are viewed, valued, and used by those responsible for implementation. Analyzing the implementer's perspectives has shed light on the fidelity of SLM implementation and how SLM is believed to influence early literacy development for at-risk learners.

Researchers have identified that low early literacy skills are linked to an increased risk of dropping out of high school (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2011). Additionally, early literacy intervention programs have been shown to be effective in improving literacy skills. The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in the SLM. Understanding how educators experienced the implementation of this literacy development model may provide new knowledge about how primary

students learn to read in a 21st Century context. These new understandings are needed to help students achieve and sustain on-time and on-grade level trajectories toward high school graduation and college or workforce readiness.

The major sections of this chapter include the background of the study, problem statement, and purpose of the study. The research questions, conceptual frameworks, and the nature of the study are explained. The significance of the study follows the definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of the study.

Background

Declining literacy rates have detrimental consequences for future education and life experiences among these students and raise concern over how to more effectively teach the young to read. Researchers have identified the link between low literacy levels and continued academic failure (Dugas Bryan, Ortlieb, & Cheek, 2013). Researchers have shown that retention in elementary school, combined with other at-risk student characteristics, sets a course of repeated failure and early school dropout (Montague, Enders, Cavendish, & Castro, 2011).

The SLM was designed to combat mandatory retention in third grade due to poor performance on high stakes tests. Supporting literacy instruction is also intended to accelerate literacy development for at-risk students to reduce the length of time they are nonproficient in reading. SLM instruction originated from the desire to move away from an exaggerated focus on test preparation and return to a teaching philosophy that all children can and do learn when they experience success through differentiated and direct

instruction, self-directed educational experiences, and positive, formative feedback toward goal attainment (Osborne & Jones, 2011).

SLM was implemented in 2011 by one public school district as a result of root cause analysis, problem-solving, and action planning for improved literacy instruction for at-risk students. SLM pedagogy was designed to improve literacy development among at-risk students in kindergarten, first, and second grade while also addressing students' academic adjustment needs. The goal was to ensure developmentally appropriate reading trajectories for all students (Bruning, Schraw, & Norby, 2011; Dugas Bryan et al., 2013). There is much research on early literacy instruction, but there are no known studies on the comprehensive frameworks found in SLM.

The SLM is innovative in that it individualizes reading instruction through frequent progress monitoring, facilitates ongoing professional development for teachers in the area of reading instruction, supports the development of teachers through one-on-one coaching, and involves parents in at-home literacy development. SLM students received weekly positive reinforcement for achieving individualized reading targets, and they developed research and writing skills as part of 21st Century competencies using mobile technology and research labs. The differences between SLM and traditional literacy instruction are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of SLM and Traditional Literacy Instruction

SLM	Traditional
150-minute literacy block Core and Intervention	90-minute literacy block Core only
Daily explicit phonics instruction through Saxon Phonics	Core reading series
Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework (IRLA)	Unavailable
Daily progress monitoring through PACE software and fall, winter, spring AIMsweb	Fall, winter, spring, AIMsweb progress monitoring
Full-time paraprofessional for one-to-one and small group instructional support	Part-time paraprofessional support during guided reading instruction
Monthly rigorous SLM teacher training	Teacher selected topic and frequency
Adjunct SLM Coach assigned to each cohort for monitoring and coaching	School site reading coach to support instruction shared among all faculty
Classroom leveled science libraries	Unavailable
iPad mobile technology for student use in researching the sciences	If available, teachers may check out from the library
Reading Pals, community outreach, shared-book experiences	Unavailable
Incentivized, daily at-home reading and parent participation	Teacher discretion
Weekly student recognition for reaching individualized goals	Teacher discretion
Three-year cohort program	Unavailable

This study is needed to more deeply understand early literacy instruction from the experiences of teachers and coaches as implementers of SLM. Their experiences and perspectives will add to current research on how to most effectively teach at-risk primary students to read through SLM frameworks.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of effective literacy interventions for the development of reading skills for primary aged students who are at-risk for dropping out of high school. Researchers have identified that low early literacy skills are linked to an increased risk of dropping out of high school. Hernandez (2011) analyzed the relationship between third graders' literacy and poverty in the United States. Hernandez found that nonproficient students are 17% more likely to drop out of high school. This correlation increases if the child's reading proficiency is lower. The rate goes up if the child has lived in poverty for more than 1 year, increasing to 32% of those children who test below reading proficiency in third grade at-risk to not graduate from high school (Hernandez, 2011).

According to the OECD (2013), literacy is defined as "the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written texts to participate in society, achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential" (p. 4). The results of the 2013 *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies* revealed that literacy skills influence the economic and social status and that low proficiency is correlated to greater economic disadvantage, unemployment, and poor health (OECD, 2013). The study also revealed a correlation between illiteracy and social marginalization (OECD, 2013). These

findings suggest that early literacy instruction must better equip students with the skills necessary for full and satisfying participation in society. Additionally, researchers have shown that early intervention programs to teach reading have been effective in increasing these students' reading abilities (Wanzek et al., 2018). Early intervention efforts, according to Kaminski, Powell-Smith, Hommel, McMahon, and Aguayo (2014), are linked to sustained professional development for educators in order to be successful in raising the students' reading levels. There is a gap in the research that defines the educators' experiences implementing an intensive early literacy program. This study is designed to understand the experiences of educators who have implemented an intensive early literacy program for primary students in an effort to reduce nonproficiency rates.

The decline of literacy proficiency for third-grade students in one school district, as measured by the state's standardized test, created the need for stakeholder collaboration and led to the design of an innovative approach to literacy instruction, known as the SLM. The district policy mandates retention for these nonproficient students. As a result, an early literacy intervention for primary students was implemented in the school district. In 2011, SLM was implemented and driven by the mission to improve initial literacy instruction for at-risk, economically disadvantaged primary students. The SLM was used for 6 years, and little is known about its impact on literacy proficiency and how or why this model influences learning to read. The program was discontinued with the election of a new district superintendent. Understanding how educators experienced SLM may yield valuable information as to how educators perceived and practiced literacy instruction within SLM.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. Analyzing early implementer's perspectives will shed light on the fidelity of SLM implementation and how SLM is believed to influence early literacy development for at-risk learners. Understanding how the young best learn to read in a 21st Century context is needed to help students achieve and sustain on-time and on-grade level trajectories toward high school graduation and college or workforce readiness.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this qualitative multiple case study is as follows: What are the experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program? The secondary questions are as follows: How do teachers and coaches experience literacy instruction in SLM? What are teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of the SLM literacy program?

Conceptual Framework

The two conceptual frameworks that grounded this qualitative study are Vygotsky's (as cited in Jaramillo, 1996) sociocultural learning theory and Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Sociocultural learning theory is a contextual lens for understanding how social interaction among group members influences learning (Jaramillo, 1996). In the case of SLM, professional development and routine collaboration among educators were distinctive characteristics of program

implementation. Understanding how these interactions in the SLM culture were experienced by SLM teachers and instructional coaches was one function of the current study. In addition, the conditions of learning for SLM students was studied through the sociocultural lens. SLM teachers and coaches observed their students working in structured and collaborative environments. According to Shepardson and Britsch (2015), formal and specialized learning activities in social contexts help students form new knowledge and conceptual understanding.

Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory provides context for understanding the individual experience of SLM educators in the reflection of their implementation of new literacy pedagogy and other SLM program elements. Understanding the complex relationship between perception of ability and subsequent performance provides a lens to understand how teachers and coaches experienced SLM implementation. Self-beliefs about the capacity to implement program elements are needed to understand the differences between skill acquisition, such as the professional development of SLM teachers and coaches, and the ability to use these skills to affect learning (Bandura, 1993).

Sociocultural learning and self-efficacy are conceptual frameworks related to this case study approach and the key research questions. Moreover, these theories were the foundation for data collection and analysis. Exploring beliefs and perspectives about the SLM experience through these theoretical underpinnings was necessary to originate meaning from the data. Sociocultural learning, self-efficacy, and the relationship of these theories to the current study is further explained in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study is a qualitative multiple case study based on Yin's model of thematic inductive analysis (see Yazan, 2015). In a qualitative case study inquiry, the researcher collects, reviews, and examines the subjective observations of participants within the context of a lived experiences through open-ended, semistructured interviews and analysis of related artifacts, such as lesson plans and curriculum documents to explain and describe the experience of participants (Creswell, 2013). For the current study, data were collected through face-to-face interviews from eight SLM educators. Study participants also responded to one reflective topic prompt and provided curriculum artifacts for analysis. Within-case analysis, followed by thematic analysis, afforded an interpretation of the SLM experience toward understanding the complex nature of this program approach for literacy instruction (see Creswell, 2013). The analysis of multiple sources of data from different participant roles was used to form an in-depth understanding of the SLM instructional experience.

Definitions

Academic adjustment: To what extent an individual perceives him or herself capable of completing academic tasks. Motivation toward the desired outcome influences the constructs of self-view and identification with academic achievement (Osborne & Jones, 2011).

At-risk: A general term used to describe a student who is economically disadvantaged and performs below level grade level in one or more areas of social, emotional, and academic development (Copeman Petig, 2015).

Behavior management: Encompasses classroom structure, clearly defined behavioral expectations, intervention on disruptive or unproductive behaviors, and specific praise or reward for desired outcomes (Gage et al., 2015).

Coaching-based professional development: Individualized teacher feedback specific to the current classroom conditions intended to enhance instructional efficacy as measured through students' responses to instruction (Powell & Diamond, 2013).

Electronic books: A form of paperless text and graphics that offer reading experiences with interactive features, such as narration, animations, games, reading strategies, and music (Salmon, 2014).

Emergent literacy development: The acquisition of discrete reading skills, such as print awareness, use of idiomorphs, phonemic awareness, and phonics, as foundational language experiences prerequisite to reading fluency and comprehension (Neumann & Neumann, 2012).

Literacy learning: The comprehensive application of discrete literacy skills to demonstrate mastery of reading and text comprehension (Scull, 2013).

Media literacy: Cpmprised of technical, social, and collaborative digital competencies whereby students interact with text, content, and others to achieve learning goals (Tripp, 2011).

Oral reading fluency: The process whereby students decode letters to sounds and sounds to words with automaticity and accuracy. The rate of oral reading fluency is a key indicator of early literacy skills (Gage et al., 2015).

Parent involvement: The primary caregiver's disposition to and participation in the student's educational experience (Boudo et al., 2014).

Remediation: A general description of the intentional skill-based instruction to improve a student's trajectory toward proficiency (Ortlieb, 2012).

Scaffold: Describes intentional instructional support to eliminate learning gaps in knowledge or skill (Channa & Nordin, 2015).

Supporting literacy model: A comprehensive approach to literacy instruction intended to improve oral reading fluency rates of at-risk, primary students in Grades K to 2. SLM is a stand-alone intervention whereby only SLM students receive program components, which include coaching-based professional development, balanced literacy approaches with guided reading and explicit skill instruction, behavior modification, one-to-one student use of technology, and parent involvement (Foorman, Herrera, Dombek, Schatschneider, & Petscher, 2017).

*Tier 3 literacy intervention*s: Intended to stimulate change and accelerate literacy development for at-risk students and are delivered through differentiated and individualized instruction (Kaminski et al., 2014).

Word recognition: Describes the mental grapheme representations stored and retrieved to read fluently (Apel, Thomas-Tate, Wilson-Fowler, & Brimo, 2012).

Zone of proximal development: Describes the learner's state of cognitive capacity to complete a task with or without assistance (Channa & Nordin, 2015).

Assumptions

This study was conducted under assumptions that all sample participants have experienced the same phenomena, participants provided responses that were candid and honest based on their personal recollection of SLM, and participants reflectively responded to the questions during the interview with a sincere interest in the research. I also assumed that SLM teachers and coaches were using SLM components such as professional development, family literacy, shared book experiences, and motivational learning designs as they implemented SLM.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. The study was designed to understand the experiences of teachers implementing an early literacy program. Purposive sampling yielded SLM educators with 2 or more years of SLM experience. Semistructured interviews, analysis of journal topic responses, and analysis of curriculum artifacts yielded qualitative data reflecting the educator's perspective within the scope of SLM pedagogy. The scope of the study was confined to one school district in the southeast region of the United States.

The professional development required of SLM educators provided a major context for the design and delivery of SLM pedagogy for at-risk primary students. Additional characteristics of SLM included in this study were the use of technology and the inclusion of family literacy. SLM pedagogy included instructional delivery for differentiated instruction, research labs, and a focus on student communication across

reading, writing, and presenting content. Delimitations of the study included the perspective of the problem of early literacy instruction for at-risk primary students and the creation of the research questions.

Limitations

The current study was limited by time, geography, and student demographics. Educators' experiences in SLM were limited to implementation during the years following a decline in student achievement within the district. The design of the interview questions considered the focus on improving literacy rates for SLM educators within the context of extensive professional development and instructional coaching. Interview questions were also designed to elicit reflection on how SLM influenced literacy development among at-risk populations. Diversity within the participant pool was intended to reduce the geographical limitation on study findings.

In the current study, I did not examine the quantity or quality of SLM instruction in terms of student and teacher attendance and mobility. Nor did I address fidelity measures of program implementation. To address both research elements, future studies on the SLM might include student interviews and analysis of literacy performance data for subsequent years of SLM students' schooling to determine whether SLM students achieved or sustained proficient trajectories. Future researchers might explore quantitative measurement and analysis of areas of literacy development for SLM students, including oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

In working with SLM teachers and coaches, ethical considerations included creating relationships where participants are fully informed through transparent, two-way

communication. SLM educators must trust the researcher to communicate their perceptions and beliefs about SLM pedagogy honestly. Establishing trust among participants through honest and open discussion and sharing reflective journals as checks for accurate reporting was part of this research. Respect for the autonomous nature of teaching led to establishing trust and open communication among the participants. Participants were made fully aware of the study's purpose, methodologies, and use in educational research.

A reflexive journal was used to record daily reflections on data collection and analyses processes as a safeguard against personal bias and to ensure open communication with participants. I avoided bias by not including any participants from the school site where I was the principal. To further reduce bias throughout the study, I excluded any participant with whom I have worked in any capacity within the school or district. I also used member checking to ensure the interview transcripts accurately reflected the participant's experiences.

Issues related to limitations of transferability and dependability were addressed through the use of research strategies, such as detailed descriptions, variation and number of participants, and common bounded considerations such as time, place, and activity. Participants were selected to represent a variety of years of experience, degree and certification backgrounds, and gender. Dependability issues were addressed through a complete audit trail. Memos and a reflexive journal were kept, and all data were tracked and securely stored to provide a comprehensive response to data collection and analysis.

Significance

Although much is known about early literacy development and the influence of academic adjustment as predictors of future academic success, the broadened scope of 21st Century learning creates a need for contemporary research about literacy learning for at-risk primary students. More research is needed to examine the effect of initial and intervention literacy instruction in hopes of reducing at-risk student populations before intermediate education and the introduction of high stakes testing. The SLM approach was designed to achieve these goals, but how the experiences of early implementers shaped the implementation of this innovation is not known. This study aligns with innovation and positive social change because it takes a closer look at learning support systems, equitable access to 21st Century learning for at-risk students, and sustainable academic success to support a trajectory for high-school graduation, college or workforce readiness, and full participation in society.

Summary

Positive social change involves addressing the needs of marginalized populations to ensure all groups have equitable access to life and liberty. Literacy is a pillar of equitable access to higher education, workforce, and involvement in processes of government. A literate society positively influences the health and growth of their communities. A review of current literature emphasizes the need to improve primary literacy instruction toward 21st Century competencies (see OECD, 2013).

This may be done by providing on-going professional development for teachers in effective literacy instruction supported by routine on-site coaching (Powell & Diamond,

2013), by providing instruction within the zone of proximal development for emergent

learners (Channa & Nordin, 2015), and by incentivizing shared-book experiences to

strengthen parent involvement of early literacy development (Han & Neuharth-Pritchett,

2014). In this study, I explored how teachers and academic coaches experienced these

SLM instructional building blocks. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature

related to these literacy concepts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. The primary research question for this qualitative multiple case study is as follows: What are the experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program? The secondary questions are as follows: How do teachers and coaches experience literacy instruction in SLM? What are teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of the SLM literacy program?

The major sections of Chapter 2 include literature search strategies, conceptual foundations for early literacy development, an exhaustive review of the current literature to support the research questions for this study, and a synthesis of studies related to the key variables of literacy instruction for at-risk primary students. Figure 1 illustrates the major themes in current research surrounding SLM approaches to literacy instruction to be explained within this chapter.

Professional Development and
Instructional Coaching for
Effective Literacy Instrucion

Academic Adjustment, Social
Emotional Learning, and Positive
BehaviorSupport

Family Literacy Learning

Mobile Technology for
Literacy Development and
Student Research

Personalized,
Differentiated, Guided
and Explicit Instruction
for Literacy
Development
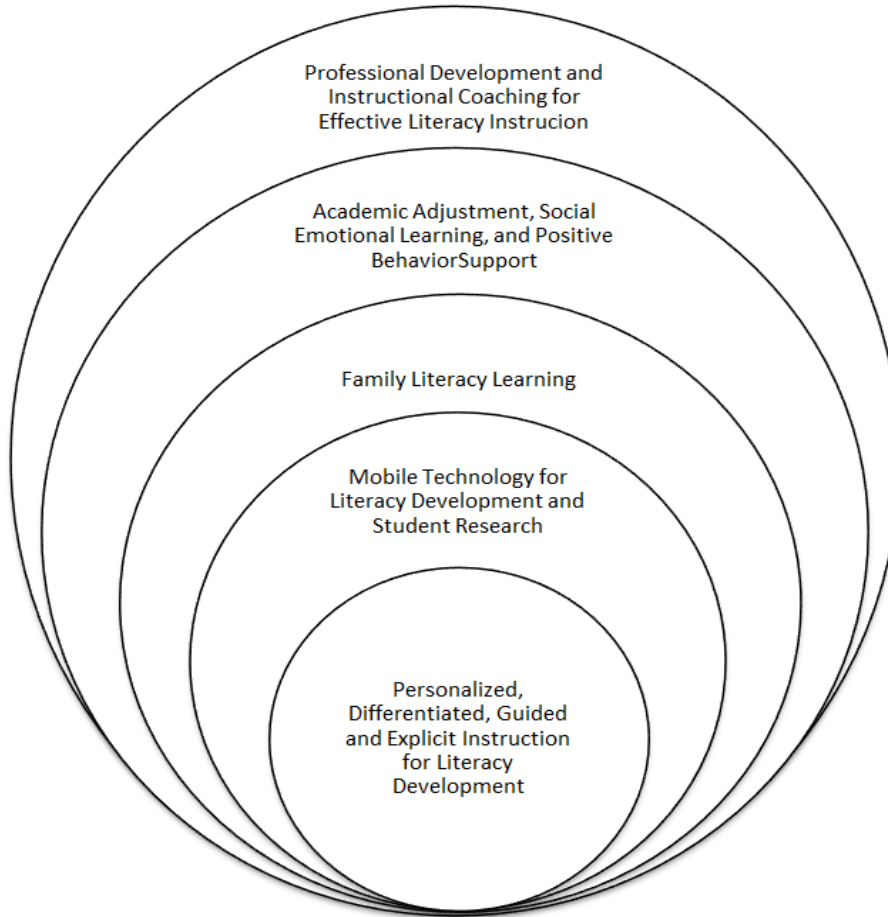
Figure 1. SLM concepts.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review, I used EBSCO, ProQuest, Sage Premier, ERIC, and

Google Scholar to locate current research in the areas of teacher professional

development for early literacy instruction, the use of technology for literacy learning, and

the influence of academic adjustment and parent involvement on literacy development.

Articles related to these conceptual frameworks within the field of early literacy were

analyzed for connective links to the research questions and SLM frameworks. Research

on early literacy intervention programs, emergent literacy, and influences on reading for at-risk students was fully used as underpinnings for this study.

Key terms included the following: *primary literacy development*, *emergent literacy*, *literacy instruction in the primary grades*, *reading comprehension*, *teacher training*, *professional development for educators*, *coaching and modeling for developing teachers*, *21st Century literacies*, *parent involvement in literacy development*, *technology for literacy learning*, and *academic adjustment*.

Conceptual Framework

Two core theories served as the conceptual framework for this study: Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, focusing on self-efficacy, and Vygotsky's (as cited in Jaramillo, 1996) sociocultural learning theory. Bandura's (1977) theory of behavioral change observed the conditions of change in human behavior through cognitive processing, personal experience, persistence, performance, and mastery. The phenomenon of self-efficacy was defined in Bandura's research as internally perceived competence and successful task completion. Bandura attributed task initiation, coping, persistence, and performance to a "conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193). Bandura's self-efficacy theory is directly linked to the motivation for learning. Efficacy expectations influence the strength and duration of effort toward the desired outcome, and if success is achieved, efficacy expectations become more generalized (Bandura, 1977).

According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy involves four psychological processes: cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection. Bandura asserted that human

thought, or cognition, seeks to understand events by relating them to similar previous experiences and then anticipating what is required for goal attainment. In this state of evaluating current and future possibilities, individuals do so by reflecting on past experiences (Bandura, 1994). The belief that one can navigate new tasks with success is predicated by the success of other tasks or experiences. Conversely, failure may lead to diminished performance (Bandura, 1994). Previous experiences and beliefs about oneself shape self-efficacy. What motivates an individual to achieve, even in the face of adversity, is attributed to the satisfaction of performance or accomplishment and the ability to increase effort matched to the difficulty of the task. Individuals who believe they can accomplish goals self-direct thought and action accordingly. Motivational processes are linked to cognitive processes by thought, action, and outcomes (Bandura, 1994).

Affective processes are those encountered with anxiety or stress associated with worry or perceived threats to task completion (Bandura, 1994). Negative thoughts can lead to task avoidance and self-deprecation. Again, coping mechanisms play a significant role in how an individual reacts to stress and how this reaction positively or negatively influences self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). The selection process further reveals that internal thought leads to personal choice and is derived from perceived abilities, competencies, and interests (Bandura, 1994). Strong self-efficacy results in expansive possibilities from which to choose (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy originates from internal thought in reflective and predictive ways. Bandura's research on understanding the

relationship between self-efficacy and performance is necessary to understand how to assist in the development of high levels of self-efficacy for new learning.

The current study on understanding educators' experiences implementing SLM was conducted through the lens of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. While I made no hypothesis of a causal effect of teacher's self-efficacy on the fidelity of implementation, researchers have found a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness in interactions with students and regulating students' learning (Sehgal, Nambudiri, & Mishra, 2017). Within the context of instruction and teaching, Sehgal et al. (2017) proposed that self-efficacy and performance are correlated and that a teacher who is motivated to improve his/her practice in pursuit of improving learning outcomes for students is more effective. Bandura (1994) further suggested that innovative and productive work requires resiliency, significant effort, and endurance over time.

Modeling, social persuasion, and scaffolding through strategically planned activities are three ways found in the research to build and strengthen self-efficacy in others (Bandura, 1994). SLM educators participated in rigorous professional development, which included all three dimensions of self-efficacy strengthening. SLM teachers and instructional coaches routinely observed SLM instruction in a variety of classroom settings, and SLM professional development was planned with intentional support to develop pedagogical skills associated with SLM programs. Supporting literacy educators often collaborated to share and reflect on best practices for implementation. SLM collaboration involved problem-solving and instructional coaching. SLM educators frequently met to support one another in a collective learning environment where

instructional efficacy was paired with core values, program goals, and collaboration among implementers for program fidelity.

The second theory in the conceptual framework is Vygotsky's (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) sociocultural learning theory. Vygotsky studied the phenomenon of learning in formal education settings and found that understanding how learning occurs cannot be understood by observing the student alone. Observations of learning must include social interactions in the classroom. Vygotsky theorized that learning is achieved through individual and social experiences (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Sociocultural learning theory focuses on the internalization of experiences through social interaction and explains how human development occurs through participation in activities, which are initially facilitated by caregivers (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

According to Jaramillo (1996), school curricula should be developed with consideration for the learner's interests and interactions between teachers and students. Jaramillo asserted that teachers are responsible for guiding students' social and cultural experiences. SLM educators facilitate classroom interactions to help students navigate and negotiate new meaning through problem-solving, discussion, and exploration. SLM frameworks of learning include student collaboration, presentations of new concepts, and family interactions focused on at-home literacy. Teacher-student interactions facilitate the internalization of new behaviors for the young. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) described how this transmission occurs as modes of internalization and asserted that both direct instruction and collaborative learning experiences are beneficial to the internalization process.

The study of organizational development, through the lens of professional development, has extended sociocultural learning to adult learners. Boreham and Morgan (2004) studied organization development through the sociocultural perspective and described interactions within the social context as essential and beneficial to the improvement processes. Following the study of oil refineries in the United Kingdom, Boreham and Morgan determined that organizational learning occurred through "the adoption of a particular set of relational practices as the creation of a social structure to sustain such learning" (p. 314). Boreham and Morgan also explained that growth occurs in the workplace when collaboration, teamwork, and open communication are key participation expectations.

Boreham and Morgan's (2004) findings align with the sociocultural learning theory found in the implementation of SLM, whereby educators routinely participated in social learning opportunities structured around the SLM frameworks. SLM teachers and coaches participated in monthly professional development and weekly coaching sessions. How SLM educators experienced professional development and coaching during implementation was one area of examination for the current study. This research is intended to help understand SLM educator's experiences in working with other SLM educators throughout program implementation.

Literature Related to Key Concepts

The balanced-literacy approach contextualizes SLM literacy instruction whereby students receive both explicit instruction in the building blocks of early alphabetic principles and prerequisite reading skills while also experiencing whole language,

immersive literacy, and application of literacy skills in research labs. The main research topics that ground this study include early literacy instruction, teacher professional development, the use of technology for young learners, family literacy, academic adjustment, and effective intervention instruction.

Supporting Literacy Model Framework

The SLM framework was based on the concepts of early literacy development and educational approaches for professional development, academic adjustment, mobile technology for learning, and family literacy. A social context for teaching and learning was embedded across these concepts. For the SLM teacher, collaboration and professional development provide opportunities to apply new pedagogy and to reflect on their practice (Sturm, 2014). In addition to individual reflection, group reflection assists SLM teachers in identifying what methods are accepted, rejected, or refined (Sturm, 2014). For the SLM student, the acquisition of new knowledge and skills was influenced by interactions with others in the classroom and at home (Hoglund, Brown, Jones, & Aber, 2015).

Frequent and ongoing assessment of students' skill level and conceptual understanding is a prerequisite to effective literacy instruction and is needed to diagnose deficits in the five areas of literacy development. According to Dugas Bryan, Ortlieb, and Cheek (n.d) routine assessment serves to (a) inform teachers' decisions for instruction, (b) assess student's strengths and knowledge, (c) determine what the student can do independently and with support, (d) document progress for parents and students, (e) summarize achievement over time, and (f) report progress to other stakeholders (p. 39).

Gullo (2013) found that data-driven decision-making assists in identifying the differences between "curriculum content or instructional strategies and children's differing levels of development or different learning styles" (p. 415).

A major component of SLM was the frequent use of students' performance data to identify instructional needs within the domains of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These broad categories of early literacy development are useful in describing students' readiness for diagnostic instruction. Research acknowledges differences in speech, language, and literacy development among at-risk student populations (Apel et al., 2012, p. 368). The SLM framework relied on student performance data to plan for individualized, student-centered learning experiences.

SLM takes instructional rigor and student motivation into account to create a balance between explicit instruction and student-direct learning. Students participated in whole group and small group instruction of discrete literacy skills and applied these skills in self-selected reading and research experiences. This interdisciplinary approach, which embedded science and social studies within the literacy experience, extended direct instruction and guided practice of literacy for SLM students.

Weekly, teachers evaluated and tracked growth trajectories through one-on-one assessment and provide diagnostic instruction to reduce deficits in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The variety and frequency of data collection were not only used to make instructional decisions but were also used to identify the professional development needs of SLM teachers. The SLM was created

on the practice of using routine performance data to provide an understanding of curriculum design, root causes or potential problems, and to identify the gap between curriculum, instruction, and students' unique learning needs.

Early Literacy

Early literacy instruction for at-risk primary students involves comprehensive knowledge of the progression of literacy development from sound units that can be manipulated for rhyming and phonological awareness to decoding, encoding, and word-recognition (Apel et al., 2012; Goldstein, 2011; MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). Findings from this case study on children's language and reading development point to the importance of providing young children experiences with oral and written language structures, story grammar, and vocabulary development opportunities (Scull, 2013). Hilbert and Eis (2014) also described the delay of early literacy skills for at-risk students and the need for intervention to improve phonological awareness, vocabulary, and print awareness for word-attack and letter-word identification.

In their examination of prekindergarten literacy intervention, Hilbert and Eis (2014) found that explicit literacy skill instruction, use of scaffolding strategies, and guided reading experiences were effective in increasing students' vocabulary and print knowledge for at-risk learners. Roskos, Burstein, and Sullivan (2013) proposed direct and embedded vocabulary instruction to improve vocabulary development and word learning for at-risk students. Roskos et al., (2013) suggested that vocabulary instruction benefits students' word learning gains and that repeat experiences with new words within broader reading contexts benefit emergent literacy development.

Kruk, Prentice, and Moen's (2013) longitudinal study found that the amount of time at-risk preschool students spent emerged in balanced-literacy to include guided reading and explicit phonics instruction positively influenced decoding and comprehension. Their research suggested that early preventative practices improved students' response to literacy instruction in subsequent years of education. Can, Ginsburg-Block, Golinkoff, and Hirsh-Pasek (2013) also studied long-term predictive relationships between early vocabulary skills and language acquisition and found a "positive and significant association between early vocabulary skills and later semantic abilities" (p. 831).

The complexity of early literacy development requires teachers to know the progression of skill development and to understand the relationships between systematic phonics instruction, word decoding, vocabulary development, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Schaars, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2017). For instruction to be responsive and individualized for every student, early literacy educators must be adequately trained in (a) practices for diagnosing instructional needs; (b) methodologies for moving students along the continuum of literacy development; and (c) strategies for creating supportive environments for learning.

The main constructs of early literacy development include explicit instruction in discrete skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and text mapping for comprehension to whole-language approaches for literacy development within the context of shared reading experiences and guided reading discussions (Goldstein, 2011; Lee, 2013). According to Goldstein (2011), emergent readers transition through several

phases of literacy development, first becoming aware of sounds associated with printed letters and words, then decoding words by understanding and applying sound-symbol relationships while also developing recall of sight words which evolve into reading fluency.

Apart from phonics and word recognition, Goldstein (2011) also emphasized early language acquisition to include students' knowledge of word meanings within a developing vocabulary and cognition for active comprehension. The earliest behaviors associated with literacy development are observed during oral language, where children socially participate in conversations during literature experiences (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). These early behaviors are passive but indicative of students' future development in learning to read (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010).

Researchers showed that parents can enhance the development of these early literacy skills by understanding their roles in providing preschool literacy experiences and creating a culture of family literacy for lifelong learning (Anderson, Anderson, & Teichert, 2013). However, once students enter formal education, primary teachers are responsible for assessing and diagnosing students' emergent literacy skills within the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension and then individualize instruction to move students from one level of proficiency to the next (Goldstein, 2011). The focus of SLM was to develop these literacy skills among young students to advance their literacy skills in primary grades and offset future problems related to low literacy levels.

Professional Development for SLM

For SLM to address all domains of emergent literacy, teachers must be effectively trained in (a) the core comprehensive reading program; (b) quantitative reading inventories to diagnose skill deficits; (c) targeted intervention literacy instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and (d) strategies to promote positive academic adjustment. SLM teachers and coaches received training in a variety of pedagogies, literacy development programs, and learning modalities. The integration of the core reading program, Daily Five Reading and Writing, Guided Reading, Essential Questions, Gradual Release, Research Labs, and the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) were part of professional development for teachers and coaches.

Initial considerations for planning professional development, which also served as a basis for yearlong SLM instructional coaching, included (a) credentialed trainers, (b) clear learning outcomes, (c) intentional collaboration, (d) and opportunities for reflection on practice (Lannin et al., 2014). Hammond and Moore (2018) advised that effective professional development via instructional coaching is premised on the content and pedagogical expertise of the coach and the availability of onsite classroom support (p. 115). Building a sense of collaboration and community for SLM teachers and coaches established a framework for developing instructional efficacy and sustainable implementation within authentic contexts of SLM classrooms (Lannin et al., 2014; Miller & Stewart, 2013).

Miller and Stewart (2013) and Perkins and Cooter's (2013) research evaluated professional development programs intended to build teacher capacity and improve student performance. Each study examined the characteristics of effective professional development programs in literacy programs. They found that teacher-directed and literacy-focused professional development programs were effective. These aspects of professional development are part of a conceptual framework for SLM professional development. The SLM professional development and classroom coaching align with Powell and Diamond's (2013) Domains and Dimensions of Coaching in Table 2.

Table 2

SLM Professional Development Aligned to Domains and Dimensions of Coaching

Domain	Dimension	SLM
Structure	Frequency of onsite coaching sessions	Onsite weekly coaching lasting one or more hours
Process	Feedback on teacher's newly implemented practices	Observed lessons, review of student performance data, direct instruction on methodology, reflect on practice
Content	Evidence-based practices that promote desired learning outcomes	Guided Reading, individual instruction, IRLA, Research Labs, Family Literacy

Hammond and Moore (2018) found instructional coaching is most likely to be effective when facilitated by a trusted individual and engaged in specific feedback related to new implementation strategies. Their findings suggest that the frequency and duration of instructional coaching following the initial professional training are as important as the expertise of the coach and relevancy of the new pedagogy (Hammond & Moore, 2018).

Formative feedback was also found to enhance teacher confidence utilizing new methods in the classroom and worked to eliminate the gap between current and improved practice (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Powell & Diamond, 2013).

Professional development and weekly instructional coaching are essential elements of the SLM literacy program. SLM teachers and coaches routinely evaluated practice for desired student learning outcomes as measured by oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and interaction with a variety of informational texts. The collaborative nature of improving literacy instruction in SLM leveraged training, planning, implementation, and evaluation of each SLM component to ensure a responsive course of the intervention.

Technology for Literacy Development

The advent of mobile technology has created new conditions for how teachers, students, and parents interact with online educational resources to engage, instruct, practice, and enjoy literacy learning (Boudo et al., 2014; Salmon, 2014). The use of technology to enhance students' interaction with reading through educational games, remedial instruction, electronic books, and self-selected web-based research is shown in the research to benefit literacy development (Gahwaji, 2016; Salmon, 2014). Digital natives use mobile technology to access, process, explore, and assimilate new knowledge and skill. Each student in the SLM classroom had an iPad for research, computer-assisted instruction, and skill practice.

Common Sense Media (2014) compared the use of media among children ages zero to eight in 2011 to that of 2013. Key findings showed (Common Sense Media, 2014):

- A five-fold increase in ownership of tablet devices such as iPads, from 8% in 2011 to 40% in 2013 (p. 60).

- Almost twice as many children have used mobile media compared with two years ago, and the average amount of time children spend using mobile devices has tripled (p. 60).

- Among five to eight-year-old children, the use of interactive media for educational content is higher than among younger children (p. 62).

- Access to mobile media devices and applications among poor and minority children is much higher than it was two years ago, but a large gap between rich and poor persists (p. 61).

Increased use of mobile technology among young children as a way of accessing new learning through games, applications, and media content makes tablets and iPads theoretically sound additions to the learning experience. The variety of educational and literacy applications readily available on mobile devices is shown in the research as an important variable to increased student engagement, motivation, and literacy learning (Harrison & McTavish, 2018; Neumann, 2018).

The SLM classroom afforded every student an iPad for use at school and at home. The Apple iPad came to the technology market in 2010 and has since evolved students' interaction with the digital world (Merchant, 2015). Neumann (2018) found student use

of iPad literacy applications "positively fostered children's letter knowledge, print concepts, and name writing skills" and allowed for a variety of media interactions, which motivated use (p. 245). Harrison and McTavish (2018) also investigated the use of tablet applications for young children and found that preschoolers demonstrate independent and adaptable use of tablet devices, which can lead to acquiring skills for early literacy development.

Research on literacy instruction and early intervention points to the benefits of educational technologies as an engaging source for learning (Boudo et al., 2014; Gahwaji, 2016). Gahwaji (2016) describes computer-assisted instruction, whereby young learners interact with literacy content, tutorial lessons, and program-generated feedback (p. 14). Other types of technology for literacy development include the use of mobile technology, such as iPads, to access electronic books, online libraries, and multimedia content (Roskos et al., 2013; Salmon, 2014).

SLM students used iPads to complete science-based research labs, as part of reading in the content areas, and to practice discrete literacy skills. As well, SLM students use iPads to access a variety of engaging content through songs, complex graphics, and read alongs to promote comprehension more readily (Salmon, 2014). According to Salmon (2014), digital sources of text and information increased motivation, engagement, and advanced vocabulary. Roskos et al., (2013) also examined the potential of educational technologies for delayed learners and found that electronic books improved print awareness, sound-symbol relationships, and vocabulary

development. These studies demonstrate the benefits of using mobile devices to scaffold and reinforce literacy development for young children.

The use of mobile technology to research self-selected topics in the sciences improves student motivation and encourages learning through digital media. The use of digital media in SLM classrooms addressed the needs of poor children and families by providing internet and web access for educational purposes (Tripp, 2011). The SLM promotes digital equality for engaging, student-centered instruction to reduce the performance gap among economically disadvantaged students through the use of IPad technology in every SLM classroom (Tripp, 2011, p. 330). Combined with teacher and parent training in literacy skill acquisition, SLM provided an environment for the development of analytical, social, technical, and creative skills for primary students. SLM students use technology to research topics, create digital media, and share research through student-to-student reading projects for language and literacy development.

Family Literacy Learning

Family literacy learning, as a key component of SLM, was integrated as a result of research findings that show a positive relationship between caregiver's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about literacy development and the acquisition of early literacy skills for their children (Özen Altınkaynak & Akman, 2016). To increase awareness for literacy support at home and to strengthen literacy learning among SLM families, several partnership tasks were implemented.

- Quarterly meetings were held where presenters showcased the literacy curriculum, instructional pedagogy, and student learning opportunities. The

intended outcome was to give caregivers insight into the workings of the SLM classroom.

- To facilitate two-way communication between the school and home and to address student and family needs in real-time, caregivers completed surveys during the school year.

- All stakeholders completed a partnership compact, which outlined the roles and responsibilities toward the common goal of improved literacy development for SLM students.

- Caregivers participated in two annual Parent Academies to learn how to create supportive literacy learning environments at home and how to fully support the learning structures in place at school.

- Caregivers and students documented their daily, shared-book experiences in a reading log. Students participated in a medallion recognition program using the reading log results. This at-home literacy could be facilitated by anyone in the home, such as an older sibling or extended family members, and translated into positive reinforcement at school.

In the early planning of SLM, home literacy experiences were identified as a significant causal relationship where reading activities and engagement at home promoted interest and literacy learning for young children (Pezoa, Mendive, & Strasser, 2019). Anderson et al., (2013) found that families who participated in a structured family literacy program "gained insights as to how they could continue to support their children's learning at home" and expressed comfort in working with the school to meet

their child's needs (p. 33). From this study, major themes emerged that align with SLM's family literacy component. At home literacy influences success in school and life; therefore, family literacy programs should aim to improve knowledge about literacy and childhood development, social-emotional learning, home to school transitions, and curriculum and pedagogy used in the classroom (Anderson et al., 2013).

SLM focused efforts for integrating family literacy on increasing shared book experiences. Han and Neuharth-Pritchett (2014) and Hill and Diamond (2013) assert that emergent reading skills such as making meaning from text, understanding concepts of print, and developing oral language and vocabulary result from shared book experiences at home. For at-risk students, shared-book experiences at home provide children with exposure to models of complex language. According to Hill and Diamond (2013), shared-book experiences are even more important for students with disabilities or other delays in literacy learning. Özen Altınkaynak and Akman (2016) investigated the effects of family literacy learning and concluded that families who create supportive environments at home for literacy development had positive, long term effects on student's phonological awareness, word and print awareness, vocabulary, and expressive language skills. However, Pezoa et al., (2019) study on the transactional relationship between student's reading interest and parent's literacy engagement found that not all shared book experiences benefit reading interest in pre-school and kindergarten children.

Access to quality books and the frequency of shared book experiences are notable influences on the extent to which this activity affects emergent literacy (Pezoa et al., 2019). To combat the lack of quality books available at home needed to engage students

in interesting and challenging literacy discussions, Santos, Fettig, and Shaffer (2012)

emphasized that family resource rooms must include a variety of book levels and genres

as a significant contribution from schools to students and their families.

Developing and strengthening literacy experiences at home is supported in the

research as a causal relationship between student's social-emotional learning needs and

interest, motivation, and skills in learning to read. SLM leans on this supposition in

designing meaningful family literacy learning to engage and sustain parent's literacy

practices at home. The coordination of resources shared between school and home,

alongside routine communication and training opportunities, gives families support for

shared book experiences and interactive reading activities with their children.

Academic Adjustment of SLM Students

Pezoa et al., (2019) described students' motivation to read as derived from

internal and external drives where children demonstrate an interest in reading and other

related activities because they are enjoyable, believed to be important, or valued as a self-

directed experience. Academic adjustment is linked in research to motivation, interest,

and social-emotional aspects of learning and was one of the SLM program frameworks.

SLM implemented external motivators for learning to read through positive

reinforcements for behavior and academic performance and nurtured students' internal

motivation to read by scaffolding competency through guided reading and explicit

instruction. SLM provided students a positive culture for learning, which is shown in the

research to benefit social-emotional learning and cognitive development (Santos et al.,

2012). Students who experience positive reinforcement in early learning, whether at

home, in school, or within the community, are more likely to demonstrate confidence,

persistence, attentiveness, responsiveness, the ability to communicate, solve problems,

and form relationships with others (Al-Hendawi, 2013; Santos et al., 2012).

Early studies on temperament, defined by Al-Hendawi (2013) as an innate

"behavioral style that is concerned with an individual's patterns of responding to various

situations," examined the relationship between temperament, school experiences, and

academic achievement (p. 180). Al-Hendawi's (2013) analysis of temperament studies

reveals the need for educators to create personalized learning environments where

student's unique behaviors and school adjustment are considered for planning instruction.

Domain identification, or how an individual perceives the self through

performance in a specific domain, is an important understanding for teachers of at-risk

students (Osborne & Jones, 2011). Educators can use this knowledge to influence

students' academic adjustment through effective scaffolding and positive learning

experiences. Within the context of SLM practices, social and academic experiences were

intentionally constructed to promote positive domain identification, or in other words, to

help at-risk learners see themselves as effective readers, writers, and researchers through

the use of carefully planned scaffolding social and academic experiences. SLM

developers understood the need to layer effective literacy instruction atop addressing the

self-efficacy needs of at-risk learners.

Osborne and Jones (2011) found that positive associations with academic ability

among high school students correlated to other important adjustment factors such as

motivation, effort, participation, effort, and subsequently, academic achievement. The

geneses of positive identification with academic ability are experienced, or not, during

the early childhood years. Mantell (2013) extends the research on how educators use

motivation, engagement, and social learning to help students experience learning as

valuable and relevant. The motivation process described in Mantell's (2013) research is

shown in Table 3 as a progression of internal and external factors utilized by educators

for planning experiences for students to most likely result in mastery learning (p. 39).

Table 3

Steps Involved in the Motivation Process

Step	Description
Psychological membership	Feeling of belonging within the community classroom
Perceived instrumentality and authenticity	Perceive the work as a valued tool and view it as useful outside the classroom
Perceived self-efficacy	Self-confidence in the learning process
Learned intrinsic motivation	Embrace content with interest and pride
Achievement/Mastery	Deep understanding with critical thinking

Mantell (2013) reserved the use of external motivators for young learners to help

them identify and associate positive feelings from the external reinforcement with their

effort and achievement to create conditions for intrinsic motivation for learning. SLM

practices for academic adjustment and behavior modification centered on positive

behavior support. The academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for SLM students were

facilitated through the lens of self-efficacy, academic adjustment, social-emotional

learning, and motivation theory. The intended SLM outcome was to reduce or eliminate at-risk characteristics by addressing the influence of academic and social adjustment on literacy learning and development.

Research on Intervention Models

According to Kovach and Fredendall (2013), continuous improvement practices that encourage multiple perspectives, collaborative problem-solving, strategic planning, and individual and collective reflection on practice is characteristic of organizational growth. To replicate effective practices and processes within an organization, a focus must be maintained on developing the capacity of its stakeholders by learning new methods (Kovach & Fredendall, 2013). Once an organization has isolated problems of their current state and identified a best-matched solution, professional development for the implementation of Continuous Improvement Practices (CIPs) follows. SLM, as a multi-faceted intervention for addressing poor literacy rates, presented the need for professional development in effective initial and intervention instruction while concurrently addressing the need for supportive environments through engagement and family literacy.

The intervention of SLM was created through root-cause analysis using student achievement data, demographic information about the at-risk population, discussion of available resources, and examination of current research in the field of early literacy instruction. The purpose was to identify CIPs most likely to yield the greatest return on investment for improved literacy rates. Once SLM implementation was underway, trend data was routinely collected and analyzed to determine the trajectory toward program

goals. Van Norman and Parker (2018) examined this data review and decision-making process and found that the type of performance measures used, criterion versus normed-reference, and the frequency of progress monitoring was needed for analyzing intervention efficacy. Gullo (2013) extended on data-driven decisions for early literacy learning to include standards-based accountability and reallocation of resources for at-risk populations. Intervention efficacy, according to Gullo (2013), is determined by assessment measures that are most closely aligned to the delivered curriculum and students' learning needs.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a model in current educational practice that discriminates curriculum and students into Tier classifications (Kaminski et al., 2014). Initial and intervention instruction is differentiated within three Tiers. Tier 1 is the core curriculum delivered to all students, and Tier 2 and Tier 3 are supplemental intervention programs with Tier 3 being the highest frequency in delivery with one or more interventions. Kaminski et al., (2014) examined the effects of a Tier 3 early literacy intervention program and found that students' varied response to the intervention was most likely due to program variables, such as duration, group size, and teacher expertise. The severity and diversity of learners' needs also surfaced as a consideration when planning intervention instruction (Kaminski et al., 2014).

From the study of a variety of early literacy intervention programs, several implementation characteristics emerged:

1. Professional development for implementers is critical.

2. Initial diagnostic evaluation is needed to identify the best-matched

   intervention.

3. Routine progress monitoring identifies changes in students' literacy skills.

4. Instructional plans are informed by formative and summative assessments.

5. Consideration of student characteristics beyond academic performance scores

   to address the whole child.

6. Application of intervention skills in other contexts in and out of school must

   occur.

7. Student interest in materials, resources, and experiences are foundational to

   academic participation and adjustment.

8. Supportive and responsive environments in and out of school promote learning

   and growth.

These characteristics were planning elements of SLM. Foorman et al., (2017) studied standalone versus embedded early literacy interventions and found similar effects from both models on reading and language development. SLM was supported in this research as both a standalone where three classes form a K-2 cohort at each school and embedded with daily intervention instruction for students in each classroom.

According to Rowland (2012), the science of reading begins with the mastery of the alphabetic code, which is achieved through phonics instruction and the development of neural pathways for internalizing sound-symbol relationships. This foundational curriculum is supported in the research as necessary for language and literacy proficiency and is associated with future school success (Gullo, 2013). Teaching students to read,

especially those who enter school with significant delays in language and literacy acquisition, is reliant upon how well teachers are trained in language constructs (Gullo, 2013).

Research for academic adjustment and at-home support for literacy development are included in this study toward addressing the psychological needs of underperforming students. One goal of SLM was to help struggling readers intrinsically embrace learning in such a way to self-select literacy experience and to persevere through challenges (Mantell, 2013). Gage et al., (2015) described the relationships between students' behavior, engagement, and literacy development. Understanding these relationships in the context of social-emotional learning was examined for influence on initial and intervention instruction.

Summary and Conclusions

The major themes explored in this literature review include early literacy instruction, teacher professional development, the integration of technology for young learners, the influence of family literacy and academic adjustment on literacy development, and effective intervention instruction. Researchers showed the direct impact of these frameworks on early educational experiences. The findings of the studies show that at-risk learners benefit from expert delivery of initial and intervention instruction in engaging and supportive environments. Some studies examined the efficacy of literacy intervention programs and others explored teachers' perspectives of professional development experiences, but few asked teachers and instructional coaches

to self-reflect on their experience as early implementers of a multipronged approach to literacy instruction.

The current multiple case study will further the understanding of literacy learning by addressing the gap of knowledge about teachers' and coaches' perspectives of SLM related to instruction and other SLM improvement practices. Using a combination of open-ended, semi-structured interview data, SLM curriculum artifacts, and journal topic responses, this study provided valuable insight that may improve early literacy instruction for low income, at-risk primary students. Chapter 3 details the research design, the rationale for choosing qualitative research, and the role of the researcher. The methodology of this case study, including participant selection and data collection tools, will be described. Methodological issues, such as trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability, and a narrative of the procedures will also be explained.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. I used qualitative data to discover useful themes of SLM curriculum and instruction for improved literacy learning among low income, at-risk primary students. Processes and procedures for conducting a qualitative case study are described in this chapter. Research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, participant selection, data collection and analysis, and issues of trustworthiness and validity are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

The primary research question for this qualitative multiple case study is as follows: What are the experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program? The secondary questions are as follows: How do teachers and coaches experience literacy instruction in SLM? What are teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of the SLM literacy program?

The central concepts of the study include early literacy instruction and related professional development, use of technology for literacy learning, family literacy, and academic adjustment. Inquiry into how teachers and coaches perceived their experiences in SLM is relative to the implementation of this intervention model and subsequently may influence how at-risk students best learn to read. Researchers have shown that early literacy development is needed for future academic success toward equitable life experiences and a literate society (OECD, 2013).

In qualitative case study research, inquiry originates from a desire to understand how or why a phenomenon occurred as it did (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). In the case of SLM, the inquiry into the personal experience, along with the analysis of organizational structures and curriculum artifacts, generated themes across multiple sources of data that can contribute meaningful, useful, and credible knowledge to the field of early literacy. Case study research was the selected methodology because understanding SLM through the first-hand experiences of early implementers revealed needed insights about professional development and pedagogical practices for early literacy instruction. Case study processes are well-matched to answering the research questions of this study, and the bounded nature of case study limited the inquiry of SLM within one school district in the southeast United States in a primary educational setting.

Role of the Researcher

I first identified SLM as the case for this study. From the perspectives of teachers and instructional coaches and the analysis of SLM artifacts, an in-depth understanding of this early literacy instructional approach emerged. I recruited SLM teachers and coaches, facilitated face-to-face interviews, and analyzed curriculum artifacts to identify themes about this case related to instruction and pedagogy for early literacy development. I described the context of the case and followed case study data collection and analysis procedures.

I have been a school principal for 10 years and work in the district where the study was completed. I assumed a participatory role during the interviews and have historical knowledge of the development and implementation of SLM as a district-wide

improvement process. These are considerations for subjective interpretations and necessitate awareness to prevent bias. Participant checks and reflexive journaling during data collection and analysis ensured high standards and ethical research on all research procedures. In the current study, I did not analyze the efficacy of SLM, and there was no personal advantage from this study.

Methodology

The methodology section includes information about participant selection, the interview protocol, a description and justification of the questionnaire instrument, and processes for establishing validity. The plan for data collection and analysis is also explained.

Participant Selection Logic

The population of this study was a subgroup of elementary educators who taught literacy in kindergarten, first, and second grade. These educators worked in a rural school district where declining literacy rates drew attention to the need for more effective early literacy instruction. Study participants also included instructional coaches who supported primary literacy instruction within the SLM schools. In this study, I sought to understand how SLM frameworks and pedagogy were perceived and experienced among these educators.

The purposive sampling recruitment plan for in-depth interviews was to email all SLM teachers and coaches the recruitment email from eight different SLM schools resulting in eight participants. This number of participants provided varying insights, led to data saturation, and was aligned with the multiple case study approach. When the

potential participants replied to the recruitment email, the sampling process ensured that

the volunteer taught SLM at least 2 years. Additionally, the volunteer was not directly

supervised by me. The sampling process included a focus on gender, years of experience,

and grade level diversity.

The stages of recruitment and selection ensured the quality of planning and data

collection to reveal the most useful information in describing the phenomenon of SLM

and literacy trajectories of students. Data saturation was achieved when no new data,

themes, or codes emerged during the analysis of transcribed participant responses to

interview questions, and during the analysis of journal topic responses and curriculum

artifacts.

Instrumentation

Three types of case study evidence shaped the data set: archival curriculum

artifacts, face-to-face interviews, and participants' journal responses to select topic

prompts. Multiple sources of data created a study database and a chain of evidence to

answer the research questions and derive case study conclusions. The researcher develops

interview questions to yield exclusive perspectives to examine the similarities and

differences between cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Content validity was established through rigorous application of case study

protocols including the researcher and data analysis were free from bias. The participants

authentically represented the pool from which they were selected, and the triangulation of

three data sources established the sufficiency of data to answer the research questions

(Patton, 2002). The basis for the development of interview questions and journal topic

responses were the theories of sociocultural learning and Bandura's cognitive processing of efficacy. The lived SLM experiences and perceptions of efficacy among SLM teachers and coaches framed the inquiry of this case study.

Interview Protocol

Open-ended, semistructured interview questions were used for this multiple case study to analyze teachers' and coaches' perceptions related to SLM design and practices. The following questions emerged from the literature review of program elements and were intended to more deeply understand how SLM teachers and coaches experienced literacy instruction and literacy development among their students:

1. What are your perceptions of SLM professional development?

2. What was the relationship you had with the SLM coach?

3. What were your experiences with literacy instruction in SLM?

4. How do you feel about students' response to SLM instruction?

5. There were three instructional tools unique to SLM. Which were more or least effective, and how did you use each in your classroom?

    a. Probe: What were your students' use of iPads?

    b. Probe: Did you use the research labs?

    c. Probe: Did you use the science libraries?

6. How do you feel about students' social-emotional needs and SLM learning?

7. What are your beliefs about the SLM culture for learning?

8. Is there anything about the SLM that you would like to share that you haven't already?

The purpose of the study was to explore SLM implementers' experiences in this early literacy model. The interview questions and journal topics asked participants to explain their experiences through the lens of sociocultural learning and self-efficacy frameworks and within the context of program components, including literacy instruction, the use of technology for literacy learning, SLM professional development, students' academic adjustment in SLM, and family literacy. The analysis of these data, along with an analysis of curriculum artifacts, sufficiently answered the research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The following subsections outline the protocols for the recruitment of participants, conducting research in a school setting, data collection, analysis, and security, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical concerns.

Recruitment

There were 15 SLM school cohorts for grades K to 2 and approximately 270 SLM students in a district of 52 schools spanning grades prekindergarten through 12th grade. The inclusion criteria for recruitment was SLM teachers and coaches with a minimum of 2 years of SLM experience and participation in SLM professional development. Teachers not in an SLM classroom or those with less than 2 years of SLM experience were excluded from recruitment. Teachers who had not participated in SLM professional development were excluded from recruitment.

The purposive sampling recruitment plan began with district-level approval, secured in the form of a community-site approval letter following institutional review

board (IRB) approval. A list of SLM teachers and coaches, along with permission to use the district's email contact lists to contact potential participants, was obtained before the study. Archived program documents, such as program description and goals, professional document agendas and training materials, curriculum resources used for literacy instruction, family engagement agendas, positive reinforcement, and plan of use for iPad mobile technology, were obtained.

Volunteers were considered eligible for study participation if they replied yes to the email invitation with the inclusion criteria of 2or more years SLM experience and participation in the SLM professional development. Participants received the informed consent at least 24 hours before the scheduled face-to-face interview. The informed consent was signed by the participant immediately before the interview. Following the interview and within 2 weeks, interview transcripts were emailed to each participant for their review and for correction if needed. After participants responded to the transcript review, I thanked them for their participation and acknowledged their contribution to the study.

Data Collection Plan

Data were collected in face-to-face interviews lasting 35 to 45 minutes in a public library conference room. The interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recording device. Participants were asked to share, via email, SLM curriculum documents such as lesson plans and teaching resources, taking no more than 20 minutes. SLM teachers and coaches were asked to respond to the following prompt in a reflective journal response

via email, taking no more than 30 minutes to complete. The prompt was as follows: What are your feelings or beliefs about your effectiveness in implementing SLM frameworks?

Research Setting

The setting for this study was a rural, public school district in the southeastern United States. The school district designed and implemented SLM as an innovative model of literacy learning and instruction to combat declining literacy rates among economically disadvantaged students in grades kindergarten through second. The intended outcome was to facilitate on-time and on-grade level reading and writing trajectories for students exiting primary grades and before high stakes testing in Grade three.

Students were selected to participate in SLM based upon entry-level reading assessment data and socioeconomic status. SLM students enter a cohort in kindergarten and, minus mobility, remain for three consecutive years through the end of second grade. SLM teachers are placed in cohort teams, which are also intended to remain constant for three consecutive years. The benefits of this model of stabilized instruction, teaming for collaboration, and vertical alignment are addressed in the research as effective designs for reducing barriers to teaching and learning outcomes (Wenzel, 2011). A dominant trait of the SLM cohort was the consistent and immersive literacy instruction provided to at-risk learners for three years.

SLM teachers and coaches received on-going, rigorous professional development in the areas of initial and intervention literacy instruction, engaging students and their families in literacy learning, and the use of technology for literacy learning. SLM

provides a variety of student-centered literacy experiences to increase reading engagement and application of literacy skills. SLM research labs integrate leveled, science libraries, and the use of iPad mobile technology to leverage students' natural curiosity to learn about topics of interest.

The SLM relied on the constructivist approach to learning, whereby students build new content knowledge in the sciences through reading and research. Student choice was a daily mode of reading engagement. SLM students self-select reading materials for independent, guided, and shared reading experiences. Social-emotional and positive adjustment aspects of learning are addressed in SLM through reinforcement for performance, student collaboration, and shared reading experiences.

Data Analysis Plan

The procedures for data analysis for this qualitative multiple case study are based on Yin's cross-case analysis for comparing two or more cases (Creswell, 2013). The cross case analysis allows the researcher to identify similarities and differences among multiple cases in answering the research questions and understanding SLM teachers' and coaches' experiences. For each participant, the case as a whole will be described along with the contexts of the participants' SLM experience. Multiple case study analysis treats each case separately by completing the direct interpretation of single cases, or instances, before layering case units for more significant themes (Patton, 2002). Codes attached to units of meaning found within the transcribed participant responses, journal topic responses, and program artifacts will be described. The unit of meaning coded for this

study will be a paragraph of text. Coding was intended to capture single instances that seem meaningful in light of the research question.

The categorical aggregation will reveal collections of meaning-rich instances from the data that will emerge themes within this single case analysis. These themes and patterns will be described and developed using verbatim passages and direct quotes from the data to explicate each pattern and theme. In this multiple case study, the description of the single case with direct interpretation followed by categorical aggregation and with-in case analysis will be repeated for each participant. Dedoose™ (Dedoose Version 8.0.35, 2018), a web-based application, will be utilized for the coding process. The final two steps of case study research are thematic synthesis and interpretive generalizations. The thematic synthesis will originate from a fusion of the thematic analyses across multiple cases of SLM.

Verbatim passages and direct quotes from all cases will be used to explicate each theme as well as present the interpretations of the integrated meaning of all the cases in the study. The cross-case analysis emerged naturalistic generalizations of the results of the interpretive phase of the study, which consists of the lessons learned from the case study.

Summary

Qualitative data analysis involved recording and transcribing statements, breaking down narrative data, and organizing it to generate categories that facilitate comparison and contextualizing to identify patterns across the narratives. The formation of themes in understanding SLM pedagogy is described considering dominant features of the situation

and its people to understand pervasive qualities of the SLM experience. To better understand the SLM experience of literacy instruction for at-risk primary students, teacher, and instructional coach interviews with open-ended questions were used to gain deep insights about implementing this innovative instruction and learning program.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. Dedoose™ was used for coding. For each case, pattern coding and categorizing was applied to identify primary themes in the data. The similarity principle was applied to discover similar experiences and will assist in describing the SLM teachers' perspectives through deductive processes. Triangulation analysis of the interview and topic reflective journal responses along with curriculum artifacts will best explain the data for findings that will add to the field of early childhood literacy.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Patton (2002), credibility and internal validity of a qualitative case study are derived from "a stance of neutrality" with a strategic intention to devoid the study of researcher bias (p. 51). For this case study, strategies to establish credibility are triangulation, saturation, and reflexivity. Patton (2002) defines data triangulation as "the use of a variety of data sources in a study" (p. 247). Accordingly, the study of SLM included analysis of three data sources, face-to-face interviews, curriculum artifacts, and reflective topic response.

Saturation occurs when an adequate number of participants provide enough data to answer the research questions, and when no new codes are generated during the coding process. For the multiple case study of SLM, eight participants were interviewed and

responded to reflective topic journal prompts. Saturation was achieved when all codes were identified from the transcribed responses.

A reflexive journal to identify and eliminate any potential bias throughout the study was kept. Journaling sheds light on decisions, interpretations, analyses, and feelings or beliefs about the study and its participants. As a school administrator in the district where SLM was implemented, I avoided bias by not including any participants from the school site where I was principal. To further reduce bias throughout the study, I excluded any participant with whom I have worked in any capacity within the school or district. I used member checking to ensure the interview transcripts accurately reflect the participant's experiences.

Transferability, or external validity, describes the ability to examine findings from one context in another similar context to determine if the detailed description of the phenomenon explains common characteristics useful beyond the current study (Creswell, 2013). To establish transferability, detailed descriptions, variation, and number in participant selection, and common bounded considerations such as time, place, and activity was addressed in this study. For this study, inclusion criteria for participants are provided, and the description of the setting bounds the geographical place and SLM activities for teachers and instructional coaches. I used variations in participants include two different categories by including teachers and instructional coaches. Participant variation also includes demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and years of experience. I worked with my committee to ensure a complete report and a thick description of the study.

Dependability, or qualitative reliability, describes a clear and consistent application of rigorous procedures for the study (Patton, 2002). For this study, I will apply a clear set of procedures to establish dependability, such as audit trail and triangulation. Triangulation of three types of data will include face-to-face interviews, reflective journal responses, and analysis of curriculum artifacts. For a complete audit trail, I will write memos throughout the study and keep a reflexive journal to document biases. All data will be tracked and securely stored to provide a comprehensive response to data collection and analysis. The research plan itself and the IRB application also serve to describe the operational detail of data collection and analysis. On-going communication with committee members will also be considered for dependability.

Confirmability in a qualitative study refers to the accurate depiction of participants' experiences and not preferences of the research. Neutrality and objectivity are needed to establish confirmability (Creswell, 2013). One method to ensure confirmability is reflexive journaling. During the reflexive journaling, the researcher intentionally plans for self-awareness and self-exposure (Creswell, 2013). The reflexive journaling holds the researcher to telling the participants' story from an objective, neutral platform (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I transcribed all responses from the interviews and topic journal responses. Direct quotes and verbatim responses explicated categories and themes in the data.

Ethical Procedures

All required procedures for gaining access to study participants and SLM curriculum artifacts will be followed. A community-site approval letter following IRB

approval will prerequisite all study processes. Recruitment procedures were utilized, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. All confidential information and signed forms was treated according to the procedures in the following data security plan.

Data Security Plan

Informed consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The digital audio recording was transcribed by the researcher. Digital audio recordings are stored in a locked cabinet. A file containing all hard copy memoing, field notes, or other research documents are stored in a locked cabinet.

Before, during, and after data analysis, all digital data will be uploaded to a login protected computer. The use of Dedoose™ for data analysis will also be a login protected secure website. All digital data will be downloaded to a flash drive to be stored in a locked cabinet. All paper documents will also be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be destroyed after five years. The flash drive will be physically destroyed, and all paper documents will be shredded.

The following steps were used to secure participants' confidentiality and ensure anonymity:

1. Assign an alphanumeric pseudonym to all participants, i.e., P1, P2, and create a master list linking the participant's name with the assigned alphanumeric pseudonym.

2. Store the master list in a separate folder in a locked cabinet.

3. Participant de-identification by removing names from the audio file.

4. Implement the data security plan to eliminate risks to the research and protect the participants and the data.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the purpose and setting of this multiple case qualitative study, the role of the researcher, procedures for recruiting participants, the methodology for collecting and analyzing data, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical concerns related to the study. This multiple case study will allow for cross-case analysis and a deep understanding of SLM implementers' experiences. The researcher's role is to execute standards of rigorous and robust qualitative research and sustain neutrality to present credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable conclusions.

The current study focuses on the perspectives of the teachers and instructional coaches and their experiences with SLM. The variation of cases in this study will yield similarities and differences for in-depth descriptions of the SLM experience. Inductive thematic analysis, triangulation, reflexive journaling, and saturation will increase the validity of the results of the study. All ethical guidelines to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be followed. All data will be stored, deleted, or destroyed properly at the appropriate times. The methodology for data collection and analysis will be described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. I used a case study design to gain in-depth insight into the educators' experiences and perceptions of teaching SLM. Analyzing early implementer's perspectives sheds light on the fidelity of SLM implementation and how SLM was believed to influence early literacy development for at-risk learners. This information can then be used to transform primary education and instructional practices for early literacy development. Understanding how the young best learn to read in a 21st Century context is needed to help students achieve and sustain on-time and on-grade level trajectories toward high school graduation and college or workforce readiness.

Three research questions guided my understanding of how SLM educators experienced and perceived SLM professional development and instructional pedagogy. The primary research question for this qualitative multiple case study is as follows: What are the experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program? The secondary questions are as follows: How do teachers and coaches experience literacy instruction in SLM? What are teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of the SLM literacy program?

I collected data from semistructured interviews, a reflective journal prompt response, and SLM artifacts. I analyzed the data and made connections to the research questions and conceptual frameworks. In this chapter, I describe the setting of the study, the demographics represented in the population, the collection and analysis of data, the

evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and the study summary. This chapter includes the

results of the case study analysis of the experiences and beliefs of eight SLM educators

who participated in extensive professional development for early literacy instruction and

who implemented SLM for 2 or more years.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was a rural, public school district in the southeastern

United States. The school district designed SLM as an innovative model of literacy

learning and instruction to combat declining literacy rates among economically

disadvantaged students in kindergarten through second grade. The intended outcome was

to facilitate on-time and grade-level reading and writing trajectories for students exiting

primary grades and before high stakes testing in Grade 3.

Students were selected to participate in SLM based upon entry-level reading

assessment data and socioeconomic status. Minus mobility, students remained in the

cohort for 3 consecutive years through the end of second grade. SLM teachers were also

placed in cohort teams intended to remain constant for 3 consecutive years where they

participated in on-going, rigorous professional development in the areas of initial and

intervention literacy instruction, student and family engagement in literacy learning, and

the use of technology for literacy development.

Demographics

Eight SLM educators consented to participate in this study. Each participant was

at least 18 years of age and participated in the professional development for SLM. Each

participant had a minimum of 2 years of SLM experience. Five of the participants were

SLM teachers and three were SLM instructional coaches. All participants were female. Of the eight participants, all had 10 or more years of teaching experience, and all had primary or elementary certification. Of the eight participants, four held certification in English for Speakers of Other Languages and four held certification in Educational Leadership. Of the eight participants, two held reading endorsements, and one was a National Board Certified teacher. All but one of the eight participants had other leadership experiences beyond classroom teaching. In this study, the demographics were limited to gender, areas of certification, total years of teaching experience, years of SLM experience, and other coaching or leadership experience. Table 4 shows the participants' profiles and is followed by a summary of each participant.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Participant code	Areas of certification	Role in SLM	Total years of teaching experience	Years of SLM experience	SLM grade level(s) taught	Other coaching or leadership experience
P1	Elementary education; ESOL; Educational leadership	Teacher	23	4	2nd	National Board Certified
P2	Elementary education; ESOL	Teacher	13	5	K, 1st	None
P3	Elementary education ESE; ESOL; Reading; educational leadership	Teacher	10	4	1st	Content area specialist English Language Arts
P4	Elementary education; ESOL	Teacher	28	5	1st	Mentor teacher for interns
P5	Elementary education; ESOL; Education leadership	Instructional coach	30	5	K-2	Title I
P6	Primary education; Reading; Educational leadership	Instructional coach	24	3	K-2	Title I
P7	Elementary education; Early childhood education	Instructional coach	33	5	K-2	Title I
P8	Elementary education; ESOL	Teacher	26	4	K-1	Content area specialist math

Summary of Participants

Participant 1 (P1) had 23 years of teaching experience and taught SLM second grade for 4 years. She holds National Board certification and has served as a dean for 3 years. P1's state certification is held in Elementary Education, Exceptional Student Education, and Educational Leadership. She is also endorsed for English as a Second Language. P1 shared her SLM experiences with a focus on students. Each response culminated in how SLM created literacy learning where students were "active participants" and how the instructional strategies had the potential to "transform students' confidence" as readers. P1 provided examples of the "highly motivational" leveled readers and rubrics for language stems. Her detailed connections between SLM professional development, implementation components, and students' response to SLM crafted a complete demonstration of the school improvement cycle.

Participant 2 (P2) had 13 years of teaching experience with 5 years of SLM instruction in Kindergarten and first grade. P2 is an alternatively certified teacher with state certification held in Elementary Education with an endorsement for English as a Second Language. P2 described the instructional resources provided for SLM, such as Action 100 (American Reading Company, 2020), Saxon Phonics (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020), and Symphony Math, and explained how students interacted with them to build daily routines around the "progression" of skills where students "took ownership" of their learning. P2 described SLM professional development and the struggle to "try to make me fit SLM." P2 shared that her SLM coach encouraged her "step back and make SLM fit you." P2 drew from the "sense of family" in SLM among

teachers, coaches, and students. P2 described her SLM classroom as one filled with energy, song, dance, love, and rigor; a place best described in her own words, "You must meet the Maslow's before you meet the Bloom's."

Participant 3 (P3) had 10 years of teaching experience and taught 4 years in SLM. She taught first grade and holds state certification in Elementary Education, Exceptional Student Education, Educational Leadership with endorsements in Reading and English as a Second Language. Currently, P3 is a content area specialist in English Language Arts. P3 described the SLM experience as "back to the basics" with "constant support" for growth among all students. She explained the relationships between explicit literacy instruction and routine celebrations for student growth. When students reached their "steps," they received public acknowledgment and medals. P3 explained how routines and teacher-student conferencing allowed her to "hone in on" students' needs.

Participant 4 (P4) taught SLM for 5 years with a total of 28 years as an educator. P4 holds state certification in Elementary Education with an endorsement in English as a Second Language. She is also a clinical educator who mentors practicum teachers. P4's reflections emphasized the "differentiated" and "self-motivating" nature of SLM. She described how she looped with her students from one year to the next and reaped the benefits of SLM professional development that provided practice in higher grade levels. P4 appreciated SLM training that focused on "single aspects" of instruction, which allowed them "to work on and build on" these discrete program elements in the classroom.

Participant 5 (P5) had 30 years of experience in education. She has served as an instructional coach for 8 years and an SLM coach for 5 years. P5 holds state certification in Elementary Education and Educational Leadership with an endorsement in English as a Second Language. P5 is currently serving as an English Language Arts content area specialist and previously worked as the lead reading coach for Title I. P5 described how she could "see the progression of procedures and practices" throughout SLM professional development and how the training provided "ideas to take back." P5 emphasized the close relationships with teachers and their collaboration when identifying areas to work on in the classroom. P5 believed that SLM was a predecessor to standards-based instruction and that SLM teachers were ahead of the pedagogical shift to using informational text to teach literacy.

Participant 6 (P6) had 24 years of teaching experience and holds state certification in Elementary Education and Educational Leadership with an endorsement in Reading. P6 was an SLM instructional coach for 2 years and has since worked in Title I as the district parent involvement coordinator. P6 also described a relationship between the new state standards in 2013-2014 and the ease of transition for SLM teachers because they were already using standards-based practices. P6 explained that the fishbowl model was used for professional development where teachers would watch live instruction with students and then discuss, reflect, and ask questions about implementation. In this process, P6 fondly remembers "learning right there" with her teachers and how these experiences "bonded" them.

Participant 7 (P7) had 33 years of teaching experience with state certification held in Elementary Education. She has been an instructional coach for 15 years with five years in SLM and 10 at Title I. P7 reflected on how she "learned with them (teachers)" and how SLM coaches would help each other across the district. P7 described the saturated focus on students and their reading at school and at home. She explained the leveled readers available in every SLM classroom from which students would self-select topics of interest within their level. Students would "read for enjoyment" because they had access to books at their level. P7 found parents more knowledgeable about their child's literacy experiences at school and praised the sense of community among SLM cohorts.

Participant 8 (P8) had 18 years of teaching experience. She taught SLM kindergarten for three years and SLM second grade for one year. P8 now serves as a Math Coach and is finishing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. P8 holds state certifications in Elementary Education and Educational Leadership with an endorsement in English as a Second Language. P8 believed the first year of SLM training was "overwhelming," but described it as filled with "deep insights" about early literacy instruction. She emphasized the "amazing" support from SLM coaches and described her coach as "actively involved" in modeling, planning, and helping with implementation. P8 described SLM instruction as "logical and sequential" and touted SLM as a "student-driven model for literacy." She repeated throughout the interview that when implemented with fidelity, SLM had the "potential to close gaps" in the primary grades.

Data Collection

The data collection process began after the Walden University IRB approved my study on October 14, 2019. The approval number is 10-14-19-0397116. Following IRB approval, I sent the initial email invitation to SLM teachers and coaches within the school district. The list of 18 potential participants was obtained from an SLM coach. After receiving an intent to participate reply email from each participant, I emailed the informed consent with a request to schedule the interview. In the same email, I asked the participant to bring SLM artifacts with them to the interview. They were also invited to email artifacts following signed consent. The informed consent was signed at the time of the face-to-face interview. I created an excel spreadsheet to track invitations, replies, scheduled interviews, and receipt of artifacts and journal responses. Of the original 18 initial email invitations, three declined, seven did not respond, and eight voluntarily participated in the study.

All face-to-face interviews were scheduled and held in a public library, private study room. At the beginning of each interview, I thanked the participant and carefully reviewed the informed consent, which included the study background, purpose, procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and sample interview questions. I reminded participants of the voluntary nature of the study and reiterated that they could stop at any time. I offered to answer any questions they might have about the informed consent and then obtained each participant's signature on the consent form. I reminded participants that the interview would be audio-recorded and that they would receive a copy of the

transcription from their interview to correct as needed. I also explained that they would receive a summary of the findings after the study was completed.

I collected data from eight participants for three weeks. Of the eight participants, five were SLM teachers, and three were SLM instructional coaches. Data collection for this study consisted of three data sources: (a) face-to-face interviews, (b) curriculum artifacts, such as training documents or instructional resources, and (c) a reflective journal entry. All but two participants provided all three data sources. One participant did not provide a reflective journal entry, and another did not provide artifacts.

All of the participants live and work in the county where SLM was implemented. All of the participants are still currently educators in the district. As I scheduled and conducted the interviews, I was flexible and cognizant of the time demands of educators. For all face-to-face interviews, I used a cell phone recording program. The interviews lasted between 16 and 20 minutes. None of the interviews stopped the interview process. All of the participants were interviewed once. All of the participants responded to all questions. On two occasions, participants needed a probe from the original question. I transcribed each interview verbatim. Transcribed interviews were emailed to each participant.

At the end of each face-to-face interview, I provided the reflective journal prompt in hard copy and explained that I would also email the prompt to them. In the prompt email, I thanked each participant again and asked for a "reply" response to the journal prompt taking no more than 30 minutes of their time to complete. There was no variation or unusual circumstances in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Recruitment

The recruitment process consisted of obtaining educator emails from the district's Outlook email distribution list. Email addresses are also accessible through the schools' websites. The initial email included a brief introduction to the researcher, a purpose statement, and the inclusion filter of at least two years of SLM experience while also having completed the SLM professional development. I sent 18 emails to potential participants who were asked to reply to the email if they wanted to participate in the study. The second email, sent to those who responded with interest to participate, asked for a convenient date and time to meet at the public library. The email also requested SLM artifacts. I tracked each communication in a master spreadsheet shown in Figure 2. For confidentiality, names, locations, and current school information are hidden.

	Role	Email invite	Date	Time Reserved	Prompt emailed	Journal Prompt Rec'd
P1	T	initial email 10-16-19	10/18/2019	4:45pm	10/21/2019	10/21/2019
P2	T	initial email 10-16-19	10/19/2019	10:00am	10/20/2019	10/21/2019
P3	T	initial email 10-17-19	10/21/2019	3:30pm	10/23/2019	10/27/2019
P4	T	initial email 10-16-19	10/23/2019	4:00pm	10/23/2019	10/24/2019
P5	C	initial email 10-17-19	10/24/2019	4:45pm	10/27/2019	10/31/2019
P6	C	initial email 10-23-19	11/1/2019	3:30pm	11/2/2019	11/6/2019
P7	C	initial email 10-17-19	11/4/2019	4:00pm	11/6/2019	11/10/2019
P8	T	initial email 11-2-19	11/8/2019	4:00pm	11/9/2019	NA

Figure 2. Recruitment and data collection schedule.

I interviewed five SLM teachers and three SLM instructional coaches. All were recruited via email. Attempts to recruit male participants to ensure diversity were unsuccessful. The second email included the informed consent, which described the study and protections for participants. All eight SLM educators met the inclusion criteria of at least two years of SLM experience and having completed the SLM professional development. Face-to-face interviews occurred once for each participant at the public library and lasted no more than 30 minutes. Each interview was recorded an iPhone. Field notes were taken during the one-on-one interviews.

At, or after the interview, each participant shared SLM artifacts. Hand-delivered, hard copy artifacts were scanned into PDF documents and returned via courier service within the district to the contributing participant. Artifact collection provided me additional opportunity to reflect on common characteristics following the interviews. After the interview, on the next calendar date, one reflective prompt was emailed to each participant with all but one response received in return. For the written reflective prompt, the participant was instructed to reflect on their SLM experience and respond and answer the following question: What are your feelings or beliefs about your effectiveness in implementing SLM frameworks? After receipt of each journal response, I read participants' reflections for understanding. Each response clearly represented personal "I" statements in describing first-person beliefs about SLM implementation. These reflective journal responses added documentation to the data set for triangulation and specifically addressed personal beliefs of self-efficacy. There were no unusual circumstances encountered or variation from the plan in the data collection.

Data Analysis

The procedures for data analysis for this qualitative multiple case study are based on Yin's cross-case analysis for comparing two or more cases (Creswell, 2013). Cross case analysis allows the researcher to identify similarities and differences among multiple cases in answering the research questions and understanding SLM teachers' and coaches' experiences. The steps for data analysis were:

1. For each participant, the case as a whole will be described along with the contexts of the participants' SLM experience.

2. Codes attached to units of meaning found within the transcribed participant responses, journal topic responses, and program artifacts will be described in the direct interpretation.

3. Categorical aggregation will reveal cross-case categories of codes.

4. Thematic synthesis will originate from a fusion of the thematic analyses across multiple cases of the participants' experience implementing SLM.

Multiple interactions with the data and reflection on these interactions by note taking about the ideas, concepts, and relationships found in the data, supported deep knowledge of the transcripts, artifacts, and prompt responses. The process of working with descriptive or observational data is important for explaining the SLM experience through themes and patterns. I maintained a folder of field notes to complement the audio-recorded interviews and captured nonverbal indicators or sematic context during the interviews. Field notes and memoing were critical research processes that reduced memory bias over time between interviewing, transcribing, and coding.

Data Structuring: Dedoose ™

The inductive approach was used to analyze the data. All data sources were stored as digital content. To code and analyze this data, I created a Dedoose™ study database. Dedoose™ is an online data management system used to code, categorize, and organize discrete units of meaning to analyze data for larger themes. All data was first entered in Dedoose™ in textual form. Using Dedoose™ assisted in organizing the data to observe patterns and create themes.

The interviews were transcribed, and all reflective journal prompt responses were received in written form. All SLM artifacts were uploaded as documents. I revisited my research questions to understand the objectives of the study and to begin organizing data. I created digital files to store all transcripts, artifacts, and reflective journal responses. Before, during, and after transcribing, I listened to the recording to ensure accuracy in speech nuances, such as pauses, stutters, repeated words, rhetorical questions, punctuation, or directional changes. During the process of transcribing audio-recordings, I began to get a sense of participant's SLM experiences.

In Dedoose™, I uploaded all interview transcripts first. I then uploaded artifacts followed by the reflective journal responses. There were eight interview transcripts, seven journal entries, and 16 SLM artifacts. I coded each transcript in its entirety by reading text line by line and highlighting words, phrases, and selections of text that represented a unit of meaning. I repeated this process of identification of units of meaning for each interview transcript.

Next, I coded all reflective journal responses, in the same manner, line by line, and then coded artifacts. Coding artifacts included segments of content related to units of meaning identified in the interview transcripts and the journal responses. I had to re-code five documents as a result of an error with saving the codes in Dedoose™. Initial coding resulted from identifying units of meaning from the respondents' descriptions. There were 55 initial codes. Saturation was reached with no new codes being created at transcript P8. Triangulation of data generated initial codes and patterns that resulted in categories of units of meanings. From the categories, themes emerged. I created memos in my study folder about developing patterns and themes.

I identified initial codes and patterns for each participant and combined the patterns into major themes across all participants. After reviewing the data as coded in Dedoose™ to further analyze the results of interview responses, journal responses, and SLM artifacts, I created a coding table. The table of codes, shown in Table 5, assisted in combining similar patterns across cases into major themes from initial and axial coding. In this process, I made connections and related codes into categories, concepts, themes, and conclusions.

Table 5

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Initial codes	Categories	Patterns	Topics	Theme
PD fishbowl PD SLM PD coaching PD goal setting PD cohorts	Professional development and collaboration	SLM pedagogy and instructional components were effective in literacy instruction and learner development as a result of comprehensive PD.	PD was intensive, on-going, included weekly coaching, and routine collaboration among SLM educators.	Comprehensive support for early implementers believed to positively impact inside and outside of the classroom experiences of SLM educators.
Reading Reading Pals Action 100 Power goals ELL students Saxon Phonics Sight words Accountable talk Student-teacher conferencing Anchor charts	Comprehensive model for early literacy instruction	Several researched-based approaches for literacy instruction were included in SLM implementation.	Instruction was delivered to individual students at their instructional level and whole group via explicit phonics instruction.	The program was differentiated, individualized, and learning-focused.
Scaffolded instruction Paraprofessional support Culture Rewards Field trips Student ownership Student-centered Students as topic experts	Students social, emotional, and behavioral needs supported for engagement	Literacy learning was intentionally planned to build success and ensure growth for students. All tasks were created with the learner in mind and were data-driven.	A student-driven model for literacy development. Student interest, ability, and engagement were priority considerations for growth.	Program elements created a culture of student success. Students were part of a learning community where the celebrations of achievement and high expectations were the norm.
Science libraries Research labs Sentence stems	Writing as literacy learning	Non-fiction texts, research rubrics, and sentence stems were used for standards-based mastery.	High-interest reading materials motivate reading and writing among students.	Students became content experts, authors, and teachers through the use of research labs and high interest, leveled reading material.
iPads	Technology resource	IPads were used for instruction, research, and computer-assisted reading tutorials.	Technology afforded a supplement learning tool for students.	Early exposure to mobile technology as a source of information and instruction engaged students.

Initial codes	Categories	Patterns	Topics	Theme
Student motive/attitudes Teacher beliefs Transformative for students Experiences with SLM	Teacher beliefs	Teachers believe that SLM was successful because of the growth mindset, strategic intent to eliminate gaps in performance, and exit students reading on grade level.	Confidence, relationships, support, efficacy, and growth through fidelity implementation for teacher and student.	The SLM experience was perceived as positive and desirable both in efficacy and sociocultural learning for literacy learning.
Family literacy Parent training Stigma Reading logs Reading pals	Family interactions with literacy	Training parents in at-home literacy support. Requiring SLM families to support nightly reading via Reading logs and word lists.	Parents were invited into school-life and provided literacy experiences to empower them and build a partnership for student success.	Engaging families in literacy was a priority, but other stakeholders (administration, school counselor, Reading Pal) often stood in the gap.

Summary of Participants

P1

P1 interview responses originated 26 initial codes from 35 excerpts. Her experiences with SLM professional development, program implementation, family involvement, and collaboration among SLM educators link the complex relationships among teacher development for innovative practice and creating supportive environments for learning to occur. According to her reflective journal response, P1 believed in her ability to effectively implement SLM as a result of the professional development outside of the classroom and the interactions with stakeholders and students inside the classroom. P1 provided two artifacts: (a) Action 100 Parent Night Agenda and (b) Research Rubric. According to P1, "This program was so successful because students learned to love reading."

P1 interview responses detailed SLM instructional elements, such as Saxon Phonics, Action 100, and student-teacher conferences. She emphasized that independent

reading for students must be "fun, fast, and easy." According to P1, the leveled readers

provided through American Reading Company (American Reading Company, 2020)

benefited students in self-selection of books for independent reading. P1 cited examples

of how SLM culture for learning created structure, high expectations, accountability, and

celebration in a safe environment. She believed that SLM met the individual needs of

students, and in doing so, "nothing teachers like success!" The passion she holds for SLM

was articulated in her interview response as she reflected on SLM as a motivational

learning experience where students are "active participants" developing a "love for

reading." P1 believed "the biggest plus of SLM was that it took students where they

were, and with the support of home and school, we moved them to where they need to be.

We closed gaps."

P2

P2 interview responses yielded eight new codes from 57 excerpts. The greatest

number of codes was Culture Rewards. New codes generated from the interview

transcripts of P2 include professional development in Cohorts, Action 100, Power

Towers, Reading Pals, and Student Ownership. Student-Centered was coded five times.

P2 described the role of the SLM Coach as "mental support and cheerleader." She

reflected on her experiences navigating the structures, schedules, and other demands of

SLM and how the coach encouraged her "to take a step back" to make SLM fit her

instead of the other way around. P2 described in her journal response how

"overwhelming" the different programs embedded in SLM were to integrate into a

cohesive experience. Once the pieces "fit together," she "felt truly confident" in her effectiveness as an SLM teacher.

P2 provided three artifacts: (a) Learning SLM Research Labs Parent Letter and (b) two weeks of lesson plans. The parent letter was anecdotal to the interview description of how research labs worked inside the classroom and how parent knowledge of these expectations might support learning outside of the classroom. The lesson plans exampled the daily structure of SLM and instructional procedures, such as student-teacher conferencing, Power Goals, and monitoring student literacy behaviors and reading comprehension. The lesson plans added data on centers for learning, writing task cards, word work, and sight word practice. P2 emphasized in all data sources that student engagement through song, dance, games, goal setting, and celebrations of learning were dominant characteristics of her SLM classroom. When asked, "what were your experiences in literacy instruction in SLM," P2 replied "this one might take a while" and explained at-length how SLM brought successful literacy experiences to struggling, at-risk primary students. P2 believed that experiences inside the classroom, such as explicit and scaffolded literacy instruction, were strongly complemented with experiences outside of the classroom, such as Reading Pals, Reading Logs, and celebrations attended by family members.

P3

P3 interview responses originated three new codes, with a total of 30 codes from 38 excerpts. Reading Logs, Family Literacy, and Experience with SLM Literacy were coded most frequently from the excerpts. P3 provided two artifacts: (a) an example of

sentence stems for writing standard RI.1.2 and (b) a sampling of conferencing tools from American Reading Company. These artifacts provide insight into codes for Leveling, Conferencing, and Action 100 and make connections among these SLM frameworks.

P3 explained heterogeneous groups where literacy resources, such as the science leveled readers, provided students access to content knowledge at any level of reading development. Research labs gave students opportunities to internalize writing standards. P3 explained that inside the classroom, students "had a great foundation with writing about literature" because they wrote daily after reading. She described how FaceTiming with other classrooms to share their insect studies. P3 described the SLM culture as "centered on the students growing and getting better" and the celebrations for students when they moved up "steps." P3 explained, "we were constantly celebrating each other, and we were constantly supporting each other." P3 believed "the professional development was very thorough and assisted the success of SLM experiences inside the classroom," but elaborated more on the importance of the collegial relationships outside of the classroom in pursuit of SLM fidelity. She reflects in her journal prompt response, "So, we still have a great relationship all these years later. All the people that I met at those trainings, we still get together. We still talk all the time. So, it was great just to learn the material but all to meet each other."

P4

P4 originated four new codes, with a total of 54 codes from 67 excerpts. Experiences with SLM Literacy were coded most frequently, followed by Culture Rewards and Reading Logs. P4 provided two artifacts: (a) Research Rubric and (b) a

sampling of SLM lesson plans. The Research Rubric provided insight on how students researched topics, such as bugs and marine life. The lesson plans show the infrastructure of SLM and instructional processes, such as assessment, direct instruction, conferencing, research labs, and the literacy block in its entirety. The lesson plans also show writing, endurance reading, and other subjects, such as math, science, and social studies.

P4 reflected in the journal prompt response that her "effectiveness grew more each year" despite an "overwhelming" first year. She described experiences inside the classroom with her paraprofessional as a "comfortable routine," where each has specific roles in supporting "student's learning and progress." Outside of the classroom, P4 described the trainings as "tailored to suit the needs of our teachers" and "focused on problems were facing and how to better serve groups of students."

P5 originated no new codes from 25 excerpts. Most frequent codes from the interview responses included Culture Rewards, PD SLM, PD Coaching, and Leveling Readers. During the interview with P5, two question probes were used: (a) "would you describe" and (b) "any elaboration on." P5 had the fewest number of excerpts and even still, her belief in the effectiveness of SLM is captured in her assertion that, "The whole district school district needs to use it. I think if you used it K through 12, you would see scores sore because all these students feel confident in their reading and feel better about themselves."

P5

P5 provided two SLM artifacts: (a) SLM Action 100 To-Do for Families and (b) Paraprofessional Ways to Assist. This outline of SLM paraprofessional tasks illuminates

the influence of a full-time paraprofessional in primary classrooms when used for

scaffolding literacy development among students. An excerpt from this artifact is found

in Figure 3.

Warm up:

- Sitting with student(s) (indicated by the teacher) to quietly prompt for active participation or reinforce concepts being discussed.
- Do Review Decks with children needing extra practice.
- Give Phonemic Awareness Assessment as directed by the teacher. This can be for new students or for those students not making adequate progress during the year.
- Assist with passing out of lesson materials for spelling review (worksheet or letter tiles).
- Assist with distribution of alphabet strips as needed.
- Help children follow the ABC strip by touching each letter as it is said.

Figure 3. Paraprofessional ways to assist.

P5 reflected on her role as an SLM coach in the journal response and expressed

that she "was effective in implementing the SLM frameworks." She described the process

of SLM professional development as "the gradual release model, starting with a

workshop, moving into grade group meetings, then into fishbowl demonstration lessons,

and finally into 1:1 support as needed." P5 also described the teamwork outside of the

SLM classroom, such as monthly SLM coaches meetings at the Title I office and

administrator support of SLM frameworks, as important variables of implementation. She

wrote, "Coaches and principals paired up together to discuss data trends that we were

seeing at our schools." P5 reflected on her role inside the classroom as a facilitator of

instruction that builds confidence among students as readers. Her SLM experiences

broadened insights about early literacy and positive socialization. P5 stated, "When children feel confident, you don't usually have any kind of social problems."

P6

P6 interview responses originated no new codes, with 12 codes from 15 excerpts. P6 had the shortest interview duration and concisely conveyed her SLM experiences. When asked about SLM professional development, she stated, "I think it was the very best professional development that I've ever seen in our county." This belief is contextualized as significant with 24 years of experience in the school district. P6 provided two artifacts: (a) High-Frequency Word Station and (b) 900 Steps as a sample of the positive reinforcement of achieved student goals. The word station task card is evidence of the literacy skills developed among primary students through routine word work. P6 elaborated on the "steps" and reflected during the interview:

> We had a big award ceremony. It was just that kids thought they were so special, and I think that's what was the best part for the students. They got the confidence. They were readers, and they knew it, and they were confident.

P6 emphasized in the journal prompt response that she believed herself to be "highly effective in teaching and supporting teachers in the delivery of reading instruction within the model." She continued, I was very confident in my abilities to model instruction in the classrooms and support teachers through this part of their implementation." Outside of the classroom, P6 referenced on-going collaboration that included problem-solving, observations of other SLM coaches, and sharing of SLM practices.

P7

P7 originated one new code, with a total of 12 codes from 17 excerpts. The most frequent code was PD Coaching. P7 reflected on her SLM coaching experiences for the duration of the program and described the progression of teacher development where each professional development session gave "one piece at a time, followed by practice." As a coach, she recalls how they learned alongside teachers, but also supported one another in the coaching role. She described how they would occasionally coach together, and the focus was "more about the kids" and how they responded to SLM.

P7 reflected on the social-emotional learning of students, "being able to enjoy a text and sit on the floor and read it with a friend or read it to the teacher." She also described her belief that the cohort model for students benefited academic learning and family engagement. She reflected, "I think it built community at their school and then with others." Outside the school, P7 stated, "we built culture not only within the school but with the teachers across the district." P7 did not provide any SLM artifacts.

P8

P8 originated no new codes, with a total of 31 codes from 41 excerpts. P8 did not provide a reflective journal prompt response, but did provide three SLM artifacts: (a) Word Study Task Card, (b) Research Lab Organizer, and (c) Academy Special Event Parent Letter. The artifacts connected to the interview responses in that P8 connected learning to read, speak, and write as symbiotic processes. She detailed the progression of early literacy development from learning sounds and letters and then on to sight words to build fluency. P8 described SLM as a "truly student-centered and driven model for

literacy." She attributed highly engaging and leveled reading materials from which students could choose the "just right reading level" and content of interest. She reflected on the "logical and sequential" skills that "built upon each other in ways that the kids got." P8 contextualized student progress in student empowerment and ownership of their learning.

When asked, "how do you feel about student's social-emotional needs and SLM learning," P8 commented, "Great question" and further described the stigma with "low kids" being placed in SLM. The caution was to avoid a negative mindset translating to students and families. P8 believed SLM culture to be "the best thing that I've seen come across the county." She believed that "it has the potential to close the achievement gap in reading." She contextualized SLM as "systematic progressive." According to P8, family interactions are limited due to life constraints and described the disadvantaged plight of specific students from her experience as an SLM teacher. P8 advised the advantage of an earlier screener to better identify students' needs. Inside the classroom, P8 testified how "we supported and scaffolded, but we didn't coddle. We set high expectations, and the kids rose to it." Outside the classroom, P8 relied upon the coach to answer questions and assist with celebration events for students and their families.

Categorical Aggregation

Once all of the data was collected, transcribed, and analyzed, patterns emerged and were categorized by common attributes and characteristics among the triangulated data. A cross-case analysis assisted in understanding these specific and common characteristics identified by study participants of the SLM experience. There were no

discrepant cases. The diversity found in participant demographics, such as teaching experiences in years, subjects, and grade levels, teacher certifications, or other leadership experiences might have yielded such a case, but did not.

Three major themes were identified as a result of initial coding and categorical aggregation following the collection of data from SLM teachers and instructional coaches. The themes were:

1. Personal beliefs about the SLM experience as an educator responsible for implementation and educator beliefs about students' experience as literacy learners.

2. Differentiated instruction and sociocultural learning within the classroom as experienced among SLM educators and their students.

3. Conditions outside of the SLM classroom that influenced implementation efficacy and interactions among community, district, school, student, and family stakeholders.

Once these themes or patterns were identified within each case, themes across the cases were identified to assist in understanding educators' beliefs and perceptions about the SLM experience with a focus on the research questions for this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative case study involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these research strategies, when applied rigorously by the researcher, gives assurance to truthful and non-biased study results. Trustworthiness is established when the researcher transparently demonstrates these to

external readers. The following sections describe methodology procedures to allow future researchers to replicate this study in order to add to the literature about early literacy instruction.

Credibility was embedded throughout the design of this qualitative case study through the triangulation of data, coding procedures until saturation was achieved, and reflexivity with a reflective journal. Triangulation of data was achieved through the collection, coding, and analysis of three data sources: (a) transcribed face-to-face interviews, (b) a reflective journal prompt response, and (c) program artifacts. Saturation of this triangulated data was achieved at transcript number eight. All coding procedures were described in a previous section for transparency and, if needed, duplication. Reflexivity is a term used to describe a systematic process for analyzing the interactions between the researcher and the research for continual self-awareness and effect on the research itself. Journaling throughout the study to note my interpretations, questions, follow up items, and other reflections were important to provide a true account of the participants' thoughts and perspectives.

Transferability refers to the replicability of the study procedures and findings within other contexts because the procedures used to conduct the original study are explained in depth. For my study, transferability is evidenced in the scripted nature of how the study was conducted following rigorous standards for qualitative research. I described how the data was collected from each participant, how the data were coded, categorized, and analyzed using Dedoose™, and provided samples of data throughout the

description of themes and results. Recruiting participants with diverse demographics occurred as a strategy for transferability.

Dependability in qualitative case study research involves documenting the procedures of the research design, implementation of the study, and reflection on the effectiveness of the research. For my study, I used audit trails to ensure dependability. I recorded and transcribed the interviews and applied a triangulation of data. The face-to-face interviews revealed the perspectives and beliefs of SLM educators about implementation, professional development, and culture for literacy learning. Following the interview, participants completed a reflective journal prompt response. I also collected program artifacts, which provided samples of topics described in the interview and the prompt responses. The design of interview and journal prompt questions maximized participants' responses and thereby increased data collection. Revisiting the data over time also increased the dependability of findings.

As an elementary educator and school administrator, I had to ensure that my bias did not influence the study. To ensure confirmability, I used triangulation of data, reflexivity, and intentionally looked for negative instances in the data. I conducted a data audit to analyze my procedures, reflections, and limitations of the study. I maintained notes throughout and memoed my thoughts, feelings, and reflections. I documented procedures for checking and rechecking the data from the transcription of interviews through coding, categorization, and analyzing themes found within the data.

Results

The primary research question for this qualitative multiple case study is What are the experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program? The secondary questions are How do teachers and coaches experience literacy instruction in SLM? and What are teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of the SLM literacy program? I developed the results based on the three major themes identified above and described participants' beliefs and opinions through these themes.

Theme 1: Personal Beliefs

The first theme was identified and defined as personal beliefs about SLM and early literacy development. These educators' experiences reflected beliefs in two subthemes: (a) celebration of student learning and (b) implementer self-efficacy. The interview responses and reflective journal prompt responses revealed common themes among the personal beliefs of SLM educators. The primary research question asks of the SLM educator experiences to gain insight into how these beliefs explain implementation for students' early literacy development. Comprehensive program elements integrated and were reflected in the belief that effective early literacy instruction includes explicit and direct instruction, student engagement, student interest, high expectations, and a sense of community among stakeholders.

SLM was believed to be successful because it brought together a combination of approaches designed to change the course of literacy development among at-risk primary students. The common pursuit and membership in SLM embodied a culture of teaching and learning intentionally created to eliminate poor literacy development and the

potential for diminished life quality by intervening with effective initial and intervention instruction. SLM educators believed that the program worked because it placed students at the center and encompassed them with the very best experiences: academically, socially, and emotionally.

All eight participants described components of the literacy instruction and made connections among these components with student growth and the culture of success! P1 reflected that program developers "made sure that it was well-rounded" to address all five areas of reading instruction and went on to explain that this was "very important to me that it wasn't just a program that worked off one model." P8 described the SLM culture as "a safe culture where students aren't' afraid to take chances" and where "you were rewarded, your hard work, your efforts were rewarded." P2 stated, "Our rooms are like happy families."

Subtheme 1: Celebration of student learning. A subtheme of personal beliefs about the SLM culture is the celebration of student achievement. SLM provided explicit recognition programs intended to incentive effort and encourage students to own their learning through an understanding of the "steps" for daily reading. Weekly celebrations of each student who moved up levels as a result of time spent reading, positively reinforced the growth mindset culture of SLM. P6 explained, "the best is when we gave them the awards it was total celebration little baby steps."

P3 believed SLM was a place where "the kids really became family because we are constantly celebrating each other and constantly supporting each other." This supportive culture was also experienced among SLM educators. P6 reflected that "The

program just brought us closer. We had each other's backs, and it was a good feeling

because you know, we were on the same page, and we have the support of our

administrator of supervisor." P4 fondly recalls, "I loved this program, and we ended up

with a team that taught it together."

      Subtheme 2: Implementer self-efficacy. A second subtheme of the SLM

experience reflected in the personal beliefs of SLM teachers and coaches is their ability to

effectively implement this model. Participants' reflections summarize the initial year as

"overwhelming," but also solidifying. The undertaking of new pedagogy and curriculum

alongside new scripted programs was described as a journey, a progression of

professional growth where the beginning was challenging and difficult. According to P3,

"I felt I was very effective at implementing the Academy model at the end of the 4 years,

but it was a process to get there. The first year was very challenging." She continued,

> I believe student growth is the most important sign of effectiveness for any
>
> program. By the end of the year, 65% of the students in that class were on grade
>
> level or above. The growth they made was incredible! It was this growth that truly
>
> sold me on the Academy model of teaching.

P4 reflected, "I feel my effectiveness grew more each year I taught the program." P1

described that she "worked to implement each program with fidelity" to maximize their

effect. P1 strongly connected the belief in herself to effectively implement SLM with her

students' growth. She explained,

> Most importantly, students took ownership of their learning. They could tell you
>
> their power goal and what they needed to do to be successful. Through goal

setting, action planning, and frequent feedback, students saw the fruit of their

labor and were highly motived to learn and grow.

SLM educators described self-efficacy in their reflections of how they navigated a

complex instructional model designed to close performance gaps in the earliest years of

education. Their measures of efficacy are described in terms of student performance and

student behavior. Self-efficacy was also contextualized by SLM educators in the

navigation of the model's infrastructure, such as daily schedules and program fidelity

checklists. P3 described,

> The most effective teachers implement programs with fidelity but also add
>
> necessary modifications based on what their students need. Structure is very
>
> important to me in the classroom and that made implementing the Academy
>
> model easier. You had to have a rigid schedule to fit in all of the pieces. This just
>
> meant I needed to be on point each and every day to maximize minutes.

SLM educators were assigned class rosters of the most at-risk primary students, tasked

with learning new instructional programs concurrently and routinely evaluate program

efficacy through the lens of student performance. The triangulation of data reveals that

SLM educators not only believed in their ability to accomplish a successful

implementation but contextualized this belief in pride for what their students achieved in

leaving SLM as on-grade level readers.

SLM educators' beliefs in their own ability to implement this program

influenced their implementation of the innovation with positive outcomes. The culture of

celebration of student learning combined with educators' beliefs in their capacity to

effectively teach early literacy resulted in systemic growth among these at-risk students. Educators described how and why SLM created conditions for their success as implementers, reading teachers, and collaborators toward students' growth for exiting the program reading on grade level. SLM educators described SLM experiences fondly, passionately, and in the belief that the program should be replicated across grade levels and schools within the district.

Theme 2: Differentiated Instruction Within the Classroom

The participants described differentiated experiences in the SLM classroom where they identified and responded to the different learning needs of students as a major theme. There were three subthemes identified: (1) Action 100 and Leveled Readers, (2) Teacher-Student Conferencing, and (3) the use of paraprofessionals during instruction. Within the SLM classroom, there are several programs and processes attributed to the overall success of implementation, such as Saxon Phonics, American Reading, Research Labs, and the state's curriculum standards. These were used for literacy instruction in consideration of individual student's needs identified through formative and summative assessments. A sample literacy block, an SLM artifact, is shown in Figure 4.

PLANS – GRADES 1-2

LITERACY BLOCK   needs to be 120+ mins
WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION (GRADE LEVEL)   needs to follow Curriculum Map
30 mins. LUNCH   30 mins. SPECIALS
10 mins. MORNING MEETING – SAXON Calendar

140 mins. LITERACY BLOCK

- 20 mins.   Whole Group – Wonders (Int. Curriculum Map – CCSS Skill/Strategy)
    1 day per week, this should be a CLOSE READ (Wonders or Exemplar text)
- 30 mins. Action 100 reading – FOCUS matches whole group instruction / conferencing
- 20 mins. Accountable Talk and/or Writing – Rubric matches whole group Instruction
- 30 mins. SAXON Phonics
- 40 mins. Small group – guided reading, SAXON fluency, word work, computer, etc.

CENTER 1 GUIDED READING	CENTER 2 SAXON/ WONDERS	CENTER 3 COMPUTER/iPADS	CENTER 4 WORD WORK/OTHER
Should match conference needs- Action 100 - This group changes as students' needs change.	Saxon Fluency books, decodables, kid card games, 2nd page, extra practice of today's lesson	Earobics, SuccessMaker, StarFall, iPAD APPS,etc.	Work on skills according to most need of class... (ex. 2G sight words, chunking words, grammar skills)

- Students rotate to 2 centers per day
- Mon/Tues Guided Reading (teacher) SAXON (para) - computers open if needed
- Wed/Thur Guided Reading (teacher), Word Work (para) - computers open if needed
- Fri – whatever's needed

Figure 4. Example of an SLM literacy block. This shows the variety of curriculum programs, whole, and small group instruction, and centers work with the use of technology for learning.

Additional instructional resources shown in Figure 4 include Wonders, which was the district-adopted reading series, and Action 100, to be discussed further as a subtheme of differentiated instruction in the SLM classroom. SLM classrooms were required to use the Wonders reading series (McGraw Hill, 2020) in addition to The American Reading curriculum resources and Saxon Phonics. SLM educators expressed a belief that this combination of instructional resources supplemented whole group literacy experiences with differentiated and individualized ones.

Assessment results were routinely used to monitor students' progress toward the development of discrete literacy skills. These assessments originated from The American

Reading curriculum, which explicitly and systematically outlined a comprehensive

approach to teaching the sequential building blocks for literacy learning. American

Reading, as a consulting agency, was also the source of much of the professional

development for SLM educators to be discussed further as a subtheme of the third theme:

interactions outside the SLM classroom.

Within the SLM classroom, teachers and students interacted with the prescribed

processes of The American Reading curriculum in a way that engaged students and

empowered teachers to effectively teach early literacy skills. P7 described her

experiences with The American Reading literacy assessments in that

> School Pace and the Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework (IRLA)
>
> were huge. I think that that brought a common voice, common knowledge, that
>
> we used the same [School Pace] app in the same thing [program] with every one
>
> of these children. You knew where they were [skills levels]. You can check on
>
> them [School Pace]. I think about that all those teachers using the same thing
>
> [School Pace and IRLA]. So, you know, you didn't have all this, 'what type of
>
> assessment are you using and how did you do it?' because we went strictly by
>
> School Pace and by the IRLA, so I think I think that's huge. I really do.

P3 described this differentiated approach in her recollection of attention to

standards-based instruction and "what students need to be successful at the standard"

balanced with what they needed if they were not on grade level. She described the

process of how she planned instruction "to scaffold them to get them up to first grade"

through whole group instruction followed by "one-on-one instruction on their level and

then in small group, they got instruction on their level." P4 explained the "logic"

underlying differentiated instruction to her SLM students in that, "You don't wear shoes

that don't fit you or you're going to end up with blisters and hurting so you're not going

to read books that don't fit you or you're going to end up with brain blisters." P7

extended this notion to the personalized nature of students reading at their own level from

self-selected books of their own interests, which is the first of three subthemes on

differentiated instruction within the SLM classroom.

Subtheme 1: Action 100 and leveled libraries. Within each SLM classroom,

there was a library of leveled readers purchased from The American Reading Company,

which included both fiction and non-fiction genres. The American Reading company

leveled texts spanning Prekindergarten through grade twelve. The leveled readers in SLM

classrooms advanced literacy skills and this advancement or progression was indicated by

color and letter in groups of leveled readers. SLM educators reflected on the clear

articulation of skill progression within the levels and how students "loved action 100 and

they loved the choices." P7 recalled,

> I think overall, when those kids got so many choices of books, and they got to
>
> take them home every day and read every single day with their parents. But
>
> something that I could really read or they really enjoyed was huge.

P2 compared her teaching experiences in terms of before and after Action 100. She

explained,

I knew how to teach reading before, but I really learned how because you got to

see the progression of the different skills through the Action 100 and getting to

see that opened my eyes to a lot of things as well.

P3 also explained her experiences with Action 100 within the SLM classroom,

Action 100 was different because it was a framework which focused on student

needs. Action 100 gave me information to determine what they needs were and I

had the freedom to decide how to support the independent reading and

conferencing.

P4 described "power goals" as part of the IRLA progression linked with the

Action 100 leveled texts. She narrated her interactions with students in the classroom,

"This is your power goal right now. You're working on three-letter blends. Practice

reading these words at home and practice with me." The five areas of reading, combined

with daily word work, were presented within Action 100 and within the levels of text and

skill in the leveled readers. Baskets of Action 100 leveled readers were throughout the

SLM classroom sorted by a variety of topics. This way, students at varying levels of

reading success had equal access to knowledge of their topic.

The leveled readers were used for research where students followed a writing

rubric or used sentence stems to complete the written research. These research reports on

science topics, such as bugs or animals, were later shared by students within the SLM

classroom among their peers. P5 recounted how students used the "informational books

to do all of the research." She continued, "That's how they can do their research, and they

knew which books to go to" for successful reading experiences and future discussions

with peers on the research topic. P3 discussed how students were grouped for research labs,

> We did all heterogeneous grouping so that students would place into groups based on the one they were interested in. So, that allowed you to have some of your higher kids working with your lower kids. When they're all talking on the same topic and because we had a wide variety of books at different levels on that topic, everyone could read. Everybody could be successful.

Much of the interaction within the SLM classroom originated and centered on the Action 100 leveled readers. Students worked on isolated literacy skills and worked extensively with sight words and vocabulary words, all within the context of the Action 100 leveled readers and IRLA. P4 explained, "They now had color words, shapes, family members, number words, days of the week, and months of the year." P8 described Action 100 as a "different philosophy" in that students self-selected reading material at their "just right reading level" and of their personal interest. She recounted one student's story and how she watched him develop a love for reading "that the series helped him too." The science standards were often addressed in the informational leveled readers. P8 recalled, it "was something that they were able to read and master that science standard through ELA [English Language Arts].

Student ownership of their learning through goal setting with Action 100 drove the sociocultural learning within the SLM classroom. P1 described her experiences with students setting goals and achieving them through Action 100. She said, "Achieving those goals just gave them fire and gave them the confidence to try something else."

Students knew their level, were given relevant, purposeful work within the classroom to grow, and then advanced to the next level in reading skills, fluency, and comprehension. Participants described how motivating it was for students to transcend into higher levels and to publicly proclaim this advancement.

P4 explained, "They love it. They love it. They're fighting over getting in higher levels and what books they can get." P5 described the accessibility that Action 100 leveled readers provided to students within the classroom and what students loved "was the success that they felt" because they had books they could read compared to traditional classrooms where "kids go in there, and they don't have materials that they can actually read."

P8 connected reading, writing, and speaking for complete literacy experiences within the SLM classroom, which were made possible through Action 100. She said, "I loved the fact that they had so much information text and then the rubrics that Action 100 creating for having accountable talk. It included literary and information components." P1 also commented on how students "became the experts" and how "children who even hated to write became writers." She described the research labs through Action 100 as opportunities for "modeling" and "scaffolding" where students were "able to apply their own writing and use it independently."

Action 100 was contextualized in the participants' responses as a pillar of the SLM experiences within the classroom. Another pillar of the SLM experience within the classroom was the one-to-one, teacher-student conferences. Action 100 and IRLA data were routinely used to help the teacher, and the student strategize learning goals and tasks

to advance to the next level of literacy learning. Teacher-Student Conferencing is subtheme number two of the theme SLM within the classroom.

Subtheme 2: Teacher-student conferencing. Each participant described how they met with every student each week, one-on-one, to assess literacy skills, measure oral reading fluency, and evaluate reading comprehension. Participants described the benefits of this conferencing as "my time to really hone in on this child" and time "to build relationships, build trust," and when they [students] became active learners and active participants in their own learning." P3 reflected in her journal prompt response,

My dedication to one-on-one conferencing is what led to most of the success. It was time-consuming, but I was able to maximize the time outside of the 30-minute Action 100 block because I could zero in on what each child needed based on what I had learned in 5-7 minutes.

P2 stated that students "love coming to the conference table. They would be like, is it my turn today? Is it my turn today? I practiced my words!" P1 described how the initial instruction delivered during whole group, such as Saxon Phonics, was reinforced during conferencing. P3 explained that these interactions within the SLM classroom motivated and engaged students in literacy learning. She stated during her interview,

Kids who really just wanted to talk about their reading and needed some extra support and attention, if I wasn't working with them one-on-one, that's not something I would have seen. And things I learned about the kids are connections to the book. When you're working with a small group, you're not going to have time to dig deep into a connection. But when you're working one-on-one, I'd say,

‘that's an interesting connection. Can you tell me how you came up with that?’

And then you learn more about the child, and that's only going to help you teach,

though.

A sample conferencing tool is shown in Figure 5. This tool was used by SLM educators

to evaluate student performance during the conference and to move through concrete

steps toward creating a power goal with and for the student. Data from IRLA was used

during the conference to address isolated skill deficits and instructional needs. As well,

this conferencing tool assisted the teacher and student in identifying reading strategies,

concepts, or habits for early literacy development.

0	Is this student successful at this level without any help?	Can the student read the words and ideas fluently and problem-solve 99% of challenges without teacher help of any kind?	___No. Stop and re-focus the conference on identifying the student's correct level. ___Yes. Continue to work on creating Student Action Plan.
1	Where should I coach this student?	Does this student need more coaching in this level or is s/he ready for coaching towards the next level?	___This level. ___Next level.
2	What one area of reading should I focus on?	What one area of reading most needs improvement so s/he can progress? (from the IRLA)	__ Comprehension __ Range of Reading/Reading Lifestyle __ Phonics/Word Solving __ Word Recognition __ Fluency and Self-Monitoring __ Vocabulary and Language
3	What essential standard (skill/ strategy or concept/habit) should the student learn next?	What one thing must the student do better in order to progress? (from the IRLA)	Student Power Goal:
4	ACTION PLAN	How will the student achieve this goal? -Constant Practice -Expert Coaching	C.P.: E.C.:

Figure 5. Sample conferencing tool identifying how teachers conference with the students.

Teacher-student conferencing within the SLM classroom was valued among SLM educators as an opportunity to routinely evaluate performance and monitor students' progress through different qualitative and quantitative measures of early literacy learning, which was then used to help students understand their own learning needs. During one-to-one conferencing, there was another valued member of the SLM classroom who

ensured support and scaffolding in the absence of teacher attention: the SLM

paraprofessional. Subtheme three of the dominant theme, interactions within the SLM

classroom, is the impact of a fulltime paraprofessional on early literacy development

among at-risk primary students.

 Subtheme 3: Use of paraprofessionals. A full-time paraprofessional was

provided for every SLM classroom, unlike traditional primary classrooms where multiple

teachers shared one paraprofessional. P2 stated that the relationship with her

paraprofessional was "amazing" and gave an example of when the state's accountability

team visited her classroom, "they said they couldn't tell the difference between her and

me." P8 described her paraprofessional as a "co-teacher" who taught small group lessons.

P6 described the nature of the paraprofessional within the SLM classroom as a "pseudo

reader" for students who had little parent support for at-home reading. P2 described how

the paraprofessional assisted students with writing aligned to the rubric, and P6 reflected

on how SLM paraprofessionals scaffolded skill development during whole or small group

instruction and during independent work, such as computer-assisted instruction on the

IPads.

 The partnership between the teacher and paraprofessional gave foundation to the

multi-faceted nature of SLM and the differentiated instruction for growth in literacy

learning within the SLM classroom. With so much to do each day of SLM, a fulltime

paraprofessional was essential. Other essential supports, as reported by SLM educators,

included ongoing SLM professional development, instructional coaching, and family

interactions with their children's literacy development. This third theme, emerged from

the disaggregated data, was the experiences of SLM educators outside of the SLM classroom.

SLM educators described differentiated classroom interactions that were implemented and influenced their students' ability to develop literacy. Differentiated instruction was built into SLM through the curriculum resources, such as American Reading, Saxon Phonics, and School Pace. The subthemes of the differentiated interactions described how and why SLM educators believed that Action 100, one-to-one student conferencing, and the use of a full-time paraprofessional supported students' individual growth toward grade-level literacy development. SLM educators believed that these differentiated experiences better equipped their students to direct their effort and work with each other in a sociocultural context of learning.

Theme 3: Interactions Outside the SLM Classroom

The participants described two major experiences of SLM outside of the classroom: (1) intensive, ongoing professional development with a weekly coaching component, and (2) family interactions with SLM literacy experiences. The participants described professional development as influential for the implementation of this new, innovative literacy instructional model. The professional development initially occurred at different school sites within the district and evolved to include "fishbowl" experiences where teachers and coaches observed live SLM instruction in one classroom within the cohort. Professional development was provided on the new programs, such as Saxon Phonics, Action 100, School Pace, and IRLA. Families of SLM students were trained by SLM coaches to understand how their interactions could support literacy learning at

home. Families were also trained in the different SLM programs, in the nightly reading expectations, and the reading logs for Steps. SLM educators drew on these experiences, which occurred outside of the classroom, as important experiences across cases.

Subtheme 1: Professional development and coaching. The professional development subtheme encompassed coded excerpts from the interview transcripts, prompt responses, and artifacts resulting in several categories: PD SLM, PD Fishbowl, PD in cohorts, and PD goal setting. SLM educators described professional development to include strategies, culture, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They shared that trainings were full-day, usually once a month, and provided by program consultants or SLM coaches. Participants explained that the training at the beginning of the school year "was a lot" and "extremely difficult." Participants described how the training was frontloaded and included all of the curriculum programs and procedures. As well, participants described how the training evolved over the years and included training the paraprofessionals.

The professional development provided "went into deep insights" and used student achievement data so that SLM educators could adjust instruction and move students through the Action 100 levels as they made progress. The fishbowl experiences were described by P6, who was an SLM coach:

> The program used a "fish-bowl" model as we visited classrooms at each of the schools. We watched Leigh [pseudonym], our PD Specialist, as she taught whole-group lessons, conferenced with students, and afterward met with teachers. Leigh demonstrated the use of program materials, reading conferences with students,

and modeled coaching conversations with the teachers. Then, through the gradual

release model, we were tasked with modeling, demonstrating and having coaching

conversations with our assigned teachers. We observed each other in meetings

with SLM Teams during coaching conversations with teachers and gave each

other feedback and constructive criticism. We had regular meetings where we

discussed celebrations, problems, or issues that arose, and together, we celebrated

or problem-solved together! The trust and confidence that was built as we

implemented this program was fabulous. We grew so much as a cohort of

coaches.

P5 described working alongside her SLM coach to observe and internalize new

curriculum and pedagogy for literacy instruction,

This way you're seeing the live-action of the program with the teacher really using

it, and then your coach is right there beside you in case you have any questions

about the teacher or what's going on in the room or maybe something about one of

the students. They are there to help to answer questions, the coach of that school,

and the coach from their school.

According to participants, the professional development and coaching afforded

some flexibility in implementation. Weekly classroom visits by the SLM coach was

believed to be an important influence on implementation. According to P3, "She was

going to push me to be the best that I could be. So, I really saw an improvement in my

teaching having her come in and be a part of the classroom, and she took into account my

opinions." SLM educators' experiences with the coach outside of the classroom during

professional development and while visiting other SLM classrooms helped educators feel secure in a new implementation and created a culture of shared-professional learning. The enormity of how much and how often was balanced in the return on investment seen by teachers in student learning. Participants believed that SLM professional development was effective in creating better primary reading teachers. The time that SLM educators spent together examining best practices for early literacy instruction was perceived by these educators as worthwhile and beneficial to student growth.

Participants also described how other stakeholders, such as principals and district personnel, positively influenced their implementation. P5 explained,

Professional development was a key role in the effectiveness of implementing the SLM frameworks. Our professional development trainings were not only for teachers but also for the principals that had the SLM frameworks at their schools. We had monthly professional development meetings at our Title I office. Coaches and principals paired up together to discuss data trends that we were seeing at our schools. This also helped with my implementation of the SLM frameworks because my principals were supporting me with my efforts. The implementation was teamwork between teachers, coaches, and principals.

SLM educators described the "tailored" trainings and support for "how to better serve groups of students." The collaborations among school and district personnel alongside school administrators were believed to be favorable and allowed teachers to make "necessary modifications" for their students.

They felt comfortable with implementation because of the frequent and on-going professional development, which included time with other SLM educators to address challenges. One such challenge involved the role of families outside of the classroom in early literacy development. The SLM provided several opportunities for families to gain knowledge about their child's school experience and to support literacy learning at home. In subtheme two, SLM educators described their experiences with parents and families and how these experiences influenced literacy development among their students.

Subtheme 2: Family interactions. According to SLM educators, family involvement was an important consideration of literacy development among their students. The SLM provided training to family members in Saxon Phonics, Action 100, and at-home reading. SLM students were required to read at home for at least 30 minutes each day. Any adult in the house could listen to share a book with the student and sign off in the daily reading log that he or she listened to the student read. According to the participants, families were routinely invited to the school for the celebrations of students' progress toward their reading goals. The celebrations acknowledged students' "steps," which translated to minutes read. Figure 6 shows one teacher's example of a certificate for reading 900 steps or 225 hours. Students also received medallions for benchmark reading "steps."

Figure 6. Sample certificate for reading steps.

P5 provided the artifact shown in Figure 7, which outlines how families can support literacy learning at home.

What will students have to do?	What can parents do to help?
Unpack all school materials to show your parents or family member.	Encourage your child by establishing a time and spot for when they get home to take out all their school materials and show you.
Take good care of books, folders, log sheets and all other important school materials.	Talk to your child about being responsible for the care of these materials. Expect it!
Read your books for 30 Minutes or 2 Steps 1 Step = 15 minutes We are not counting books, we count time!	Block out distractions like TV, video games, etc. Set up routines and a place to read. Listen to and/or watch your child read.
While reading fun, fast, and easy books, problem solve when needed on your own. Use your *Reading Strategies* before asking for help!	Encourage your child to figure words out on their own. We want them to keep pushing to improve through effort.
After reading, think, talk, write, or draw a picture about what you read to prove you understand.	Give your child a choice of what to read. Talk to them about their reading. Ask "Why" questions as much as possible.
ONLY after Reading is completed, write 2 Titles on the Reading Log. One Title written for each Step.	ONLY after Reading is completed, sign one line of the Log sheet next to the title for every 15 minutes of time your child spent reading.

Figure 7. Family support for at-home reading.

P1 described her beliefs about parent involvement and at home reading,

Students had two bags of books on their independent level on their fun fast and
easy level, and so they got to take they chose. They got to take three books home.
The parents were trained at an Open House. And for those that didn't come, we
did send a YouTube link plus we called and walked them through it. So the
parents knew exactly how to establish a climate where children could read, and
children were to read out loud every single night, and then the parents ask them
questions, and they knew that, you know. It needed to be independent reading
where they could you know, they could snuggle if they wanted, but what we
really wanted the children to do is take that ownership and read out loud. Again,
the word list that we sent home and the standards question stems, the parents were
thrilled. They were very thankful to know how to help their children.

There were challenges for families to support this daily task. P2 explained,

Where we had our issues was with keeping up with the steps with the reading log.
Some parents were very faithful. Some didn't quite understand it, and like during
our literacy nights, we would explain to them what to do, but it's just a lot. And it
wasn't that the parents weren't doing what they should be doing. It was the fact
that they were so busy taking care of their families, making sure that the house
payment was made the lights were turned on…do you know what I'm saying?
They were busy taking care of life that they had trouble keeping up with that
[reading logs].

P8 described her perspectives,

I think a lot of students that came into [SLM] had very limited family literacy. I

even had a parent one time said it didn't matter if his student could read because

he couldn't read, and he was just going to grow up to go work with him as a

contractor. And as long as he could do a little math, it was okay.

Several participants described how they would help students catch up on the

reading log during the school day by providing independent reading time with the

teacher, paraprofessional, or school administrator. One SLM teacher allowed students to

read to each other and list three key details, and then she would sign off on the steps.

Another shared-book experience for kindergarten SLM students came from Reading Pals

United Way volunteers. They would come one day each week and share books with SLM

kindergarteners. P2 explained how these community volunteers contributed to students

literacy experiences,

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the sweet people, they would they would come to

the schools, and they would like read to the kids, and we also built in sight words.

We also built-in fun games. My kids loved their Reading Pals.

She further described the end of year celebrations with their Reading Pals and how

important this outside interaction was for showing students the importance of reading and

in developing a love of reading.

Participants explained how and why family literacy outside of the classroom

benefited students' learning and, in some cases, created the need for alternate ways for

students to earn their steps. SLM schools trained families, invited them to the school for

quarterly celebrations, and stayed in "constant communication" about students' reading

development. According to SLM educators, family literacy was influential when parents worked to support their child's reading at home, but often there was a need to fill in the gaps for families who did not provide this daily interaction at home.

Summary

The experiences of SLM teachers and instructional coaches in implementing the SLM program were positive and believed to be impactful in helping at-risk students grow as early readers toward grade-level proficiency. Participants unanimously agree that SLM was an effective model for literacy instruction and that their role in becoming a better reading teacher was accomplished through professional development, collaboration, and coaching. This innovative model was comprehensive in developing the whole child through differentiated instruction, positive academic adjustment, effective initial and intervention literacy instruction, and family involvement. Participants also described how iPad technology was used to enhance literacy learning.

The conceptual frameworks of this study are self-efficacy and sociocultural learning. Participants rated themselves highly for the implementation of this innovative model and described how and why their professional learning and learning among their students were positively influenced by interactions in and outside of the SLM classroom. The three themes that emerged from the data connected participants' personal beliefs about SLM and their efficacy in effective literacy instruction for struggling students to SLM professional development, support within the school and district, and family interactions outside of the SLM classroom.

In Chapter 5, I reiterate the purpose of this cross-case qualitative study and summarize key findings. I describe in what ways the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend the knowledge in early literacy development with the peer-reviewed literature in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5, I interpret findings within the conceptual frameworks of this study and describe the limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine early literacy instruction by exploring the insights and perspectives of primary educators who participated in an intervention program known as the SLM. The study was conducted to understand educators' beliefs about how SLM was implemented and the perceived influence of this early literacy program on students' reading development. The population of this study was limited to teachers and instructional coaches with 2 or more years of SLM experience who participated in SLM professional development. These SLM educators specialized in literacy instruction for at-risk students in kindergarten through second grade. The research questions and the qualitative case study design allowed me to analyze SLM educators' experiences to deeply understand program implementation, self-efficacy beliefs, and interactions in and outside the SLM classroom.

Eight semistructured interviews, a reflective journal prompt, and program artifacts were coded, categorized, and analyzed for resulting themes. Each theme related to how SLM educators experienced (a) efficacy in initial and intervention early literacy instruction, (b) differentiated instruction resulting from ongoing professional development across a variety of literacy programs with routine instructional coaching, and (c) interactions in and outside the SLM classroom, which influenced the trajectory of instructional practice and literacy rates among students. The conceptual frameworks of this study, as described in Chapter 2, are Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy and Vygotsky's (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) sociocultural learning. These theories were used to understand educators' experiences as they related to content knowledge of literacy

instruction with differentiated approaches, implementation of SLM pedagogy, and the sociocultural nature of learning in a cohort model for SLM students and teachers. This chapter includes a discussion of the interpretations of findings related to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the limitations of the study, and implications for early literacy instruction.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study gave insight into the SLM educators' experiences and beliefs about their effectiveness in program implementation. The conceptual frameworks extensively reviewed in Chapter 2 centered on Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy and Vygotsky's (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) sociocultural learning. The key concepts also outlined in Chapter 2 include early literacy instruction and professional development for improved practice, academic adjustment, and family literacy. These frameworks and key concepts were found in the data analysis from the lived experiences of SLM educators. Three broad themes emerged from the data analysis and are confirmed in related findings in the review of the literature. These themes were as follows:

1. Personal beliefs about the SLM experience as an educator responsible for implementation and beliefs about students' experience as literacy learners.

2. Sociocultural learning as experienced among SLM educators throughout the ongoing professional development, which included instructional coaching and modeling, collaborations, and classroom observations.

3. Contextual conditions in and outside of the SLM classroom influenced SLM educators' experiences and beliefs about literacy learning for their students.

Personal Beliefs and Self Efficacy

Sehgal et al. (2017) found that educators' self-efficacy influenced interactions with students and assisted in regulating learning in their classrooms. Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as one's belief in their capacity to execute a task with persistence, motivation, and prolonged effort. Bandura (1994) specifically addressed the resiliency needed for innovative pursuits where significant work over long periods with unknown outcomes is to be carried out. In SLM, the significant and prolonged focus, motivation, and effort were required for this innovation. Study findings showed that SLM educators persisted throughout implementation and applied new pedagogy and programs with students' literacy learning as the priority. The SLM required educators to preserve, overcome challenges, and make many moving parts of this comprehensive model come together in a way that worked them and their students. SLM educators worked together to support and encourage each other throughout implementation. These collegial relationships were described by participants as influential in their beliefs about the ability to implement this innovation with uncertain outcomes.

While Bandura's (1977) research on self-efficacy showed that setbacks or low prerequisite skills as external conditions negatively affect self-determination, SLM educators were able to negate these external conditions because of their witness to immediate and positive impacts on students' learning. As their students quickly became successful learners, SLM educators were motivated to persist in further regulating positive outcomes. SLM educators were motivated to persist because they celebrated small but important victories along the way. Routine collaborations with other SLM

educators were instrumental in these celebrations and allowed educators to experience individual and collective affirmation in their work. SLM educators experienced positive reflections of their dedication, capabilities, and mastery to help their students and each other achieve success in SLM.

Sociocultural Learning

The Vygotskian framework is based on the research of learning that takes place in social and cultural contexts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The SLM was described by participants as a positive culture whereby all stakeholders shared in the common work of effective literacy instruction intended for students' growth in reading performance. The sociocultural contexts of learning existed for both SLM educators and students where educators worked collaboratively throughout implementation and where students worked alongside and with each other in a culture of an individualized but highly cooperative learning environment. Study findings indicated that SLM educators believed that student growth resulted from both differentiated and shared learning. Students worked together in reading, researching, writing, and presentation of knowledge within a differentiated culture. Differentiated instruction was delivered through the leveled texts in Action 100, the use of data to plan initial and intervention instruction, and by using students' interests for literacy learning.

Understanding Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) was found to be a main instructional delivery consideration. All SLM program elements originated from a pedagogical stance of scaffolding. Jaramillo (1996) described learning in the context of active involvement, social interaction, and

along a continuum through the use of scaffolding techniques, which include modeling, coaching, and differentiated instruction. The differentiated instruction in SLM moved students from one level of understanding to the next, more challenging level. The SLM provided a variety of differentiated experiences facilitated by the teacher and paraprofessional. In SLM, students interacted with the teacher, the curriculum, and each other in ways that encouraged them to learn concepts and practice skills necessary for reading, writing, and communicating. Student experiences in SLM were intentionally planned to address individual needs within social contexts.

Supporting Literacy Model In and Outside the Classroom

Boreham and Morgan (2004) studied the sociocultural nature of learning within an organization and found collaborative inquiry, a culture of knowledge-sharing, and collective capacity to mediate learning among its members. In SLM, the professional development provided these conditions for improved literacy instruction and assisted educators with the implementation of embedded program elements, such as Saxon Phonics and Action 100. Inside the SLM classroom, educators facilitated learning experiences for students that were rooted in a comprehensive model of emergent literacy development and literacy connected to experiences beyond the classroom. SLM educators worked collaboratively outside of the classroom with other SLM educators, instructional coaches, school, and district administrators. In addition, SLM families were involved in literacy experiences at the school and home. SLM educators described these relationships as important for sustaining their efforts in giving students effective instruction.

Pezoa et al., (2019) analyzed the influence of family literacy on students' reading development and found a cyclical relationship between parents' engagement in literacy and students' interest in reading. One recommendation of this study was to provide books for low-income families to promote shared-reading at home, which SLM did. Students were celebrated for achieving benchmarks in minutes read at home, and this celebration translated into positive academic adjustment for them. Families were invited to these celebrations, and they participated in trainings provided by SLM at the school site. Relationships among schools and caregivers were believed to be a variable in students' literacy development in SLM.

The SLM experience for educators, and subsequently, their students, was believed to be a positive accumulation of program, professional development, and student-centered interactions among all stakeholders. Research on comprehensive models for early literacy development among at-risk primary students showed that effective programs include all stakeholders in the implementation and focus on effective tools for teaching students to read across all tiers of instruction (Kaminski et al., 2014). The professional development required for educators to implement a comprehensive model includes coaching, collaboration, and ongoing support for improved practice (Perkins & Cooter, 2013; Powell & Diamond, 2013). The SLM leveraged professional development and relationships in and outside of the SLM classroom to maximize student learning in a shared-vision for grade-level reading proficiency for their students.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations outlined in Chapter 1 included time, geography, student

demographics, and teacher mobility. Study findings are contextualized within one southeastern district in the United States and elicited perspectives of educators with at least 2 years of SLM experience who also completed the required SLM professional development. Therefore, I excluded educators who did not teach SLM, did not teach SLM for a minimum of 2 years, or did not participate in the SLM professional development.

Diversity among participants was observed in the demographic profiles and included number of years of service, degrees and certifications held, grade levels and subjects taught, and other pseudo leadership experiences in education such as instructional coaching or work in Title I. This diversity was beneficial to the study in understanding experiences from individuals with diverse backgrounds in education. The number of participants limits the generalizability of the results of this study. This study was limited to the experiences of eight SLM educators, of which five were SLM teachers and three were SLM instructional coaches. SLM schools identified students at-risk in primary grades and implemented SLM to eliminate or reduce students' at-risk status before third grade high stakes tests. The issues deliberately not investigated, but which should be studied in the future include (a) student performance exiting each grade level of SLM, (b) student performance in subsequent grade level as measured by high stakes tests, (c) fidelity measures of SLM implementation, and (d) influence on literacy rates within student demographic subgroups.

The SLM was disbanded in 2018 with a change in the district's superintendent. The elapsed time from implementation to interview might have influenced the results of

the study. However, the detailed and thorough descriptions given by the participants substantiate reflection and recollection with great accuracy. While it is not believed to have influenced the results, it is a consideration when analyzing the results for limitations. The recommendations for further research are derived from the limitations of the current study.

Recommendations

The recommendations for further research are grounded in the strengths and limitations of the current study in consideration of the study boundaries. The study is bounded by key concepts found in the literature review on initial and intervention early literacy instruction, professional development for educators, and students' academic adjustment. The SLM, as described by SLM educators, was effective in assisting at-risk primary students' reading development as a result of SLM professional development in reading instruction. Recommendations for future studies would be program evaluation that uses feedback from implementers to address implementation issues and quantitative analysis of how students responded to SLM as measured by performance data. Further research would also include a larger population of SLM educators and utilize a survey instrument to identify trends in feedback about implementation, which would provide broader insights into educators' beliefs about SLM pedagogy.

The current study explores how educators experienced SLM, and the results indicate that participants' held valuable knowledge about implementation that would be useful to district leaders for program evaluation. A mixed-methods study would allow for the use of a Likert scale survey and semi-structured interviews from a larger sample

population to analyze implementation issues and make program adjustments. The current study sought to understand beliefs about the key concepts of SLM from teachers and instructional coaches, but future studies might also examine the SLM experience from school administrators' perspectives.

Understanding how students responded to SLM is recommended for further research. A quantitative longitudinal study relating to the trajectory of reading proficiency for at-risk students who participated in SLM would assist in understanding program efficacy for long-range outcomes. The purpose of this study was to understand educators' experiences in SLM literacy instruction, and it would be beneficial to also understand the trajectory of students' reading proficiency resulting from this model. SLM educators highly favored SLM, and it would be beneficial to understand if students, and which students, achieved grade level proficiency as a result. A future quantitative study might also include an analysis of performance data by student demographic subgroups. How and why SLM was believed to be effective in the reading development of at-risk students offers valuable insight to add to the field of early literacy instruction.

Implications

Full participation in the global society is conditional upon the exchange of ideas, the ability to acquire and share knowledge, and the interactions with others through reading, writing, and speaking. Literacy is essential to equitable access to all life domains, such as education, work, and responsible citizenship. The implications of this current study adds a new understanding of educators' experiences in developing a repertoire of instructional tools to more effectively teach the young to read to the existing

literature on early literacy intervention instruction. The results of this study show SLM educators strongly believed SLM was effective in moving more students toward grade-level reading proficiency. SLM educators believed that professional development and routine instructional coaching made them better reading teachers and helped them differentiate instruction for their at-risk students. Therefore, consideration should be given to the design of SLM for replication in other primary settings.

The comprehensive nature of SLM in addressing students' at-risk needs for early and resilient academic adjustment is recommended for replication. The supports built into SLM, such as the leveled readers, the use of routine positive reinforcement, family literacy, and a student-centered framework, are valued among SLM educators and believed to influence students' reading development. Study findings also indicate that the overall culture of SLM brought all stakeholders together in the shared work of eliminating the gap in reading development for at-risk student populations. These relationships and interactions resulted in SLM educators feeling confident in their ability to implement the program within a positive context focused on students' growth and students' positive academic adjustment.

A recommendation for practice would be to replicate the conditions believed most effective by SLM educators within broader contexts: (a) routine professional development on initial, intervention, and differentiated literacy instruction, (b) student-centered interactions in and outside of the school, and (c) supports for educators to execute a comprehensive literacy instruction model for at-risk students. SLM educators experienced positive self-efficacy as a result of the ongoing support for implementation

and favored the routine collaboration with other SLM educators during trainings, in the review of performance data for making instructional decisions, and in the discussion of issues that surfaced during implementation. The SLM coaching model was also believed to be of great value among participants. Therefore, school systems should evaluate practice in light of these conditions for improved literacy instruction and development for at-risk primary students.

Conclusion

A major responsibility of public education systems is to examine instructional practice for conditions most likely to yield the greatest outcomes for students. Initial and intervention literacy instruction must deliver appropriate and equitable outcomes that move students toward reading proficiency sooner rather than later. The proper diagnosis of reading deficits is only possible when the clinician is well-trained in understanding how students learn to read. The SLM was believed successful in reducing or eliminating the at-risk status of primary students, from the experiences of those who implemented this multifaceted model and will contribute to the conversation within the field of early literacy development. The SLM professional development and culture for learning also have positive implications within the field of education. The findings of this study have the potential to influence policy for innovative practice in early literacy instruction.

The implications of at-risk students remaining at-risk are felt throughout local communities through poverty, crime, and marginalized life experiences. Conversely, students reading on grade level throughout their academic careers in the K-12 system gives a greater chance to them, leaving the system better prepared for post-secondary

education, the workforce, and full participation in society. A literate society supports

equal access for its members, which influences the overall health and growth of local and

global communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The qualitative design for this study will utilize open ended, semistructured interview questions to analyze teachers' and coaches' perceptions related to SLM design and practices. The following questions emerged from the literature review for program elements and are intended to more deeply understand how SLM teachers and coaches experienced literacy instruction and literacy development among their students:

1. What are your perceptions of SLM professional development?

2. What was the relationship you had with the SLM coach?

3. What were your experiences with literacy instruction in SLM?

4. How do you feel about students' response to SLM instruction?

5. There were three instructional tools unique to SLM. Which were more or least effective and how did you use each in your classroom?

    a. Probe: Students' use of iPads

    b. Probe: Research labs

    c. Probe: Leveled science libraries

6. How do you feel about students' social-emotional needs and SLM learning?

7. What are your beliefs about the SLM culture for learning?

8. Is there anything about the SLM that you would like to share that you haven't already?

The interview questions ask participants to explain their experiences through the lens of sociocultural learning and self-efficacy frameworks and within the context of program components: literacy instruction, use of technology for literacy learning, SLM

professional development, students' academic adjustment in SLM, and family literacy. The analysis of this data along with analysis of curriculum artifacts will sufficiently answer the research questions.