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Investigating Active Learning in Inclusion and Resource Language Arts Classrooms

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Haley Cooper

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Walden University
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Abstract

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EdS, Jacksonville State University, 2012

MEd, Jacksonville State University, 2010

BA, Shorter University, 2008

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

At the study site, middle school students with disabilities continue to demonstrate reading deficits. Because the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities has negative consequences for the students and for the school, it was paramount to investigate if the instructional design decisions made by teachers influence the reading growth of these students. The central purpose of this qualitative case study was to use the interactive-constructive-active-passive (ICAP) framework to analyze if teachers are assigning learning activities that compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction. Three research questions guided the investigation of active learning during reading instruction in language classrooms at the study site. In individual interviews, the eight research participants described the frequency and levels of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction, as well as how participants view the influence of active learning on the reading growth of these students. I used three rounds of coding to analyze data collected from the interviews and lesson plan assessments to find themes linked to the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that teachers are not regularly assigning learning activities that engage students with disabilities in active learning. I created a professional development project to increase teachers' capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. This project study may influence positive social change by revealing ways to develop the reading skills of students with disabilities as well as improve the long-term outcomes for these students.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Students with disabilities often lag their peers in terms of reading efficacy. U.S. lawmakers have passed significant legislative acts, and researchers have conducted numerous studies in hopes of addressing the deficient reading skills of students with disabilities (Walker & Stevens, 2017). One of the most prominent initiatives passed to address the achievement deficits of students with disabilities in the United States was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, which gave these students increased access to the general education curriculum by placing them in the inclusion classroom more often. The inclusive classroom is an approach to serving students with disabilities in the general education setting by providing supports to help them be successful (Orakci, Aktan, Toraman, & Cevik, 2016). Although students with disabilities continue to receive reading instruction in more restrictive classroom environments, because of this legislation, a larger number of students with disabilities now receive reading instruction in the inclusive setting (Dev & Haynes, 2015). More recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 reiterated schools' responsibility for ensuring the achievement of students with disabilities (Darrow, 2016). This legislation emphasized schools' commitment to providing students with disabilities access to effective instructional practices, regardless of their placement. In addition to legislative efforts, researchers have spent decades identifying best practices for teaching reading (Ko & Hughes, 2015). However, placement in inclusive learning environments, along with educators' access to a multitude of research about teaching reading to students

with disabilities, has not had the desired effect on student achievement (Gilmour, 2018), especially in reading (Wexler et al., 2018).

In this study, I investigated the lack of growth in students with disabilities' reading skills at the study site, a middle school in the U.S. state of Georgia. Although teachers are adhering to the laws and regulations that govern special education and are providing many opportunities for evidence-based remediation and intervention for these students, students with disabilities continue to show little growth in reading skills as measured by the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Language Arts assessment, according to an administrator at the school. I conducted this project study to address this gap in practice. My research efforts may benefit the middle school, its teachers, and its students with disabilities by revealing if reading instruction provided to these students should include more learning activities that result in students engaging in active learning. In the following sections, I provide background information about the reading performance of students with disabilities at the school on standardized assessments and discuss the role active learning may have in improving the reading skills of students with disabilities, as well as how instructional design decisions may influence active learning and student achievement. The study's rationale and purpose, definitions of key terms, and research questions (RQs) follow. After reviewing the literature, I discuss the study's implications for teaching practice and positive social change.

The Local Problem

Students with disabilities continue to demonstrate reading deficits on standardized assessments (Schulte, Stevens, Elliott, Tindal, & Nese, 2016); however, because their

reading skills are at deficit levels, these students should experience more growth than their nondisabled peers who possess grade-level-appropriate reading abilities (Sullivan, Kohli, Farnsworth, Sadeh, & Jones, 2017). Nevertheless, students with disabilities at the study site continue to show little to no growth in reading skills on the Georgia Milestones Language Arts End of Grade Assessment, according to a school administrator. Although there is not a singular explanation for the lack of growth in students with disabilities' reading skills, researchers suggest that the learning and achievement of these students results from their exposure to ineffective instruction in the classroom (Vaughn & Waznek, 2014; Wexler et al., 2018; Wexler, Mitchell, Clancy, & Silverman, 2016). Additional opportunities for reading intervention, as well as receiving special education services in the inclusion and resource language arts classroom, have been unsuccessful in remediating the reading struggles of these students, according to a teacher at the school. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze the instructional design decisions made by teachers to determine if the learning activities they assign in their language arts classrooms result in students with disabilities engaging in active learning. It is also necessary to analyze whether activities that elicit this type of behavior have any influence on the growth of their reading skills.

Teachers influence student learning more than any other factor, and the effectiveness of their instruction is based on their ability to make sound instructional decisions (Ko & Hughes, 2015). When investigating the teaching of reading to students with disabilities, researchers have found that teachers assign too many passive learning activities (McKenna, Shin, & Ciullo, 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014) because they are

hesitant to design learning activities that require students with disabilities to work at more challenging and independent levels (Boardman, Moore, & Scornavacco, 2015). Consequently, teachers assign learning activities that do not engage students with disabilities in active learning (Bock & Erickson, 2015), and this is to the detriment of the development of students' reading skills (Vaughn & Waznek, 2014; Wexler et al., 2018). In response to this finding, some researchers stated that students with disabilities can become better readers if they are engaged in active learning during instruction (Bryant et al., 2015); however, this assertion has not been corroborated through extensive research (Rizzo & Taylor, 2016).

Active learning is a type of learning where students cognitively engage with instruction, learning activities, and class materials (Brigati, England, & Schussler, 2019; Chi & Wylie, 2014). Practitioners of active learning assert that students learn best through direct experience (Edwards, Kemp, & Page, 2014), and in support of this assertion, the goal of active learning is for students to be "intellectually active" (Brigati et al., 2019, p. 26) as opposed to "passively receiving information and just accepting the authority's delivery" (Brigati, et al., 2019, p.26). When engaged in active learning, students work on learning activities that require them to think critically, to make predictions, to analyze and synthesize information (Brigati et al., 2019), and to collaborate with their peers (Edwards, 2017). Researchers believe that this type of student engagement is critical during the learning process (Bryant et al., 2015; Chi & Wylie, 2014; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015) as it promotes increased levels of information retention

(Fenty, Mulcahy, & Washburn, 2015) and may have the most effect on students' reading abilities (Weiser, 2014).

Because researchers suggest a relationship exists between this type of engagement and reading achievement (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015), it is critical for teachers to determine if the learning activities they assign are successful in engaging students with disabilities in active learning. Being able to describe the engagement behaviors students with disabilities display when completing learning activities during reading instruction, as well as how different types of learning activities influence learning, is necessary when trying to discern why these students are not demonstrating growth in reading skills on state assessments. The problem is meaningful to the middle school and its students with disabilities, the school district, and the education profession, as inquiry may reveal if reading instruction should include more learning activities that compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning.

Rationale

Local Evidence

At the middle school used for this project study, students with disabilities demonstrated little growth in reading skills on the 2018 Georgia Milestones Language Arts End of Grade assessment, according to a school administrator. Of the 50 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students who took the assessment and whose data are included in this discussion, 72% were considered beginning or developing learners who experienced low growth and 4% were considered proficient or distinguished learners who experienced low growth. The administrator further shared that, collectively, 76% of all

students with disabilities who took the 2018 Georgia Milestones Language Arts End of Grade assessment at the study site did not demonstrate expected growth in reading skills. The low growth scores of these students on the Georgia Milestones Language Arts of End of Grade assessment was not a singular occurrence in 2018 but a consistent trend across previous test administrations, the administrator noted. From review of these data, it is clear students with disabilities at the school are not showing growth in reading skills on the Georgia Milestones Language Arts End of Grade assessment, which highlights the need for investigation of the local problem.

The middle school's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score also reflects the lack of growth in the reading skills of these students. In Georgia, the department of education evaluates each school using CCRPI, which measures how well schools are preparing students for life after high school (GADOE, 2019). For the 2017-2018 school year, the middle school used for this project study received a failing score, which also was the lowest CCRPI score for a middle school in the district and the third lowest score of all the district's schools, according to the school administrator. Although the CCRPI calculation considers multiple aspects of school and student performance, its score in the Closing Gaps category heavily influenced the middle school's score, the administrator noted. The Closing Gaps category maintains that all subgroups should demonstrate progress and achievement, including students with disabilities (GADOE, 2019). The lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities negatively influenced the middle school's score in the Closing Gaps category. Because the reading growth of students with disabilities influences the middle school's CCRPI score, it is

critical to determine if the learning activities assigned in inclusion and resource language arts classroom compel students to engage in active learning. Additionally, it is equally important to determine whether activities that elicit these types of behaviors have any influence on the growth of the reading skills of students with disabilities. Sustained underachievement may have consequences for the middle school including a change of leadership and faculty placement, the administrator noted.

Evidence of the Problem from Literature

Regardless of the legislation passed or research conducted, students with disabilities continue to struggle to read (Wexler et al., 2018). Although students with disabilities are demonstrating some growth in reading ability on standardized assessments, the gains are marginal (Lemons, Otaiba, Conway, & Mellado De La Cruz, 2016; Wexler et al., 2018). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015) report stated that more than half of eighth-grade students with disabilities could not read at a grade-appropriate level, and this statistic has held steadfast for over a decade (Lemons et al., 2016; Wexler et al., 2018). This lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities indicates that the solution to this problem may require more than an initiative or research theory; it may also require teachers to consider whether their instructional design decisions, specifically the type of learning activities they choose to assign, influence student learning.

Although legislative and research efforts have not fully addressed the lack of growth in the reading abilities of students with disabilities, continuous attention to the issue highlights the serious nature of this problem. Researchers have found that students

with reading struggles may face a plethora of negative long-term consequences related to academic, professional, and personal success (Hock, Brasseur-Hock, Hock, & Duvel, 2017). Students with deficient reading skills underachieve in all academic areas and are less likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and be employed (Hock et al., 2017). They are also more likely to become teen parents and be incarcerated (Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014) and experience mental health issues (Boyes, Tebbutt, Preece, & Badcock, 2018). Furthermore, students with reading deficits are at an increased risk for disruptive behavior, anxiety, and depression (Boyes et al., 2018). Collectively, these outcomes highlight the dismal future that may await students who cannot read well and alone serve as justification for this study.

Purpose

The central purpose of this descriptive qualitative case study was to use the interactive-constructive-active-passive (ICAP; Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014) framework to describe the engagement behaviors students with disabilities display when completing learning activities in the language arts classroom at the study site. Specifically, through the case study, I wanted to determine if teachers are most frequently assigning activities that require students with disabilities to display interactive, constructive, active, or passive behavior modes as defined by the ICAP framework. Once gathered, I used this information to determine if these students receive reading instruction that promotes active learning. The second purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine how teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in learning at the higher levels of the ICAP framework, which are the interactive and

constructive behavior modes (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014). Outcomes of both purposes may inform future instructional design decisions made by teachers in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms in hopes of improving not only the immediate reading skills of students with disabilities but also their long-term outcomes.

Definition of Terms

To provide clarity, I defined the following terms used in this study. The terms pertain to the reading skills of students with disabilities and active learning in the inclusion, resource, and self-contained language arts classroom.

Active behavior mode: A mode in which students physically manipulate information without adding new knowledge (Chi, Kang, & Yaghmourian, 2017). Examples of this behavior mode include reciting memorized information or taking verbatim notes (Chi et al., 2018).

Active learning: Learning that involves students' cognitive engagement with the information presented (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

College and Career Ready Performance Index: A measure used to evaluate how well Georgia public schools are promoting college and work readiness for students (GADOE, 2019).

Constructive behavior mode: A mode in which students generate new knowledge beyond what is presented (Chi et al., 2018). Examples of this behavior mode include providing an explanation and drawing a diagram (Chi et al., 2018).

Engagement: The way students interact with learning activities, which is reflected in the behaviors observed while undertaking an activity (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

Instructional design decisions: Choices teachers make regarding classroom instruction including but not limited to the types of learning activities they choose to assign to students.

Interactive behavior mode: A mode in which students collaborate with peers to construct meaning (Chi et al., 2018). Examples of this behavior mode include defending a position to a partner or building on a partner's contributions (Chi, 2009).

Learning activities: Tasks teachers choose for students to work on (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

Passive behavior mode: A mode in which students take no obvious actions with learning materials other than listening or watching (Chi, 2009). Examples of this behavior mode include listening to a lecture or watching a video without taking notes (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

Reading skills: All reading skills including reading comprehension, which is "the ability to decode words, read fluently, and use active strategies to understand the meaning of text" (Ko & Hughes, 2015, p. 414).

Significance of the Study

The findings of this descriptive qualitative case study may address the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at the middle school used for this project study. This research study may make a difference in the school and local school district by revealing if the instruction in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms should include more learning activities that result in students with disabilities displaying interactive and constructive behavior modes to address the lack of growth in their reading

skills. With this knowledge, school and district personnel can make future instructional design decisions that best meet the learning needs of students with disabilities and may influence positive social change by improving the immediate reading skills of these students as well as long-term outcomes for students with reading deficits. Additionally, the research study may improve the reading instruction that teachers offer to students with disabilities, which may have a positive effect on the CCRPI score of the middle school. The research project is unique, as no other studies have used the ICAP framework to analyze learning activities assigned to students with disabilities in the inclusion and resource language arts classroom.

Research Questions

Students with disabilities at the study site continue to demonstrate little growth in reading skill. Researchers have found that students who struggle to read may face significant challenges during adolescence and adulthood (Connor et al., 2014; Hock et al., 2017); therefore, it is critical to investigate why these students are not showing growth in their reading skills to improve their immediate and long-term outcomes. The central purpose of this project study was to describe the engagement behaviors students with disabilities display when completing learning activities in the language arts classroom at the study site to determine if these students are receiving reading instruction that promotes active learning. The second purpose of this study was to determine how teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning. To investigate the problem and fulfill these research purposes, I sought to answer the following RQs:

RQ1: What behavior modes do students with disabilities display most often during reading instruction in the inclusion and resource language arts classrooms?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit active and passive engagement modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities?

Review of the Literature

The review of literature for this qualitative case study includes the following areas: (a) influences of instructional design decisions on student learning; (b) research findings on the ICAP framework and hypothesis; and (c) using the ICAP framework and its hypothesis in the classroom. When searching the Walden databases (SAGE, ProQuest, Education Research Complete, Teacher Reference Center, and ERIC) and Google Scholar for peer reviewed articles and books, the following key words were used: *active learning, active learning and achievement, collaborative strategic reading, differentiated overt learning activities, direct instruction and reading, ICAP framework, ICAP hypothesis, ICAP and learning, learning activities and reading comprehension, quantitative research, reading and self-esteem special education and literacy instruction, reading instruction and learning activities, reciprocal teaching, student-centered learning and middle school, student engagement, students with disabilities and active learning, students with disabilities and constructive activities, students with disabilities and cooperative learning, students with disabilities and reading, students with disabilities*

and reading comprehension, students with disabilities and reading interventions, students with disabilities and student-centered learning, and *teacher decisions and learning*.

Conceptual Framework

Historically, teacher-centered methods have been used when providing reading instruction to students with disabilities (Alnahdi, 2015); however, researchers suggest that a student-centered approach that compels students with disabilities to engage in active learning may have a positive influence on the growth of their reading skills (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). The interactive-constructive-active-passive (ICAP) framework, which is a student-centered framework for learning, provides support for the researchers that have found active learning to be a critical element of student learning and achievement, and it may be useful in improving the reading skills of students with disabilities at the study site. While a theoretical construct, the ICAP framework has many practical applications for teachers as it allows them to observe and describe the level of active learning that occurs in classrooms while students complete learning activities. Teachers can also use it to guide instructional design decisions (Chi, 2009), and this may be useful to teachers as the ICAP framework can be used to link learning activities with achievement outcomes (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014).

The conceptual framework for this qualitative case study is the ICAP framework. This framework aligns with the problem and purpose of the study as it provides a specific way to analyze lesson plans to determine the level of active learning students with disabilities exhibit when completing learning activities during reading instruction. Chi

(2009) acknowledges that while not fully vested in constructivism, the ICAP framework includes many of the central tenets held by this learning theory and two of its pioneers, Piaget and Dewey. According to Piaget (1953), learning is mentally and physically active. Instruction should be learner-centered as opposed to the traditional teacher-centered method as this allows students to construct their own meaning (Piaget, 1953). Additionally, students should engage in collaboration to maximize learning (Piaget, 1953). Similarly, Dewey (1933) rejected traditional classroom methods that promoted too much passive learning. Instead, Dewey believed that students experience the highest learning outcomes when learning activities promote active involvement (Dewey, 1938). Similarly, the ICAP framework promotes the integration of learning activities into classroom instruction that compel students to engage in active learning.

The ICAP framework uses the terms active learning and engagement synonymously, and it asserts that both are activities undertaken by the learner during learning (Chi, 2009). The ICAP framework allows teachers to describe the level of active learning students are engaged in while completing learning activities by categorizing the explicit behaviors displayed by students and differentiating them into four behavior modes: interactive, constructive, active, and passive (Chi et al., 2017). Interactive behaviors require both partners to engage in constructive dialogue and contribute equally to co-construct meaning (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Examples of interactive behaviors include responding to scaffoldings and challenging a partner's point of view (Chi, 2009). Constructive behaviors require students to produce knowledge that goes beyond the information given (Chi & Wylie, 2014). When working on tasks that elicit constructive

behaviors, students construct their own meaning. An example of a constructive behavior would be generating a hypothesis (Chi, 2009). Active behaviors require some sort of physical manipulation by students (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Examples of active behaviors include underlining or highlighting text, paraphrasing, or repeating information (Chi, 2009). Passive behaviors do not involve any activity related to learning other than watching or listening (Chi & Wylie, 2014). An example of a passive behavior would be watching a video clip without completing any accompanying activities (Chi & Wylie, 2014). While learning may occur at all behavior modes, the ICAP hypothesis (interactive>constructive>active>passive) assigns each behavior mode a learning outcome and postulates that the highest level of learning occurs when students exhibit interactive behavior modes and the lowest during passive behavior modes (Chi et al., 2017). While it is not practical for teachers only to assign learning activities that elicit interactive or constructive behavior modes, teachers may use the framework to design learning activities that elicit those behavior modes frequently.

In this study, I investigated the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at the study site. To do this, I collected data from individual interviews and teachers' lesson plans to determine if learning activities assigned in the inclusion and resource language arts classroom result in students with disabilities engaging in active learning during reading instruction. The ICAP framework informs the study's problem and purpose by providing a method to analyze teacher lesson plans and interview responses to determine the frequency and level of active learning students engage in when completing learning activities assigned by teachers in the inclusion and resource

language arts classroom. The ICAP framework also informs the RQs, which prompt teachers to use the framework to describe the behavior modes students with disabilities elicit when completing learning activities assigned in language arts classrooms during reading instruction.

Review of the Broader Problem

The goal of this descriptive qualitative case study was to use the ICAP framework to analyze data collected from individual interviews and the lesson plans of teachers at the project site to determine if the learning activities assigned in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction. An additional goal of the case study was to determine how teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that require students to engage in learning at the higher levels of the ICAP framework.

Dismal outcomes may await students with disabilities who struggle to read (Boyes, Tebbutt, Preece, & Badcock, 2018; Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014; Hock et al., 2017). Additionally, students with disabilities at the middle school used for this project study are not meeting Georgia's expectations for reading growth, which influences the school's overall success as measured by the CCRPI, according to an administrator. Understanding how students with disabilities engage with learning activities during reading instruction, as well as the way different types of learning activities influence their learning, is necessary when trying to discern why these students are not demonstrating reading growth on state assessments. Therefore, I chose to review the following literature as it provided information about current issues with reading

instruction for students with disabilities, research on the ICAP framework and hypothesis, and practical applications of the ICAP framework in the classroom.

Instructional Design Decisions and Student Learning

While a plethora of information is available regarding teaching reading to students with disabilities, their reading struggles continue (Vaughn & Waznek, 2014). Although a singular explanation for their struggle is unknown, researchers have found that instructional design choices made by teachers influence the reading achievement of students (Ruppar, Gaffney, & Dymond, 2015). Some researchers even assert that there is no greater influence on student learning than teachers and that the most effective teachers are those that can make sound instructional design decisions (Ko & Hughes, 2015). Specifically, the type of instructional methodology teachers employ, the learning activities associated with the various methods, and teacher beliefs about the abilities of students with disabilities influence the level of student engagement and active learning in a classroom (Bryant et al., 2015; Chi & Wylie, 2014; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015; Ko & Hughes, 2015).

Traditionally, teacher-centered instruction has been the preferred method for teaching reading to diverse learners including students with disabilities (Head, Flores, & Shippen, 2018); however, recently, this type of instruction has been linked to low levels of student engagement, which has a negative influence on student learning (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carrabba & Farmer, 2018; Johnson & Cuevas, 2016). When using teacher-centered instruction, teachers transmit knowledge predominantly through lecture to students who assume a passive role in the learning process (Serin, 2018). Because

teachers assume the dominant role in this type of learning, teacher-centered instructional methods are subject to criticism for not offering the opportunity for students to develop critical thinking skills (Serin, 2018). Research on teacher-centered instruction validates the claim that this type of instructional methodology negatively influences the development of students with disabilities' reading skills because it emphasizes the recitation of pre-determined material (Bock & Erickson, 2015) as opposed to promoting authentic learning (Carrabba & Farmer, 2018). In other words, when exposed to teacher-centered instruction, students learn to *do* as opposed to *think* about how to apply reading skills to different contexts (Bock & Erickson, 2015). Excessive teacher control also limits student communication, participation, and peer interactions, all of which result in increased learning and achievement (Carrabba & Farmer, 2018). Conversely, other researchers argue that for students to improve their literacy skills, they must be engaged in student-centered instruction that promotes active learning through opportunities to socialize, think, and reason (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carrabba & Farmer, 2018).

Student-centered instruction is grounded in constructivist principles (Keiler, 2018), which emphasize the student's role in learning. In student-centered instruction, students are empowered through taking on an active role in their learning, thus allowing them to become initiators of knowledge as opposed to being mere receptors of knowledge (Keiler, 2018). During student-centered instruction, students are given activities that engage them in active learning and offer cooperative learning opportunities (Serin, 2018), both of which emphasize exploration and discourse as critical elements of learning. Student-centered instruction is linked to increased motivation and positive learning

outcomes in not only reading (Moon, Wold, & Francom, 2017), but science (Odom & Bell, 2015), math (Sengupta-Irving & Enyedy, 2015) and social studies (Worthington, 2018) as well.

In addition to instructional methodology, the types of learning activities teachers assign students influence learning. When evaluating current practices regarding the teaching of reading to students with disabilities, researchers found that passive learning activities, worksheets, and independent seatwork accounted for a large amount of reading instruction (McKenna et al., 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014). Additionally, many of the learning activities related to reading were teacher-led discussions in class during which teachers asked simple questions and students with disabilities were passive listeners often engaged in a plethora of off-task behaviors (Ko & Hughes, 2015). These types of learning activities fail to engage students in active learning, and this is detrimental to the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills (Ko & Hughes, 2015; McKenna et al., 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014).

Although researchers show that active learning may positively influence the achievement of students with disabilities (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carrabba & Farmer, 2018; Miller, McKissick, Ivy, & Moser, 2017; Opitz, Grob, Wittich, Hasel-Weide, & Nuhrenborger, 2018; Terrazas-Arellanes, Gallard, Strycker, & Walden, 2018), several factors influence teachers' decisions to employ active learning strategies in the classroom including other teachers, content, and planning time (Edwards, 2015). Additionally, teachers' perception about students' abilities to learn influence the instructional design decisions (Edwards, 2015; Ko & Hughes, 2015; Ruppar et al., 2015) made by middle

school reading teachers (Siuty, Leko, & Knackstedt, 2018). Specifically, teachers often question the ability of students with disabilities to learn through active learning methods (Edwards, 2015). Because of their perceptions about student ability, teachers may be hesitant to design learning activities that cause students with disabilities to work at higher levels (Boardman, Moore, et al., 2015) and instead rely on traditional instructional methods (Bock & Erickson, 2015) that do not always engage them in active learning during reading instruction. Although some researchers indicate that students with disabilities may struggle to learn when their teacher uses active learning methods (McGrath & Hughes, 2018), findings in other studies refute this claim. These researchers assert that as long as teachers are committed to implementing the instructional strategy and believe that students with disabilities can work at higher levels (Boardman, Buckley, Lasser, Klingner, & Annamma, 2015; Lee & Tsai, 2017), then these students can be successful in a classroom where the teacher uses active learning strategies.

Research on the ICAP Framework and Hypothesis

The premise of the ICAP framework and hypothesis is simple: to increase student achievement, assign students learning activities that promote active learning, construction of meaning, and collaboration with peers. According to the ICAP hypothesis, the deepest learning occurs in conjunction with interactive behaviors, followed by constructive, active, and passive behaviors (Chi & Wylie, 2014). As a student-centered construct, the ICAP framework provides a framework that teachers can use to overcome the instructional design issues identified in research that include too many passive learning activities that impede the learning of students with disabilities.

Although the ICAP framework is relatively new, several researchers have tested its hypothesis and its influence on student achievement. Collectively, these researchers have validated the ICAP hypothesis (Chi et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2017; Damnik, Proske, & Korndle, 2017; Lam & Muldner, 2017; Menekse, Stump, Krause, & Chi, 2013; Roelle, Mueller, Roelle, & Berthold, 2015; Theobald, Eddy, Grunspan, Wiggins, & Crowe, 2017). Additionally, these studies support the main assertion of the ICAP framework and its hypothesis, which assert that activities eliciting interactive and constructive behavior modes result in the highest learning outcomes (Chi et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2017; Chi & Wylie, 2014) and teachers should assign these types of activities frequently during instruction.

In addition to research that supports the ICAP framework and its hypothesis, other research studies indirectly validate its central claims. A prominent feature of the ICAP framework and hypothesis is that learning activities should engage students in active learning. In support of this, researchers have shown that when reading instruction is student-centered and active, it results in higher levels of cognitive engagement (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carrabba & Farmer, 2018; Miller et al., 2017; Opitz et al., 2018; Terrazas-Arellanes et al., 2018), which is linked to increased achievement (Alvarez-Bell, Wirtz, & Hui Bian, 2017). Another tenet of the ICAP framework and its hypothesis is that students should have the chance to develop their own understanding of material as this leads to deeper learning (Chi & Wylie, 2014). These actions occur during the constructive behavior mode, and researchers have provided many examples linking learning activities that elicit constructive behavior to deeper learning (Ciullo, Falcomata,

Pfannenstiel, & Billingsley, 2015; Kim, 2018; Palmer, Boon, & Spencer, 2014; Sarwar & Trumpower, 2015). Additionally, the ICAP framework and its hypothesis assert that the co-construction of meaning, or interactive behaviors, is the pathway to the deepest level of learning (Chi et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2017; Chi & Wylie, 2014). There are many examples of research validating the ability of learning activities that elicit interactive behaviors to increase engagement and learning, especially for students with disabilities (Alvarez-Bell et al., 2017; Boardman, Vaughn, et al., 2016; Bock & Erickson, 2015; Miller et al., 2017; Opitz et al., 2018; Sencibaugh & Sencibaugh, 2016).

Collectively, researchers have found that the ICAP framework and its hypothesis are true. In addition, students engaged at the interactive and constructive behavior modes demonstrate deeper levels of learning compared to students engaged at the active and passive behavior modes. Understanding that the ICAP framework and its hypothesis are true, teachers may use it to engage students in active learning by designing learning activities that elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes. While the ICAP framework has not been recognized as a system that teachers can use for instructional design, studies show the promise it holds in assuming this role (Lam & Muldner, 2017; Roscoe, Gutierrez, Wylie, & Chi, 2014).

Using the ICAP Framework to Make Instructional Decisions

Teachers can use the ICAP framework to track how learning activities cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning. Additionally, teachers can also use the framework to design lessons that elicit specific levels of engagement as well as to assess the effectiveness of lessons (Lam & Muldner, 2017; Roscoe et al., 2014). In the

future, the ICAP framework shows potential as a theoretically grounded system for instructional design that teachers may use to alter the way they think about creating and implementing lessons for students (Roscoe et al., 2014). The use of the ICAP framework in this manner may create a learning environment that is well suited for the learning needs of all students.

Although initial conclusions from research indicate that the ICAP framework is an appropriate tool for guiding instructional design in the language arts classroom, the fact remains that only a few studies support this assertion. Consequently, it may be difficult for middle school language arts teachers to envision how the framework can inform their daily instruction. However, research on strategies for reading instruction already validate the main assertions of the ICAP framework as an evidence-based practice for teaching reading to students (Alvarez-Bell et al., 2017; Bock & Erickson, 2015; Miller et al., 2017; Opitz et al., 2018; Terrazas-Arellanes et al., 2018). Furthermore, many language arts teachers may already use strategies and learning activities in their classrooms that reflect the tenets of the ICAP framework and its hypothesis.

One instructional strategy that teachers may already use that reflects the ideology of the ICAP framework is reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching is a cooperative learning strategy in which students co-construct meaning of texts (Tarchi & Pinto, 2016). When using this strategy, students work with their peers to predict what may happen in a text, clarify confusing parts of a text, summarize the text, and make predictions about the text (Burns, Maki, Karich, & Coolong-Chaffin, 2017). Collectively, the features of

reciprocal teaching elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes, which result in the deepest levels of learning (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Researchers have found reciprocal teaching to be effective in improving the reading abilities of students (Burns et al., 2017; Koch & Sporer, 2017; Lee & Tsai, 2017; Reichenberg, 2014; Tarchi & Pinto, 2016).

Collaborative strategic reading is another instructional strategy that teachers may already use that supports the ICAP framework. While collaborative strategic reading is a multi-step and, at times, difficult process, researchers assert that students with reading struggles can use strategies that better readers use and that all students can participate in meaningful discussions with their peers about texts regardless of ability level (Boardman, Buckley, et al., 2015). During collaborative strategic reading, students work with their peers to activate prior knowledge, to self-monitor during reading, to understand the main idea, and to generate questions after reading (Boardman, Buckley, et al., 2015). Collectively, the features of collaborative strategic reading elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes. Like the reciprocal teaching strategy, studies have found collaborative strategic reading to be an effective strategy for improving the reading abilities of students, with and without disabilities (Boardman, Buckley, et al., 2016; Boardman, Buckley, et al., 2015; Koch & Sporer, 2017; McCown & Thomason, 2014).

In addition to being unfamiliar with the ICAP framework, teachers may hesitate to use the framework to guide instructional decisions because they do not want to stray away from traditional methods used to teach reading to students with disabilities. According to Boardman, Buckley, et al. (2015), teachers feel this way because they question these students' abilities to work at higher levels. However, research supports the

notion that students with disabilities can successfully work at the constructive and interactive behaviors modes of the ICAP framework (Boardman, Buckley, et al., 2015; Lee & Tsai, 2017; Reichenberg, 2014) as long as the teachers believe that they can.

Conclusions From Literature

A review of current literature results in several assumptions. First, students with disabilities continue to demonstrate significant struggles with reading skills. Secondly, instructional design decisions made by teachers may influence the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills. Instructional design decisions made by teachers, especially those that emphasize teacher-centered instruction and passive learning, are detrimental to the development of students with disabilities' reading skills. The ICAP framework emphasizes a student-centered learning approach that connects the highest levels of learning with active learning and collaboration. In response to the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at the study site, the ICAP framework and its hypothesis are a plausible approach for teachers to use to guide their instructional design choices to include more opportunities for active learning in their language arts classes. While many teachers may hesitate to use the framework to inform their instructional design decisions, they may already use strategies and learning activities that are in alignment with the ICAP framework and its hypothesis.

Implications

This study may lead to improved instructional design decisions made by teachers of students with disabilities in the inclusion and resource language arts classrooms at the project study site, which may help improve the reading skills of these students.

Specifically, this research may encourage teachers of students with disabilities to use the ICAP framework and its hypothesis to consider, design, and assess the learning activities assigned in their classrooms in order to ensure that all students are engaged in active learning during reading instruction. This study may also lead to positive social change for students with disabilities by identifying instructional methods that may improve their immediate reading skills as well as their long-term outcomes related to learning, employment, and mental health. Additionally, this study may improve the CCRPI score of the local middle school.

Summary

Section 1 of this project study revealed that even among the efforts to improve the reading skills of students with disabilities at the middle school used for this project study, these students continue to demonstrate little growth in reading skills. Consequently, teachers and administrators at this school continue to seek approaches that may have a positive influence on the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills. A review of current literature recognizes that the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills is a problem, not only in this school but nationwide. Because long-term outcomes for students with reading deficits may be dismal, it is necessary to address the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at the study site. Because a strong connection between engaging students in active learning and increased achievement, especially in the area of reading (Bryant et al., 2015; Chi & Wylie, 2014; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015), is identified in current literature, it is imperative to investigate if this type of learning is occurring in language arts classrooms at the study site. In addition, it is

important to determine whether teachers and administrators feel that active learning has a positive effect on student learning and reading ability.

To explore the problem in the context of the school setting, the RQs prompted teachers and administrators to assess active learning in the language arts classrooms at the study site and discuss how they perceive the influence of active learning on the growth of the reading skills of students with disabilities. Through this discussion, I was able to use the RQs to concentrate on and explore the research problem thoroughly and with clarity. The ICAP framework, which serves as the theoretical construct guiding this doctoral study, provided parameters for developing RQs, as well as the way to answer and analyze them to investigate the problem.

Section 2 of this proposal discusses the research design and approach, which is qualitative in nature. A qualitative case study research design is appropriate for research that aims to describe phenomena to increase understanding about how things work in the world (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016), and this purpose was the central focus of this doctoral study. Additionally, this section discusses the participants and their selection, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as limitations to the proposed study. In Section 3, I describe the project I developed based on the research findings (see Appendix A for the project itself).

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The central focus of this study was to determine whether teachers are assigning learning activities that compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction and whether this type of learning influences their reading skills. I used the ICAP framework (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014) as a guide for my interviews with language arts teachers and administrators at the study site as well as my analysis of teachers' lesson plans. The RQs I sought to answer were

RQ1: What behavior modes do students with disabilities display most often while completing learning activities during reading instruction in the language arts classroom?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit active and passive engagement modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities?

I used a qualitative design to answer the RQs. When conducting qualitative research, researchers identify a phenomenon to investigate, determine and describe observable patterns, and then explain what these patterns imply (Babbie, 2017). The purpose of qualitative research contrasts with that of quantitative research which is to quantify a phenomenon through statistical analysis to reveal what is real (Barnham, 2015). When choosing between using a qualitative or quantitative design, researchers must consider what data need to be collected to answer the RQs (Babbie, 2017). In

qualitative studies, the data are nonnumerical and unmeasurable; instead, they manifest as the feelings, opinions, and experiences of participants (Clark & Veale, 2018). Contrastingly, quantitative studies use numerical comparisons and statistical inferences to produce facts (Barnham, 2015). Because the purpose of this study was to use interviews and document review to provide insight (Barnham, 2015) into the active learning processes of students with disabilities in the language arts classroom, I chose a qualitative approach. Although not as widely used as quantitative methods, qualitative research can provide valuable insight into special education issues (Rumrill, Cook, & Wiley, 2011).

Burkholder et al. (2016) defines qualitative research as an "exploratory investigation of a complex social phenomenon conducted in a natural setting through observation, description, and thematic analysis of participants' behaviors … for the purpose of explaining and/or understanding the phenomenon" (p. 65). In this type of research, the researcher uses interviews, as well as other methods, to gain in-depth descriptions that participants assign to their experiences. There are several benefits of qualitative research. Strengths of this research include that it offers insights into and challenges the taken-for-granted theories (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018) and that its results can provide direction for future studies. Another benefit of qualitative research is that it provides an in-depth look at the feelings and experiences of the participant (Babbie, 2017). This aspect of the research is invaluable to the special education field as it allows researchers to "gain a better understanding of the perspectives of people with disabilities and those who interact with them and redress the inequities in education and

other life spheres that they experience" (Rumrill et al., 2011, p. 178). Qualitative field research is also more flexible than quantitative research (Babbie, 2017).

There are three main purposes of qualitative research--to explore, to describe, and to explain--and it is necessary to select the appropriate research purpose because its selection has implications for other aspects of the research design (Babbie, 2017). Exploratory research familiarizes a researcher with the topic to provide approximate answers to research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); descriptive research is used to answer what, where, when, and how questions regarding a phenomenon (Babbie, 2017); and explanatory research is used to answer why a phenomenon is the way it is (Babbie, 2017). Because I sought to describe the behavior modes students with disabilities elicit when completing learning activities in the language arts classroom, as well as teachers' perspectives about the influence of active learning on the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills, I decided that a descriptive case study was appropriate to answer the RQs and explore the research purposes. The first qualitative purpose of this study was to use the ICAP framework to analyze lesson plans to describe the behavior modes students elicit when completing learning activities to determine if students with disabilities at the study site are engaged in active learning during reading instruction in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms. A secondary purpose of this study was to describe how teachers and administrators perceive the influence of interactive and constructive learning activities versus the influence of active and passive learning activities on the development of students with disabilities' reading skills. Both

research purposes align with the goal of descriptive qualitative research, which is to investigate a problem in hopes of learning more about it (Babbie, 2017).

Because I wanted to investigate the experiences and perspectives of teachers and administrators who teach reading to or who observe students with disabilities in the inclusion and resource language arts classroom, I used a case study design instead of other approaches such as ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and grounded research. These approaches were not appropriate for my study because their purposes do not match the goals of my research project. An ethnography requires long-term immersion of the researcher in the culture to describe the customs of people (Burkholder et al., 2016). Researchers use a phenomenological design to explain experiences of a group of people, a narrative design to tell first person accounts, and grounded research to develop theories (Burkholder et al., 2016). These designs were ill matched with the purpose of my research. After reviewing the designs, I concluded that the case study design was justified based on my study purpose. The goal of a case study is to describe a phenomenon thoroughly to allow researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of it; to accomplish this goal, researchers use multiple data sources including interviews and documents (Burkholder et al., 2016).

I used data collected from interviews to answer the first RQ by analyzing participants' responses to reveal if teachers are assigning learning activities that result in students with disabilities engaging in active learning. To do this, I used the ICAP framework to analyze and classify participants' responses to identify the frequency and level of active learning students with disabilities work at most often during reading

instruction. The document review allowed me to explore and verify how often learning activities compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction and at what level of active learning, as defined by the ICAP framework, students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction. This information supported data gathered during the individual interviews. Additionally, I used individual interviews to provide data for all RQs. Specifically, participants described how they perceived the effects of different levels of active learning on the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills, which directly related to RQs 2 and 3.

Participants

Technique for Sampling Participants

In qualitative research, researchers select participants who will provide data needed to answer the RQs (Burkholder et al., 2016). I used purposive sampling in this research study. When using this type of sampling, researchers choose participants who will allow him to get the results needed to address the RQs (Burkholder et al., 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Specifically, in my study, I used homogeneous sampling, which is when the researcher chooses participants because they have similar characteristics related to the RQs (Etikan, 2016). This type of sampling was most appropriate because the specificity of the RQs required that participants be teachers who teach reading to students with disabilities or administrators who observe the teaching of reading to students with disabilities.

Setting

The setting for this descriptive case study was a small public middle school in the Southeastern United States. The study site is one of four middle schools in the school district. The school serves approximately 415 students with around 15% of the student population receiving special education services, according to an administrator at the project study site. Additionally, the administrator added that a large portion of the student body population is economically disadvantaged, and there is little racial diversity among the student population with over 90% of students identified as Caucasian.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The target population for the study was 14 teachers and administrator participants. Prospective teacher participants needed to teach reading to students with disabilities. Prospective administrator participants needed to review the lesson plans of language arts teachers and observe these classrooms during the school year. In addition to meeting the aforementioned criteria, the participants also had to express their willingness to share their views openly and honestly concerning the learning activities assigned or observed in language arts classrooms, as well as share their views about the influence of active learning on the growth of students with disabilities' reading skills.

Justification for the Number of Research Participants

In qualitative research, the size of the sample is not as important as the depth that the sample can provide (Burkholder et al., 2016); therefore, it is not as important to select a large sample size as much as it is necessary to ensure that participants can provide thorough responses to research questions. Although the target number of participants was

14, this research study only included eight total participants employed at the study site. The participants represented teachers from language arts classrooms who teach reading to students with disabilities.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Before gaining access to participants, I contacted the principal and board of education to obtain permission to conduct this research study and to use teachers and administrators as participants. Once the principal offered verbal permission to conduct the research study at the study site, I filled out and submitted a detailed research application to the board of education, which included in depth explanations about my research project including its purpose, rationale, research questions, methodology, design, data collection and analysis, and signed permission from the onsite administrator. Upon receiving consent from the board of education, I proceeded to contact target participants.

Establishing the Research Participant Relationship

Because I asked teachers and administrators participating in this study to provide open and honest responses to the interview questions, it was imperative to establish a trusting rapport with the research participants. To establish this understanding with the research participants, I conducted a session to introduce them to my research study and to explain their role as participants. I also discussed the Participant Consent Form and their rights as participants. Additionally, I encouraged the participants to ask any question or express any concerns they had about participating in this study. I also offered the opportunity for teachers to do this privately through email. After the meeting, I sent an email to the participants that included the Participant Consent Form for their review. I

instructed those choosing to participate to send back an email with the following phrase included: *I consent.*

Procedures for Protecting Participants

The social science profession has established a set of guidelines that serve as hallmarks of professional behavior when conducting research – nonmaleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and fidelity (Rumrill et al., 2011). Nonmaleficence indicates that research participants will not encounter dangerous or negative consequences; beneficence implies that the researcher will promote the well-being of participants; autonomy indicates that the research will respect the freedom of participants and their rights to make choices; and fidelity requires the researcher to be honest and honor agreements with participants (Rumrill et al., 2011). Collectively, these precepts center on protecting participants from harm, and I upheld these principals before, during, and after my research project.

To help ensure participants that I would protect their rights to ethical treatment and privacy, when I met with the participants, I explained how I would adhere to the ethical standards of social science research (Babbie, 2017). One important element of participants' rights is informed consent. Informed consent means that participants understand the research, its purpose, and risks and benefits, as well as know that they have the option not to participate (Babbie, 2017). After I reviewed this information with participants, I provided them with a copy of the Participant Consent Form. After participants reviewed the form, I explained the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and possible risks and benefits they may encounter while participating in my

research project (Babbie, 2017). I ensured participants knew that at any point they were free to remove themselves from the research study without consequence.

One of the clearest concerns of participants is protecting their identity (Babbie, 2017). To help protect their identity, I guaranteed participants that I would safeguard their confidentiality. To do this, I assigned a number to each participant. Additionally, I reassured participants that data collected from the interviews would remain confidential and that the only individuals that would have access to their data would be my supervising professor and myself unless otherwise granted by the Walden University IRB. Furthermore, participants maintained the right to read the summary of their transcript before it was included in the study to confirm that I did not alter their words or the meanings behind them. Upon completion of the transcripts, I erased the audio recordings from the interviews.

Data Collection

Justification for Data Collection Instruments

When using a qualitative approach for a research study, the researcher hopes to understand a phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016). Data collection instruments including interviews, focus groups, and observations (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), as well as document review (Carr, Zhang, Ming, & Siddiqui, 2019), aid the qualitative researcher's quest for knowledge. These data collection instruments yield data that helps the researcher provide answers to the research questions. In qualitative research, the data is descriptive and reported in words (Clark & Veale, 2018). Conversely, when selecting a quantitative methodology, the researcher wants to quantify the problem to gain

knowledge about it. While there are a variety of quantitative data collection methods, including questionnaires and surveys, the goal of the researcher remains the same when using any quantitative data collection method: to gather numerical data and use statistical analysis to construct models to explain what is going on (Babbie, 2017).

It can be difficult choosing between qualitative and quantitative data collection methods; however, the researcher's decision is influenced by the design and data needed to answer the research questions (Babbie, 2017). Babbie (2017) simplifies the researcher's decision when choosing between qualitative and qualitative methods by saying that the choice depends on the need for numerical or nonnumerical data. Because the goal of my research was not to use statistics to investigate the lack of growth in students with disabilities' reading skills at the study site, quantitative data collection methods were not appropriate. The purpose of my research project was to listen to the perspectives of teachers who provide reading instruction to students with disabilities, as well as review their lesson plans, in order to describe students with disabilities' level of active learning during reading instruction. Therefore, qualitative data collection instruments, specifically interviews and document review, were appropriate for this study and provided data needed to answer the research questions.

Identification of Each Data Collection Instrument and Source

Carr et al. (2019) stated that there are four basic types of qualitative data collection instruments: interviews, documents, observations, and focus groups. Data collection instruments should allow the researcher to explore the research questions, and in qualitative research, it is common for the researcher to combine data collection

methods (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In this study, I used interviews and document review. When identifying the appropriate design for interviews, qualitative researchers must choose between using focus groups and individual interviews. Focus groups are considerably larger than individual interviews, often consisting of up to 12 participants (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, & McKenna, 2017). By capitalizing on group dynamics, the researcher tries to get the group to engage in conversation about a topic (Guest et al., 2017). However, participants might behave differently in groups than they would in individual interviews (Guest et al., 2017). Conversely, individual interviews consist only of the researcher and the participant. Because the participant does not have to compete with others to express his or her opinion or feel hesitant to express an opinion that may be different than others in a group, individual interviews often yield more insight into a participant's perspective about the topic (Guest et al., 2017). Because teachers and administrators may feel hesitant to share their opinions about their teaching in front of their peers and superiors, I used individual interviews in this research project as they offer more freedom for the participant to speak his or her opinion with increased confidentiality.

Face-to-face interviews are a popular data collection tool in qualitative research (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Face-to-face interviews are flexible, allow a researcher to observe participants, and offer a controllable environment (Heath, Williamson, Williams, & Harcourt, 2018). In addition to face-to-face interviews, however, today qualitative researchers may use other types of interviews including online interviews or email (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Online interviews are useful when conflicts make

scheduling face-to-face interviews difficult (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). While the participant and researcher are not in the same room, these types of interviews do allow for access to non-verbal communication (Heath et al., 2018; Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). While not as widely used as other methods, email interviews are becoming more popular because they have several benefits (Heath et al., 2018). Emails are cost efficient and do not require the researcher and participant to be in the same location at the same time, and they may encourage people who are uncomfortable speaking in person a way to communicate their thoughts and opinions (Heath et al., 2018). When reviewing studies about using emails for qualitative data collection, Hershberger and Kavanaugh (2017) found that responses in emails were often more precise and in-depth than responses during face-to-face interviews.

In qualitative research, it is critical for the researcher to establish rapport with participants to encourage participants to share their personal opinions freely and openly (Heath et al., 2018). Because participants may have different preferences regarding how they would like to share information in response to the research questions, a variety of interview techniques were available for use during this research project including face-to-face interviews, online interviews, and emails. Heath et al. (2018) found that when given the opportunity to choose their interview technique, participants selected the method that was most convenient for them. In addition to convenience, participants choose the interview option that allows them to feel comfortable sharing personal information (Heath et al., 2018). While face-to-face interviews are preferred for qualitative data collection (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014), by offering other methods, I hoped that

participants felt comfortable sharing their opinions with me, which would ultimately allow me to gather thorough and meaningful data.

There are several kinds of interview formats including structured, semistructured, and nonstructured. When using a structured interview format, the researcher does not stray from the planned interview questions (Brown & Danaher, 2019). When using semistructured interviews, the researcher has prepared topics and specific questions to discuss during the interview. However, semistructured interviews still allow for the natural development of discussion between the participant and researcher (Brown & Danaher, 2019). In a nonstructured interview format, the researcher and participant freely discuss related topics but do not necessarily focus on answering specific research questions (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Because I wanted the participants to respond honestly and freely to the research questions, structured interviews were not appropriate because they do not allow the opportunity for the discussion to progress naturally, as the participant considers and responds to the original research questions (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Since I wanted to gather specific data in response to the research questions, an unstructured interview format was also not appropriate as this type of structure may lead to discussion not related to the research questions. Consequently, I used a semistructured interview format where I prepared an interview agenda with specific questions but still allowed for some freedom for the participant to discuss related topics. Additionally, semistructured interviews are appropriate for a variety of formats including face-to-face (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013), email (James, 2016), and online (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Appendix B contains the interview questions used in the study.

The second data collection instrument used in this qualitative study to investigate the RQs was document review. Document review is a useful qualitative strategy that can yield meaningful, retrospective information (Burkholder et al., 2016). When using document review, the researcher thoroughly examines a document through a specific lens. As with all other forms of data collection methods, when using document review, the researcher must link analysis to the research questions and literature review. In my research study, I used the lesson plan assessment to review teachers' lesson plans to gain insight about the RQs, specifically how often teachers are assigning learning activities that compel students with disabilities to engage in active learning. I used the ICAP framework to develop the lesson plan assessment. While the lesson plan assessment is unique to this research project, I used information from Chi (2009) Chi and Wylie (2014), and Menekse et al. (2013) to develop it.

Ability of Data Collection Instruments to Answer Research Questions

It is critical for researchers to review their RQs to determine what type of data is needed as different RQs necessitate the use of different techniques for data collection. Document review provided data that I used to answer RQ1 regarding the behavior modes students with disabilities display when completing learning activities during reading instruction in the inclusion and resource classrooms. I used data collected from the individual interviews to answer all the RQs. Babbie (2017) stated that interviews are an important part of qualitative research because they provide the ability to probe participants for specific details related to the RQs. Consequently, individual interviews with staff members at the study site were an appropriate data collection instrument.

During the individual interviews, I asked participants questions about active learning in their classrooms, and they provided honest responses guided by their experience assigning learning activities to students with disabilities during reading instruction.

How and When Data Were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

Individual interviews and document review generated information. I conducted interviews at the study site for participants requesting a face-to-face interview and through email for participants requesting that medium. During the interview, I collected data in two ways. I used a digital recorder to record participant responses for transcription. I also took notes as needed during the interview. Once the interviews were concluded, I transcribed the information and wrote a summary for participants to review if they wanted to ensure that the information I recorded reflected what the participant intended.

Additionally, I completed the document review to gather additional information about my RQs. I completed the lesson plan assessment prior to the individual interviews. Not only did the lesson plan assessment help provide accurate data in response to the RQs, but it also provided me with concrete information about the levels of active learning present in participant lesson plans.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

Qualitative research often yields copious amounts of data; consequently, it is necessary for the researcher to organize the data to facilitate easy retrieval of the data. To begin tracking and organizing data, upon completion of the interviews, I transcribed recordings. After offering the opportunity for participants to review the transcript, I

finalized the content and stored it as a word processing file on my computer. I also scanned the original lesson plan assessments and stored the PDF on my computer. Next, I used open coding to identify patterns within data. Upon completion of this step, I used axial coding to find connections within the categories created during open coding and labeled tentative themes. Finally, I used selective coding to identify specific themes related to my RQs. I used Excel to create code tables to manage the data. Finally, I created a folder for each research question and organized relevant data into these folders.

Access to Participants

After I received approval for my proposal and the school district gave permission for me to conduct the research project at the study site, I contacted the principal at the project site to identify teachers and administrators that were appropriate for the study. Specifically, I identified staff members who teach or observe the teaching of reading to students with disabilities in language arts classrooms. Then, I met with them to discuss their possible participation in my research study.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the "primary instrument of qualitative data collection" (Burkholder et al., 2016, p. 85). Researchers fulfill this role by participating in interviews and completing document analysis, among other activities. As the primary instrument of data collection, the researcher's involvement varies in degrees from complete participant to complete observer (Burkholder et al., 2016). In this research study, I was responsible for the data collection. Additionally, I fulfilled the role of

observer participant, which means that while I did not engage with the participants in the classroom setting, I still interacted with participants during interviews.

While I no longer work at the study site, I do have previous working relationships established with several of the target participants. I worked at the middle school for two years, one year as a special education teacher and one year as a language arts teacher. While I do have intimate knowledge of the local problem, my prior employment had no bearing on the ability of the target participants to answer the research questions. As a special education teacher and language arts teacher, I do have unintentional bias through my personal preconceived notions about active learning in the language arts classroom.

Data Analysis

How and When the Data Were Analyzed

The goal of the qualitative researcher is to present an accurate description of participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Austin & Sutton, 2014). To accomplish this task, a researcher must follow specific procedures to safeguard the accuracy of the data analysis. Coding is the analysis process for qualitative data, which is when the researcher classifies data (Babbie, 2017) into categories and themes. Coding procedures may vary depending upon the study's purpose, RQs, and design (Burkholder et al., 2016). When conducting open coding, the researcher examines, compares, and categorizes data to identify conceptual labels or patterns within the data (Burkholder et al., 2016). After open coding is complete, the researcher uses axial coding to analyze data. When using axial coding, the researcher uses the results from open coding to regroup data to find analytic concepts (Babbie, 2017). After the researcher completes open and axial coding, the analysis process concludes with selective coding, which finalizes themes developed from the data in order to answer RQs.

In my research study, I conducted three rounds of coding to analyze the data collected from the individual interviews. Specifically, I looked for emergent themes regarding how often the learning activities teachers assign result in students with disabilities engaging in active learning during reading instruction in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms. Additionally, I identified themes regarding teachers' perceptions about the influence of different levels of active learning on the reading growth of students with disabilities. The analysis of the lesson plan assessment followed

similar procedures used to code the individual interviews. I looked to identify themes regarding the frequency of and level of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction.

Procedures for Ensuring Accuracy and Credibility

In qualitative research, researchers aim to capture the phenomenon as experienced by the participants without imposing their own bias on the data; therefore, it is critical that researchers verify the trustworthiness of their research (Cope, 2014). In my research, I used audit trails and triangulation to assure that trustworthiness of my research. Audit trails are a trustworthy practice that establishes credibility (Amankwaa, 2016). Audit trails are a system for maintaining documentation and detail the steps the researcher takes to analyze data and report findings. I maintained a transparent system of documentation, which included raw data, audio tapes of interviews, and notes from my interviews and document review, as well as products of coding. Methodological triangulation involves collecting information from multiple sources as this allows for cross-referencing of data and data analysis (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). I used two data collection instruments, individual interviews and document review. Because data came from multiple sources, it enhanced the data's credibility. Not only did I have the perspectives of participants regarding the RQs, but I also had lesson plan assessments data that supported the information the participants shared during the interviews. If the data collected from the interviews and lesson plan assessments were conflicting, I could have met again with participants to clarify any questions; however, the data collected from the interviews and document review did not reveal any conflicting themes.

Bias, unintentional or intentional, is a concern for qualitative researchers (Clark & Veale, 2018). Specifically, researchers must consider how their opinions, background, and experience may influence their data analysis (Burkholder et al., 2016). Babbie (2017) offered two ways to avoid researcher bias. First, the researcher must have a deliberate awareness of one's beliefs. Secondly, a researcher must follow established processes for data collection and analysis. Considering Babbie's suggestions for avoiding researcher bias, I was aware that as an English teacher and special education teacher, I have not only a professional interest in this project but also preconceived notions about the topic. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I remained aware of my potential bias and endeavored to avoid allowing bias to infiltrate the interviewing and coding process. For example, during interviews, I was intentional to avoid inadvertent bias by being aware of my body language, voice tone, and facial expressions (Burkholder et al., 2016). Any type of physical response that indicated that I agreed or disagreed with a response would represent research bias and might influence the response I received from an interview participant. Additionally, prior to conducting interviews, I had someone review the interview questions to ensure that they were objective and did not express an opinion. In addition, to avoid potential bias during the interview and coding process, I used an audiotape to document verbatim the interview (Burkholder et al., 2016). Doing this helped me accurately record what the participant said as opposed to writing down how I interpreted their words.

Procedures for Managing Discrepant Data

Researchers examine discrepant cases to ensure that the findings are valid and not influenced by vague or incorrect information provided by participants during data collection. In the event of vague or discordant responses from the participants during interviews, I planned to ask probing follow-up questions to ensure that the information reflected the participants' perspectives and experiences. Because data collection procedures included individual interviews that seek the opinions of participants, it was possible that participants' responses may have led to discrepant findings about the influence of active learning on student achievement. If discrepant data materialized during the data analysis process, I established a process to follow up with participants to clarify any discrepancies.

Data Analysis Results

When, Where, and How Data Were Collected

I collected data over a two-week period. Data were generated from eight individual interviews from participants at the project site. Data were also collected from a review of lesson plans which participants had the option to share. Only two participants shared lesson plans with me for document review.

Data analysis

Immediately after the end of an interview, I transcribed the data into a Microsoft Word document and stored on my private computer in an appropriate file. As soon as data transcriptions were complete, I conducted the first round of open coding. Specifically, I looked to recognize similarities between data to identify patterns. During

the second coding phrase, I used axial coding to sort the patterns into tentative themes related to the levels of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction, as well as teacher perception of the influence of active learning on the reading skills of students with disabilities. As tentative themes emerged, I assigned each a number. Then, I referred to the data and looked for specific statements related to the tentative themes. Upon finding these statements, I highlighted the text and numbered it to correspond to a specific tentative theme. This process until I had collected, transcribed, and coded all data. Once I completed the first two rounds of coding, I reviewed the tentative themes and conducted a final round of selective coding to specify recurring themes. Finally, I organized the data by RQ, and used this information to answer my RQs. I completed the entire analysis process twice to ensure that the coding procedures used to identify patterns and themes were as accurate as possible.

As participants submitted lesson plans, I used the lesson plan assessment (see Appendix C) to classify the learning activities teachers assign to students with disabilities in the language arts classroom to identify the frequency and level of active learning students with disabilities work at most often. As soon as I completed the lesson plan assessment, I scanned the document and loaded it into an appropriate file. Then, I followed a similar data collection and analysis process for the review of participants' lesson plans. As soon as I completed storing the lesson plan assessments, I used open coding to look for similarities and identify patterns. Next, I used axial coding to sort data into tentative themes related to the levels of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction. As tentative themes emerged, I followed a similar

process used to analyze the interview data, and I assigned each theme a number. I continued with this process until the first two rounds of coding were complete. At this point, I used selective coding to review the tentative themes that resulted from the first two rounds of coding and identified recurring themes. Finally, I organized the data by RQ, and used this information to answer my RQs. I completed the entire analysis process twice to ensure that the coding procedures I used to identify patterns and themes were as accurate as possible.

Patterns and Relationships of Codes and Themes

I identified patterns from the data collected from the interviews and document review. These patterns revealed information about the frequency of which participants ask students with disabilities to engage in different levels of active learning during reading instruction, as well as teachers' perceptions about how active learning opportunities influence the development of students with disabilities reading skills. I used thematic analysis to develop the patterns into themes. Three themes emerged from the review of data collected from interviews and document review. These themes relate directly to the three research questions of the study.

Findings

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative research case study was to describe the engagement behaviors students with disabilities display when completing learning activities in the language arts classroom to determine if students with disabilities are engaged in active learning during reading instruction. I analyzed data collected via interviews and document review to understand the levels of active learning students with

disabilities engage in during reading instruction, as well as teacher perceptions about how learning activities that engage students with disabilities in active learning influence the development of the reading skills of students with disabilities. The findings are organized below by research question.

Theme 1: Behavior Modes Vary Throughout a Lesson. RQ1: What behavior modes do students with disabilities display most often during reading instruction in the inclusion and resource language arts classrooms? The theme related to this research question is discussed below.

Participant interviews and lesson plan analysis revealed that students with disabilities display a variety of active learning behavior modes throughout a class period. During the opening segment of a class period, students with disabilities are typically assigned learning activities that require them to review information already learned or activities that introduce new material. When discussing typical learning activities during the opening of a lesson, Participant 2 stated, "I usually assign ... a video to watch, as well as ask [students] to review ... their notes." Participants 3, 7, and 8 also stated that the opening part of the lesson typically includes a lecture of some sort with guided notes if students need it. Collectively, participants reported assigning learning activities that compel students with disabilities to display passive and active behavior modes during the opening segment of a lesson in inclusion and resource language arts classes.

During the work-time segment of a class, students with disabilities most often work on learning activities that require them to collaborate with other students to complete worksheets that review material or practice a skill. While participants reported a

variety of methods, most participants' responses reflected Participant 1's statement that group work or "stations work best" for students with disabilities. All participants stated that the worksheets assigned generally include comprehension and some analysis questions. Collectively, participants' responses revealed that students with disabilities most often display active behavior modes during the work time segment of class; however, students may exhibit constructive behavior modes occasionally. Even less frequently do learning activities result in students with disabilities displaying interactive behavior modes. Only two participants reported somewhat regularly assigning learning activities that result in students with disabilities displaying interactive behaviors during the work-time segment of class.

During the closing segment of a lesson, participants most often reported assigning learning activities that require students with disabilities to discuss material covered in class or to complete a short learning activity that monitors student progression on a skill. Participant 4 noted that the closing generally includes discussion which may be "teacher-directed in reviewing the skill learned, [may discuss] how we will apply the skills the following day or over the week, or may assess students' progress in attaining the skill." When speaking of learning activities usually assigned during the closing segment of a class, Participant 1 said, "We usually do a quick verbal check or have them turn in an assignment." Participants 7 and 8 stated that the closing segment might include games, which ask students to either review a skill or apply it. Collectively, the learning activities participants reported assigning during the closing segment of class elicit passive and active behavior modes from students with disabilities; however, students may display

constructive behavior modes infrequently. Students with disabilities rarely display interactive behavior modes during the closing segment in class.

Theme 2: Infrequent Use of Higher Levels of Active Learning. RQ2: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit interactive and constructive behavior modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities? The theme related to this research question is discussed below.

Participant interviews and analysis of lesson plans revealed that teachers do not perceive learning activities that elicit higher levels of the ICAP framework as helpful in improving the reading skills of students with disabilities. This statement develops from teachers reporting that they infrequently use learning activities that result in students with disabilities displaying interactive and constructive behavior modes, which are indicative of higher levels of active learning.

When displaying interactive behavior modes, students dialogue with a peer to generate new inferences beyond the information given. It is not simply students working together to answer comprehension or analysis questions; students must be transferring and co-creating knowledge. Collaboration is an integral component of the interactive behavior mode, and participants revealed that collaboration was a regular component of their daily lesson plans. However, while learning activities that promote collaboration potentially offer opportunities for students to display interactive behavior modes, participants reported using learning activities during group work and stations that offer opportunities for practice and review more so than assigning learning activities that require students to create and transfer knowledge within a co-partnership. Participant 3,

who reported assigning collaborative learning activities "almost daily," stated that students frequently complete learning activities that require collaboration because students can help one another complete work. Clear from this response, as well as others, participants are assigning learning activities that promote collaboration; however, this collaboration does not cause students with disabilities to engage in higher levels of active learning. Instead, students work together to review, practice skills, or provide support to one another. Only Participant 2 reported regularly assigning learning activities that require the type of collaboration that results in students with disabilities eliciting interactive behavior modes.

When displaying constructive behavior modes, students are independently generating new knowledge through transfer and application. Most participants reported that they did not regularly assign learning activities that compel students with disabilities to display constructive behavior modes. Participants 1 and 8 reported that they ask students with disabilities to complete learning activities that compel them to display constructive behavior modes one or two times a week. Participants 4 and 5 noted that they assign students activities that result in constructive behavior modes two to three times a week. Only Participants 2 and 7 reported regularly asking students with disabilities to apply their knowledge to new concepts. Participant 7 stated that through writing assignments, "students are asked to apply knowledge frequently. Between short answer and essay questions, students think critically and use analysis, as well as employ multiple narrative techniques."

Theme 3: Regular Use of Lower Levels of Active Learning. RQ3: How do teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that elicit active and passive engagement modes on the reading skills of students with disabilities? The theme related to this research question is discussed below.

Participant interviews and analysis of lesson plans revealed that teachers perceive learning activities that elicit lower levels of the ICAP framework as beneficial to the improvement of students with disabilities reading skills. This statement is evident based on participants' frequent use of learning activities that compel students with disabilities to display active and passive behavior modes, which are indicative of lower levels of active learning.

All participants reported using direct instruction daily, which can only result in students eliciting active or passive behavior modes. When discussing the types of learning activities assigned in class, participants reported that lecture and worksheets were the most used learning activities. Depending on the design and process of note taking, during a lecture, students may elicit passive, active, or constructive behavior modes; however, participants most often reported having students use guided notes during a lecture, which would elicit active behavior modes from students with disabilities. Regarding worksheet usage in class, participants indicated that they consistently include comprehension questions and occasionally include application questions on learning activities, which would cause students with disabilities to display mostly active behavior modes. Participant 7 noted that when assigning worksheets, the questions on the worksheets are "depth of knowledge level one and two for the most

part." When speaking directly about students practicing reading in class, most participants indicated that modeling and providing exemplars were the best ways to improve students with disabilities reading skills. Participant 1 stated that they "read to [students] and with them." Participant 3 and Participant 7 felt that modeling proper reading and reading comprehension was a valuable learning activity for students with disabilities. Modeling and similar types of learning activities can only elicit passive and active behavior modes from students with disabilities.

Salient Data

I immediately scrutinized any discrepant cases identified during the data collection and analysis phases to determine if I needed to take additional actions to clarify discrepancies. Because participants did provide a few vague responses during their interview, I asked probing questions to clarify responses. Two participants provided responses vastly different information from other participants regarding the levels of active learning students with disabilities engage in while working on learning activities. However, this was not concerning because since interviews seek the opinions of participants, it is reasonable to accept that one participant may think differently than another participant because of his or her personality, teaching experience, students, and personal beliefs.

Accuracy of Data

During the data collection and analysis phases of my research project, I used audit trails and triangulation to assure the trustworthiness of my research. Audit trails are a trustworthy practice that establish credibility (Amankwaa, 2016). It involves monitoring

the organization of data during collection and the specific steps taken during analysis. Immediately after I conducted the interviews and lesson plans submitted, I transcribed data into a Microsoft Word document and stored it on my private computer in an appropriate file. I then used open, axial, and selective coding to identify patterns and themes. Because I was the only person analyzing the data, I completed the entire analysis process twice to ensure that the coding procedures I used to identify patterns and themes were as accurate as possible.

Triangulation involves collecting information from multiple sources to allow cross-referencing of data and data analysis (Fusch et al., 2018), which enhances the credibility of the findings. I used two data collection instruments, individual interviews and document review. Not only did I collect data from participants' interviews, but also I used lesson plan assessments to support the information the participants shared during the interviews.

Summary of Outcomes

At the middle school project site, students with disabilities continue to show little growth in reading skills as measured by the Georgia Milestones Language Arts End of Grade Assessment (Administrator, personal communication, October 17, 2018). Because additional opportunities for reading intervention and remediation, as well as receiving special education services in the inclusion and resource language arts classrooms, have been unsuccessful in improving the reading skills of these students, it was meaningful to investigate the research problem and to answer the RQs. However, the data collected from the interviews and document review not only answered the study's RQs but also

connected the findings of this research study to the body of research already published on the reading deficits of students with disabilities.

By using the ICAP framework as a guide to analyze the findings, it is evident that students with disabilities at the project site do not engage regularly in higher levels of active learning during reading instruction in the inclusion and resource language arts classroom. My research findings support this assertion by showing that students with disabilities most often display active and passive behavior modes as defined by the ICAP framework. When displaying these behaviors, students are applying material in similar contexts or recalling material in the same context (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014). Examples of these types of learning activities include lecture, direct instruction, guided notes, review games, worksheets, modeling skills, and the use of videos (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Most participants in this project study indicated that these are the most regularly assigned learning activities in inclusion and resource language arts classroom. Conversely, participants did not report assigning learning activities that cause students with disabilities to display interactive and constructive behaviors as often. When displaying these types of behaviors, students either are transferring knowledge to new concepts or co-creating new products (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014). Examples of these types of activities would be independently solving a problem or debating with classmates to justify a finding (Chi & Wylie, 2014). While most participants reported that they do assign these types of activities at some point during reading instruction, only two participants indicated that they assign these types of activities with regularity.

In accordance with current research (McKenna et al., 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014), the reading instruction at the project site is frequently passive and teacher focused. Participants reported using learning activities that too often involve the use of worksheets and direct instruction to review and practice skills. Participants' decision to employ this type of instruction resides in their beliefs that the reading skills of students with disabilities are best improved using direct instruction. This finding reflects trends in current literature (Boardman et al., 2015; Edwards, 2015) indicating that teachers may be hesitant to ask students with disabilities to engage in higher levels of active learning because they believe it is not as beneficial to the development of the students' skills.

However, it is important for participants to consider how dominant usage of direction instruction may influence student learning. Researchers assert that too much direct instruction can impede the learning of students with disabilities because students learn "procedural but not conceptual knowledge" (Krawec & Steinberg, 2019, p. 28). In other words, when teachers frequently use direct instruction, they are not giving students the opportunity to grow and develop into critical thinkers and problem solvers. Conversely, infusing active learning opportunities in the classroom offers students with disabilities the chance to work on topics that are more complex in ways that are more independent. Specifically, activities that cause students with disabilities to display interactive and constructive behaviors has been linked to increased achievement in academic areas, including reading (Chi et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2017; Damnik, Proske, & Korndle, 2017; Lam & Muldner, 2017; Menekse, Stump, Krause, & Chi, 2013; Roelle, Mueller, Roelle, & Berthold, 2015; Theobald, Eddy, Grunspan, Wiggins, & Crowe,

2017). When students engage in activities that compel them to display interactive and constructive behavior modes, they move beyond passively listening or recitation of information to more authentic learning activities that require students to question, develop new knowledge, and engage in discussion with their peers, and researchers have shown that these types of behaviors increase student learning (Lim et al., 2019). It is important to note that researchers do not advocate for teachers to use active learning strategies instead of direct instruction; instead, researchers call for teachers to infuse active learning opportunities into their classrooms alongside direct instruction (Krawec & Steinberg, 2019).

In summation, according to the results of this research project, teachers at the project site are not engaging students with disabilities often in active learning during reading instruction. The ICAP framework postulates that increased levels of active learning increase student learning. In general, researchers have found value in increasing the level and frequency of active learning students with disabilities engage in because it positively influences student achievement and develops their ability to think critically (Krawec & Steinberg, 2019). Therefore, if students with disabilities continue to demonstrate low growth in reading skills as measured by the Georgia Milestones End of Course Language Arts assessment, it might be beneficial for teachers to consider integrating learning activities that require students with disabilities to engage in various levels of active learning during reading instruction.

Project deliverable. I selected a professional development project based on the study's problem, RQs, and research findings. The problem and RQs centered on describing the level of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction, as well as identifying teachers' perception of the influence of active learning on the development of students with disabilities' reading skills. The research findings revealed that teachers are not consistently assigning learning activities during reading instruction that result in students with disabilities engaging in higher levels of active learning according to the ICAP framework. In order to facilitate increased integration of learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning, which might help improve the readings skills of these students, I chose to create a professional development workshop focused on increasing levels of active learning in inclusion and resource language arts classes.

This planned professional development workshop uses a dual format to provide teachers of students with disabilities information about active learning strategies and learning activities they can assign to students with disabilities in the language arts classroom, as well as information about using the ICAP framework to develop lesson plans that engage students in various levels of active learning. Mahmoudi and Ozkan (2015) found that experienced and novice teachers prefer to attend professional development that integrates a variety of activities, including group discussion, collaboration, reading professional literature, observing, and discussing topics relevant to their everyday experience in the classroom. Considering these findings, this professional development workshop includes a variety of activities aimed at meeting the learning

needs and preferences of teachers. Section 3 discusses all aspects of this professional development workshop including its purpose, goals, participants, structure, and methods of evaluation, as well as a literature review related to best practices in adult learning and professional development.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Students with disabilities at the project site are not demonstrating expected growth in reading ability as measured by the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Language Arts assessment, according to an administrator. Although teachers and administrators have reported working tirelessly to implement intervention and remediation opportunities for these students, they have shown little improvement in their reading ability. I conducted this research study to determine if the learning activities assigned to students with disabilities during reading instruction compel them to engage in active learning. Teachers have traditionally used direct instruction and teacher-focused methods for teaching reading to students with disabilities (Alnahdi, 2015). However, researchers have found that use of these methods may be to the detriment of students with disabilities' reading skills and have called for teachers to integrate active learning opportunities during reading instruction (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015).

According to my research findings, teachers at the project site are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Although no research has been conducted at the project site to connect the poor reading performance of students with disabilities to a lack of active learning opportunities during reading instruction, it is possible that students with disabilities will benefit from instruction that engages them in active learning. The professional development workshop that I developed addresses the research problem and findings by providing training to

expand participants' knowledge and abilities to create and assign learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction.

Rationale

The purpose of professional development is to refine practices and develop new instructional techniques (Mahmoudi & Ozkan, 2015) that empower teachers and improve student outcomes (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). Therefore, planning quality professional development is important (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Researchers have found that successful professional development for teachers focuses on specific subject matter (Lindvall, Helenius, & Wiberg, 2018) that matches the content area of participants, as well as addresses specific areas of individual professional needs. Teachers at the study site are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Researchers suggest that to maximize the learning potential of students with disabilities, it is important to integrate active learning opportunities into reading instruction (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Using my research findings, I developed a professional development project to address the practice problem. The purpose of the professional development project was to introduce teachers to the ICAP framework and discuss active learning strategies in hopes of increasing their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction.

Review of the Literature

The following review of literature includes discussion about the change process in adults, adult learning, effective professional development, and delivery methods of professional development. I used information found in the literature review to frame and develop a professional learning plan that addresses the learning needs of participants at the project site. When searching Walden University databases (SAGE, ProQuest, Education Research Complete, Teacher Reference Center, and ERIC) and Google Scholar for peer-reviewed articles and books pertaining to the project, I used the following search terms: *adult learning*, *andragogy*, *effective professional development*, *Mezirow's transformational learning theory*, *professional development*, *professional development and teachers or educators*, and *transformational learning theory.*

Change in Adults

Student achievement scores have long been the focus of school reform and professional development opportunities as educators look to resolve issues that impede student achievement (Long, 2014) by evaluating and changing the instructional practices of teachers (Martin, Kragler, Quatroche, & Bauserman, 2019). However, change is not something that many educators accept and do with ease (Martin et al., 2019). Therefore, when planning professional development that encourages educators to implement new instructional practices, Mezirow's transformational learning theory is an important concept to consider (Javed, 2017).

Mezirow's transformational learning theory (1995) describes how adults change their behavior. Mezirow (2003) asserted that change is initiated in adults when a problem

is introduced that is not consistent with already held beliefs. Adults tend to reject ideas that do not match their beliefs, Mezirow stated; however, when adults can reflect on their instructional practices in a meaningful way, they can begin to consider change.

Martin et al. (2019) applied Mezirow's transformational learning theory to a school context to explain the change process that would need to occur for teachers to consider altering their instructional practices. First, as teachers encounter the new practice, they must examine their beliefs about teaching as well as their personal experiences in the classroom. Next, teachers use their beliefs and experiences to formulate an opinion about the new strategy. After this initial phase, Martin et al. recommended that teachers be given time to critically reflect on their assumptions about effective teaching, including what they currently do and how the new practice is different from their norm. Although teachers can individually accomplish this step, teachers benefit from discourse with their fellow teachers. Although it can be difficult for teachers to recognize strengths and weaknesses in their skillset, especially to colleagues, this type of discussion is critical in shaping their ability to accept a new practice (Martin et al., 2019). Finally, Martin et al. asserted that the conclusion of this reflection and discussion process leads to the ability for teachers to transform their beliefs about quality teaching to include the new instructional practice if they believe it to be beneficial for students. Although teachers may not always accept the change, by following this process they may become more open to changing the way they teach in their classrooms. Because teachers must be willing to modify their belief systems to adopt new instructional practices, school

leaders must consider the transformative learning theory when developing a successful professional development plan (Martin et al., 2019).

Adult Learning

Professional development is an important part of teachers' continuous learning and growth (Fischer et al., 2018) as it aims to refine practice and develop new teaching practices (Mahmoudi & Ozkan, 2015) to improve student outcomes. Research shows that professional development may influence teacher ability and consequently have a positive influence on student learning, as well as help solve problems within the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2016). The importance of creating meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers to learn new skills or refine their practices supports consideration of andragogy. Andragogy is the method of teaching adult learners (Javed, 2017), and it focuses on their unique needs during the learning process. Knowles (1980) popularized the concept of andragogy with six assumptions about adult learning. According to Malik (2016), the six assumptions of andragogy are as follows: (a) adults are self-directed learners. (b) adults are problem-centered learners, (c) adults' readiness to learn is connected to their ability to apply new information to their daily lives, (d) adults' experiences serve as background for learning, (e) the most effective motivations are internal, and (f) adults need to understand the purpose for learning. When planning for adult learners, it is critical to keep in mind these assumptions to create a learning experience that meets their needs. Adult learners benefit from professional development that is more than a one-dimensional lecture experience disconnected from their everyday experience. Instead, professional development should integrate a variety of experiences

and activities including problem-solving, group discussion, practical application, and simulation. Additionally, professional development should be meaningful to participants and related to their everyday experiences (Lindvall et al., 2018) so that they may see the value in the training.

Effective Professional Development Practices

Professional development provides "activities...intended to support and develop teachers' instructional practice" (Noonan, 2019, p. 526). Recognizing the importance of offering professional development opportunities to educators, school systems invest a lot of money and time into planning and providing professional learning opportunities for teachers; however, researchers have found that professional development is largely ineffective (Noonan, 2019) for a variety of reasons.

One of the most common reasons for ineffective professional development is that the material covered in the training is not relatable to teachers' classrooms (Nelson & Bohanon, 2019). Because the topic chosen by the presenter or administrator organizing the training often does not match teachers' needs, the effectiveness of the training is limited (Kostoulas et al., 2019). Instead of offering a generic approach to professional development, participants need training that is specific to their needs and content area (Lindvall et al., 2018; Noonan, 2019; Schachter & Gerde, 2019; Upitis & Brook, 2017). Offering teachers the opportunity to provide input about specific professional learning opportunities they need or want may also increase the relevancy and meaningfulness of the training (Martin et al., 2019).

Another indicator of ineffective professional development is the passive role teachers assume during training (Kostoulas et al., 2019). Too often, a professional development session includes activities that do not allow participants to engage meaningfully in the training. For example, many professional development sessions deliver information through a one-sided lecture from an individual, which leaves little time for discussion and reflection. Mahmoudi and Ozkan (2015) found that teachers with varying degrees of experience prefer different learning activities during their professional development training session. The responses from teachers varied from mentoring, workshops, and reading professional literature, to coaching, observing others, and engaging in dialogue. Although the responses did vary, two themes emerged from this study. First, teachers prefer to attend training that includes a variety of learning activities. Secondly, collaborative opportunities were a common link between experienced and novice teachers' ideas about meaningful professional development activities. Considering these findings, the most beneficial professional development may include a lecture to disseminate information at the beginning of the training but then offer additional sessions that provide opportunities for deeper and personal learning, especially those that promote collaboration. Richman, Haines, and Fello (2019) noted that collaborative environments increase capacity for improving professional practice, especially when it involves collaboration between teachers who teach students with disabilities. In conclusion, the delivery of professional development cannot be solely lecture format. In the same way that teachers differentiate learning activities to maximize student learning and growth,

teachers also benefit from exposure to a variety of learning activities, especially ones that engage them in the training as well as in collaboration.

A final theme that emerged from a review of literature regarding effective professional development practices is that teachers prefer sustained professional development training. Because it is critical for teachers to be present in class for students to learn, professional development opportunities for teachers are typically short in duration, either requiring a half-day or one full day of training. However, researchers have noted that teachers see little value in a one-time training session (Collins, Marsella, & Jones, 2017; Nelson & Bohanon, 2019; Peter, 2018; Schachter & Gerde, 2019) that either covers too much information or fails to allow participants the opportunity to implement the new strategy and reflect on its usage. Instead, teachers want the opportunity to attend professional development to learn a new skill and have the chance to practice it, reflect on it, and then revisit the topic covered during a training session (Nelson & Bohanon, 2019). In agreement, Collins et al. (2017) stated that effective professional development for teachers is a multi-step process. First, teachers encounter a new skill or strategy. Then, an expert models the new skill. Next, teachers should practice the new skill or strategy in their classrooms. Finally, teachers should meet again to engage in collaborative teaming to discuss, reflect on, and improve the skill application. For maximum effectiveness, this process repeats several times.

Delivery of Professional Development

Historically, professional development training for teachers has consisted of conferences, workshops, and in-service trainings, but it has more recently also included PLCs and coaching (State, Simonsen, Hirn, & Wills, 2019). Conferences and workshops are short trainings where teachers develop or acquire new knowledge about a skill (State et al., 2019). They typically use a "cascading model of knowledge distribution, where a small group of educators are taught a new method and then asked to pass on what was learned to others in their professional community" (State et al., 2019, p. 109). In-service professional development occurs in-person and is typically either a 60-minute period or a half-day or full day event. During in-service training, lecture is the typical format used to deliver information (State et al., 2019). PLCs are gatherings of teachers to discuss a shared interest or goal, including teaching strategies, student achievement, or school projects (State et al., 2019). Coaching is a more individualized approach to professional development where an advisor or expert works individually with teachers to improve specific aspects of his or her professional practice (State et al., 2019).

Although the traditional methods of professional development have taken place face-to-face, the rise of the digital age has transformed the way individuals learn and share information (Parsons et al., 2019). Colwell and Hutchinson (2018) and Macia and Garcia (2016) found that teachers are already informally using online resources such as websites, forums, and Twitter to create their own opportunities for professional learning; therefore, it is natural that formal professional development integrate some aspects of on-line learning into their programming.

There are several benefits to on-line professional development. First, it allows teachers to learn in real-time or own their own (Elliott, 2017), which makes this type of professional development effective because of the flexibility it allows. Another benefit of on-line professional development is that it is cost-effective (Powell & Bodur, 2019). In a time when school budgets do not allow for extra expenditures on something not deemed vital to daily operation, on-line professional development provides a viable option for cash-strapped schools.

Summary

The literature review provided valuable information related to designing a successful professional development plan. When planning the professional development workshop, researchers reiterate the importance of considering the participants. Not only do adults have difficulty accepting and implementing change, but they also have specific learning needs. To accommodate the adult learners who may participate in this professional development, it is necessary to consider Mezirow's transformational learning theory and the concept of andragogy as doing so will help facilitate a meaningful learning experience for participants.

In addition to using these concepts to drive the creation and delivery of the professional development, those developing training can consult current research to identify effective practices. Teachers benefit from a multi-faceted, multi-session approach to professional development that specifically addresses their professional experiences and needs. Additionally, while face-to-face sessions are an important component of successful professional development, it is necessary also to integrate

individual learning opportunities into the training to accommodate the learning preferences and time constraints of the modern learner.

Project Description

I collected data from eight semistructured interviews regarding the level of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction. My data analysis revealed that teachers are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. I developed a professional development project called *ICAP in the Classroom* in response to the research findings. A copy of the professional development plan is in Appendix A. The purpose of the professional development project was to introduce teachers to the ICAP framework and discuss active learning strategies in hopes of increasing their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. I developed the professional development project in response to the research study's findings, and it reflect themes that emerged from a review of literature related to professional development for teachers and adult learning.

Description

ICAP in the Classroom consists of 15 hours of face-to-face training, as well as nine hours of additional training outside of the main sessions, to develop skills related to increasing the level of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction. The target audience is language arts teachers who provide reading instruction to students with disabilities at the project site. The professional development introduces participants to new knowledge and teaching methods related to active learning that they

might use to increase the level of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction. During the training, teachers are first introduced to the ICAP framework. In addition to exploring research on the framework, teachers are shown how to use the framework to assess learning activities and lesson plans to identify the levels of active learning students engage in during instruction. Additionally, participants are introduced to a variety of learning strategies that are appropriate to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities. As a culminating product, teachers use the information from the training to develop a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during reading instruction. As suggested by researchers, the professional development training includes a variety of learning activities and delivery formats that best meet the needs of adult learners.

The *ICAP in the Classroom* professional development training includes 15 hours of face-to-face training and 9 hours of total engagement outside of the main sessions. This dual format not only adheres to researchers' suggestions to modernize professional development through an infusion of digital access and time to work through activities on participants' own time but also aligns with their advice to offer many opportunities for trainees to immerse themselves in the research, reflect on the new knowledge acquired, and to collaborate with their peers. During the face-to-face sessions, the facilitator shares information with participants and then participants share their experiences and opinions. Participants also work collaboratively with their colleagues to create a learning strategy toolbox and lesson plans. The additional 9 hours of training offer participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in related literature, to implement information learned

during face-to-face sessions in their classrooms, and to reflect on their experiences through discussion posts and responses with their colleagues.

Resources Needed

To participate in the 24 hours of training, participants need access to the *ICAP in the Classroom* Google Classroom. The Google Classroom, which is created and maintained by me, includes all instructional resources used in the training including PowerPoints, research articles, group discussion starters, and information about learning strategies. The Google Classroom also operates as the forum for discussion posts. Digitizing the resources gives participants unlimited access to training materials and helps maintain organization of training materials long after the training is over. Additional resources needed for the training include Chromebooks with online access for participants and a training room with a Smart Board or Smart TV.

Potential Barriers

Several potential barriers exist in relationship to the successful delivery of the professional development training. First, onsite administrators may be unwilling to allow teachers to miss instructional time in the classroom to attend training. Teachers may also feel hesitant to be outside of the classroom for 15 hours. Financial concerns may also exist. If teachers are out of the classroom for training, the school will have to hire substitutes to cover their classes. While school systems do have money in their budgets to pay for substitutes when teachers need to take sick or personal leave, administrators might view the training as unnecessary, and the school might not want to use money to allow teachers to attend the training. The school that functioned as the project site uses G

Suite for Education, so all of the participants are familiar with and can use Google Classroom; however, participants from other school districts may not have access to or know how to navigate Google Classroom, which could overcomplicate the training for participants.

Potential Solutions to Barriers

Although professional development training typically occurs during the workweek, if administrators and teachers prefer, the training can take place on the weekend to alleviate concerns about missing class-time and the need to pay for subs. If participants are not willing to attend the workshop on the weekend, I can format the training for online delivery. If Chromebooks are not available to participants, the entire professional development workshop, which is already largely digital, can be presented as hard materials. If participants are not familiar with Google Classroom, a similar process of photocopying all materials can eliminate this issue.

Proposal for Implementation

The schedule for the professional development includes 24 hours of total training. Ideally, the training would not occur over three consecutive days. Instead, the training would occur over three consecutive weeks or once a month for a total of three months. Gaps in between training allow participants the opportunity to take part in additional professional development training when it is convenient for them. This also provides participants with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the research and reflect on the new knowledge acquired. The 9 hours of training outside of the main sessions also offers additional collaborative opportunities through discussion posts. The implementation plan

can change to match the preferences of the onsite administrator and/or participants. A detailed implementation schedule is in the Appendix.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

Participants are responsible for attending 15 hours of face-to-face training and participating in all learning activities, including but not limited to group discussion, lesson plan assessment, lesson plan development, and creation of an active learning toolbox. Participants are also responsible for completing 9 hours of additional training, which includes reading related research and participating in group discussions. I am the organizer of the professional development training. I am responsible for planning the professional development training, as well as facilitating all aspects of the training to help participants fully accomplish the training's goals.

Project Evaluation Plan

Goals

The purpose of the professional development project is to introduce teachers to the ICAP framework and discuss active learning strategies in hopes of increasing their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. This professional development has four goals for participants related to this purpose. The first goal is for participants to identify active learning strategies to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities. The second goal is for participants to learn how to use the ICAP framework to increase active learning during reading instruction. The third goal is for participants to use the ICAP framework to write a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during

reading instruction. The fourth goal is for participants to create a digital toolbox of active learning strategies teachers can use.

Goal-Based Formative and Summative Assessment

After conducting the *ICAP in the Classroom* training, it is important for the facilitator to access participants' success in meeting the goals of the professional development. To achieve this purpose, the facilitator administers goal-based formative and summative evaluations at the conclusion of the training. These evaluations assist in determining if the training was successful in helping participants increase their ability to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Goals-based evaluations measure the degree of which the participants achieve the program's goals (Youker, Zienlinksi, Hunter, & Bayer, 2016). Formative assessment is a tool that helps inform student learning as opposed to simply judging how well they have learned (Houston & Thompson, 2017). It focuses on giving feedback to learners and teachers that help monitor and guide subsequent learning (Houston & Thompson, 2017). Summative evaluations are a "well-established tool for documenting and communicating … achievement … that is usually linked with the end of a learning experience" (Houston & Thompson, 2017, p. 1). In summary, formative assessments help plan for future learning, and summative assessment reveals levels of student learning to stakeholders.

Goal-based formative evaluations will take place during training. At the beginning of each face-to-face session, the daily training goals are stated, and at the conclusion of each session, participants complete a goal-based formative assessment to monitor whether they have mastered the session's learning goals. It is the facilitator's

responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the training. After each face-to-face session, I will review the formative assessments to help me prepare for the next face-to-face training session. Goal-based summative evaluations will take place after all 24 hours of training are complete and participants have had time to reflect on their experience. These summative assessments will identify whether participants achieved the goals of the professional development, and the feedback will be useful in improving future deliveries of the professional development.

Stakeholders in Project Evaluation

There are several stakeholders invested in the results of the project evaluation. As the facilitator, I am concerned with ensuring that the participants are successful in achieving the goals of the professional development. Additionally, participants want to know that they are learning valuable information during the training. Finally, on site administrators are also stakeholders interested in the successful delivery of the professional development training as it might help improve the reading instruction students with disabilities receive in the inclusion and language arts classroom.

Project Implications

The professional development project might have implications for the project site and the local school district. It might positively influence social change. The key stakeholders these implications might influence are regular education and special education teachers, administrators, and students with disabilities at the project site. I discuss these implications below.

The school serving as the project study site might benefit from the professional development project as it aims to increase participants' capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Participants accomplish this goal by completing a comprehensive introduction to the ICAP framework and its usefulness in the classroom. Additionally, participants meet this goal by collaborating with peers to identify active learning activities and design lesson plans that increase the engagement of students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Consequently, by helping teachers improve their ability to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction, the professional development training might directly affect students with disabilities. By increasing the level and frequency of active learning students with disabilities engage in during reading instruction at the project site, these students may demonstrate growth in their reading abilities as measured by the Georgia Milestone Language Arts End of Grade assessment. An additional benefit of teachers' enhanced ability to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction may be an increase in the school's CCRPI score. The professional development project might also encourage other schools within the school district to provide training to its staff that enhances their ability to infuse active learning strategies into their reading instruction, which would widen the influence of the professional development training to include more students with disabilities.

One of the core social change values at Walden University is "to generate new knowledge, conserve past knowledge, and transform knowledge by making connections among and between ideas to improve human and social conditions" (Walden University,

2017, p. 8). The purpose of the professional development project was to increase teachers' capacity for engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. This training introduces teachers to new knowledge, which when paired with what they already know about instructional best practices, will transform their ability to use learning activities and strategies that engage students with disabilities in active learning. Because reading ability is linked to positive academic and personal outcomes (Hock et al., 2017), it is critical for students with disabilities to have access to quality reading instruction, and this professional develop project might help accomplish that. Consequently, this professional development project may have an overall positive influence on the immediate and long-term academic and personal outcomes of students with disabilities.

Conclusion

In Section 3, I first summarized the findings gathered from the data analysis. Based on the findings, I designed a 24-hour professional development workshop that provided general education and special education language arts teachers with the tools and resources to increase their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. I developed the purpose of the project, as well as its goals, in response to the research findings presented in Section 2. Section 3 also included a review of literature related to adult learning and professional development, a proposal for implementation, roles and responsibilities of the participants and researchers, barriers and solutions to conducting the training, and resources needed for the professional development workshop. Next, I included the project evaluation plan, and finally, I

discussed the project's implications, including those for the local school district, as well as its social change implications.

In Section 4, I reflect on and discuss the importance of the study. I discuss the project's strengths and weaknesses, as well as make recommendations for alternative approaches. In this section, I also describe the knowledge I have gained about research and project development, and all I have learned about leadership and change. Section 4 also includes a discussion about the importance of the work and the learning outcomes of this study. Finally, I will consider the implications and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Students with disabilities at the project site are not demonstrating expected growth in reading skills as measured by the Georgia Milestone Language Arts End of Grade assessment. Researchers have found that integrating active learning opportunities in reading instruction has a positive influence on the reading skills of students with disabilities (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Therefore, the central purpose of this project study was to use the ICAP framework (Chi, 2009; Chi & Wylie, 2014) to describe the engagement behaviors students with disabilities display when completing learning activities in the language arts classroom to determine if these students engage in active learning during reading instruction. The second purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine how teachers perceive the effects of learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning during reading instruction. Based on my research findings and two literature reviews, I developed a professional development program to help increase teachers' capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. The name of this professional development program is *ICAP in the Classroom.* Through the implementation of this program, teachers may expand their knowledge and skills to enhance their abilities to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction.

In Section 4, I consider the strengths and limitations of the professional development project, as well as provide recommendations for remediation of these

limitations. Moreover, I discuss what I learned by conducting this research study and by creating the professional development project, and I analyze myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Next, I discuss the potential implications of my project study for positive social change in this school and school system. At the conclusion of this section, I discuss the implications and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

My research findings answered the RQs and reflected trends found in current literature on students with disabilities and reading instruction (McKenna et al., 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014; Bock & Erickson, 2015). These qualities demonstrate the alignment of the study from the research problem through the data collection and analysis to its conclusions. The research findings indicate that teachers at the project site are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning, which is a nation-wide trend identified in current literature about reading instruction for students with disabilities (McKenna et al., 2015; Vaughn & Waznek, 2014; Bock & Erickson, 2015). By using the findings of the research study, I identified the professional learning needs of participants, which involve expanding their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Collectively, this information helped me plan a meaningful workshop aligned with the research problem and current literature, as well as in response to the research findings. This is a strength of the professional development project.

Another strength of the professional development project is that it is grounded in current research on best practices regarding professional development and adult learning.

Instead of a single session of training that is lecture-centered that might not be meaningful to participants, the 24-hour professional development workshop includes numerous activities that relate directly to the instructional needs of participants identified through the findings of the research study. Additionally, because teachers may have difficulty acknowledging that they need to make changes to their instructional practices, Mezirow's (1995) transformational learning theory and the assumptions of andragogy informed the development of the training. This is another strength of the professional development project.

A weakness of the professional development project is that I only planned it, which means it reflects my perspective on the problem and professional development needs. The professional development project would benefit from having input from other professionals, whether it be other English or special education teachers, reading specialists, or administrators. Including other perspectives would help ensure that the schedule, content, and pacing best meet the learning needs of participants. Another weakness of the professional development project is that it only includes 24-hours of training. While that seems like enough time for a comprehensive training on the ICAP framework, researchers indicate that teachers prefer to participate in training that spans a much longer period of time to master training skills and goals (Collins et al., 2017; Nelson & Bohanon, 2019; Peter, 2018; Schachter & Gerde, 2019).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem targeted in this study was the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at the project site. Findings from this study indicated that

teachers are not engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. Through my research findings, I found that teachers do not regularly assign learning activities that engage students with disabilities in active learning because they do not find them as beneficial as other instructional methods. Consequently, I chose to develop a professional development workshop about active learning and its influence on student learning, as well as one that provides participants with information about different learning activities they can use during reading instruction to increase active learning. Even though the professional learning workshop provides training to help teachers create and deliver instruction that results in students with disabilities engaging in active learning, there may be other means of addressing the problem. As mentioned in the literature review on professional development and adult learning, there are a variety of approaches (workshops, PLCs, coaching) that can be used when planning and implementing successful professional development.

There are other ways to develop and view the research study and project to provide different methods for addressing it through professional development. Instead of the original problem that focuses on the students at the project site, it might be beneficial to redirect the problem to focus on the teachers. An alternative definition of the problem might lie in the execution of instructional practices and the support teachers receive regarding using active learning strategies in the classroom. It is plausible that teachers do not recognize the value of assigning learning activities that engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction because they do not implement these strategies successfully in the classroom. Considering this alternative definition of

the problem, a different approach to the professional development project would involve using instructional coaches to redirect the professional development training to focus on the execution of active learning instruction in the classroom. Coaching is a more individualized approach to professional development where an advisor or expert works individually with teachers to improve specific aspects of their professional practice (State et al., 2019). Coaching would personalize the professional development, as it would shift the training from large-group sessions to one-on-one training with an instructional coach. Instead of simply learning about active learning strategies, the revised professional development project would focus on helping teachers implement learning activities that engage students with disabilities in active learning.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Prior to enrolling in this doctoral program at Walden University, I had earned a bachelor's, master's, and specialist's degree in English Education. I hold teaching certifications in Middle Grades Language Arts, English (6-12), and Special Education. I also have 10 years of teaching experience in English and special education classrooms. Although my content knowledge and classroom experience were enough in preparing me for doctoral-level study, upon enrolling in this program, I quickly realized that my knowledge of research methods, data collection, and data analysis was severely inadequate. Through the prescribed coursework for this degree and, of course, this research project endeavor, my knowledge and ability to conduct a research project has advanced beyond novice status.

In addition to improving my ability to conduct an actual research project, I have certainly enhanced my content area knowledge as well as my writing skills. Through coursework, research, and writing for this project, I have acquired a bevy of new knowledge about learning theories, teaching strategies, and reading instruction for students with disabilities that will likely enhance my instructional practice and positively influence student learning in my classroom. Additionally, while I consider myself capable of completing graduate-level writing tasks, this dissertation required a different type of writing and attention to detail that I might not have always employed previously. The revision process has also improved my ability to construct succinct, effective sentences and write organized, coherent paragraphs.

Increased knowledge about the research process, as well as improved writing abilities, will have positive effects on several aspects of my professional career. While one may consider the research process only to be appropriate for official investigations into large-scale problems, through the coursework, research study, and project process I have learned that I can use this knowledge to address smaller problems within my own school. Additionally, as an English and special education teacher, writing and teaching writing is part of my daily job. Understanding how to write effectively will help me teach students to do the same. Moreover, a major responsibility of my job involves writing IEPs, eligibility reports, and progress monitoring reports. Transferring what I have learned about writing will enhance my abilities to complete the writing components of my job.

Through developing the professional development project, I learned about the adult change process and adult learning. Prior to the literature review conducted for the professional development project, I had never heard of andragogy or the transformational learning theory. In addition to helping students learn, a major role the modern teacher assumes is sharing knowledge with co-workers. As soon as I began researching andragogy and the transformational learning theory, I quickly recognized how beneficial this information would be in helping me share information with my colleagues. Too often teachers sit through professional development that is boring or ineffective; however, considering andragogy and the transformational learning theory one can plan learning opportunities that are more effective for teachers. This is information that I can use to enhance my presentations during professional learning communities.

Project Development and Evaluation

I also learned through planning the project that everything - including professional development - needs evaluation. Through the literature review, I learned how critical it is to use formative and summative evaluation measures to assess the meaningfulness of professional development. Specifically, I learned how to create and to use goals-based formative and summative assessment to accomplish this. Again, this is information that I can use to enhance my presentations to colleagues as using this type of assessment will help me shape, and reshape, how and what I share with my colleagues.

Leadership and Change

The completion of this research study and the professional development project is a commitment to improving my leadership abilities. Through my coursework at Walden,

including this dissertation process and project development, I have learned a lot about being a successful leader. I have completed reading and writing assignments on transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership, all of which I have used to mold my own leadership style. Transformational leadership "is a process that changes and transforms people" through the employment of "charismatic and visionary leadership" (Northhouse, 2013, p. 193). Transformational leaders take great effort to recognize issues at school, to create a vision to address these problems, and to gather a team to work together diligently to resolve them. Authentic leadership is the process by which leadership is "both service and influence" (Northhouse, 2013, p. 219). With this type of leadership, leaders identify with their followers and nurture them, thus enabling leaders to empower their followers to achieve at their maximum level (Northhouse, 2013, p. 219). Authentic leaders are positive people who are honest and promote transparency. Servant leadership does share some similarities with transformational leadership; however, there are distinct differences. Servant leadership is concerned with the individual (Kiker, Scully Callahan, & Kiker, 2019). A servant leader is "motivated to lead and ha[s] a need to serve" (Kiker et al., 2019, p. 173), and is known for listening, showing empathy, having awareness, and community building. As I assume more responsibility in my school and community, my leadership will reflect components of each of these leadership styles.

In addition to learning about different types of leadership styles, through completion of this dissertation and professional development project, I have learned how effective leaders cause change. Leaders are responsible for enacting positive change in

their school communities; however, change is not easy for adults. In the literature review for the professional development project, I discussed the transformational learning theory, which explains the change process for adults. In summary, it focuses on introducing the change and the need for it, and then allowing adults the opportunity to reflect on it and discuss it before deciding if they are ready to accept it. In addition to this change ideology, during my coursework at Walden, I also encountered another change model that I will utilize during my professional career: The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM).

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a set of frameworks school leaders can use to introduce change. CBAM first places focus on those responsible for implementing change and attend[s] to where they are (Loucks-Horsley, 2006) in their understanding and acceptance of new policy. Many teachers are wary of change because they fear it will be hard to implement, because it will add to their exhaustive list of duties, or because it is an individual endeavor of the leadership. Leaders who follow the CBAM framework decrease this anxiety because they acknowledge individuals and their needs (Loucks-Horsley, 2006). The CBAM is a powerful model to guide change because it takes the focus off the change and places it directly on the teachers. Coupled with what I learned about the transformational learning theory, the CBAM will help me effectively plan for and navigate change in my school community or when conducting professional development training like *ICAP in the Classroom*.

The transformational learning theory and the CBAM, as well as the leadership skills learned during my coursework, research study, and project development, will help

me achieve Walden's mission for its students to be change-agents in the real world. Understanding how adults change, and the leadership and processes necessary to facilitate change, will help me address problems within my school community in the most effective and meaningful ways that not only improve situations for individuals but also promotes a positive school culture.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

In this study, I investigated the lack of growth in the reading skills of students with disabilities at a middle school by determining if teachers are assigning learning activities that cause students with disabilities to engage in active learning. Researchers have found a positive correlation between active learning and improvement in students' reading abilities (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015), so it was important to determine if teachers are providing active learning opportunities to students with disabilities. The findings of this research study reveal that teachers are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction, so I planned a professional development project to help increase teachers' capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. The research study, its conclusions, and the project might benefit students with disabilities at the project site by informing future instructional design decisions made by teachers in inclusion and resource language arts classrooms in hopes of improving not only the immediate reading skills of students with disabilities but also their long-term outcomes.

Students who struggle to read may face many negative long-term consequences related to academic, professional, and personal success (Hock et al., 2017). These

students are less likely to complete high school, enroll in college, and have a steady job (Hock et al., 2017), and they also more likely to be teen parents, to be incarcerated (Connor et al., 2014), and to be plagued with mental health issues (Boyes et al., 2018). Moreover, students with reading deficits are at risk for other health-related issues including violent behavior and depression (Boyes et al., 2018). Collectively, these outcomes highlight the dismal future that might await students who cannot read well and demonstrates why the study was important. Because the reading growth of students with disabilities is linked with the middle school's low CCRPI score, this study was also important to the project site because it might help improve the school's performance on this evaluation measure.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications for Social Change

This research study and project has implications for social change on a local level. At the project site, students with disabilities are demonstrating little growth in reading ability. Researchers have found that active learning opportunities may improve the reading skills of students with disabilities (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015); however, through this research study, I have determined that teachers at this school are not regularly engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction. The research findings might inform practices at the school by encouraging teachers to integrate active learning opportunities into their instruction. The professional development project might also help teachers successfully implement active learning opportunities through increased knowledge about the influence of active learning

on students with disabilities' reading skills. Both results might increase the exposure of students with disabilities to active learning during reading instruction, which might have a positive influence on their reading abilities. Because reading ability is linked to positive academic and personal outcomes for students with disabilities (Hock et al., 2017), improving reading instruction might lead to positive social change for these students. As teachers more frequently use active learning strategies during reading instruction, implications could go beyond the teachers involved in this research study and lead to developing a school culture that embraces active learning in all academic areas.

Implications for Methodology

If I were to repeat this research and use a qualitative approach, I would hope to include more participants in the data collection process. Using qualitative methods does appropriately investigate the research problem, so if I wanted to be more confident in my conclusions about the research findings, the sample size would need to be increased. A larger sample size would yield much richer data and more reliable study results. To accomplish this, I would need to expand my target participants to include teachers at other schools in the district. If I wanted to use the findings of this research project to investigate the problem more closely, I would use quantitative methods to analyze statistically if students with disabilities engaged in active learning experience more growth in reading skills than students with disabilities who are not engaged in active learning.

Implications for Future Research

In the future, the replication of this research study would be valuable in determining whether students with disabilities are engaged in active learning during reading instruction at not only this school but also other schools in the district. This might determine an even greater need to expose general education and special education language arts teachers to the ICAP framework and active learning strategies. A similar descriptive qualitative case study would fulfill the purpose of this inquiry. As discussed previously, once the qualitative purpose has been satisfied, it might be useful to use quantitative methods to explore further the research problem. The switch in methodology would focus the research on proving whether active learning does have a positive influence on the reading skills of students with disabilities, at least in the local context. While the qualitative study offers possible solutions to the research problem, a quantitative study would be a step toward identifying a solid solution to the problem.

Conclusion

Although initiatives have been passed at the national, state, and local levels, the fact remains that students with disabilities continue to struggle to read (Wexler et al., 2018). Because negative outcomes may await students who struggle to read (Hock et al., 2017), it is imperative that researchers and educators seek out best practices for teaching reading to students with disabilities. Researchers have identified a link between providing active learning opportunities for students with disabilities and gains in reading abilities (Bryant et al., 2015; Fenty et al., 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Therefore, it is critical for teachers to not only be aware of active learning strategies but also understand how this

type of instruction influences the reading skills of students with disabilities. The ICAP framework offers a practical way for teachers to not only create lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in active learning but also a way to assess the levels of active learning students engage in during reading instruction. While engaging students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction is not proven yet as a universal remedy for reading deficits, researchers have shown it is an instructional practice teachers should consider more seriously.

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Appendix A: The Project

ICAP in the Classroom

A 24-hour Training

Introductions and Icebreakers

Facilitator: Haley Cooper

- Background
- Teaching Experience
- Certifications/Training

Participant Introductions

Toilet Paper Icebreaker

Pass around the roll of toilet paper around and rip off how much you would usually use. When the toilet paper makes it all the way around the circle, count your squares. I will tell you what your number means.

Training Goals

This professional development has four goals for participants related to the purpose:

1) To identify active learning strategies appropriate to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities

2) To learn how to use the ICAP framework to increase active learning during reading instruction

3) To use the ICAP framework to write a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during reading instruction

4) To create a digital toolbox of active learning strategies teachers can use.

Training Purpose Statement and Rationale

The purpose of the professional development project is to introduce teachers to the ICAP framework and discuss active learning strategies in hopes of increasing their capacity to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction.

While teachers have traditionally used direct instruction and teacher focused methods for teaching reading to students with disabilities (Alnahdi, 2015), researchers have found that this may be to the detriment of students with disabilities' reading skills and have called for teachers to integrate more active learning opportunities during reading instruction (Bryant et al, 2015; Fenty, Mulcahy, & Washburn, 2015; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015).

Session 1

Goal: To learn how to use the ICAP framework to increase active learning during reading instruction

Agenda:

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Introductions and icebreakers Purpose and goals of training
8:30 AM - 9:30 AM	ICAP framework: The basics
9:30 AM - 9:35 AM	Break
9:35 AM - 10:00 AM	Round Table #1: Preliminary Reactions
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Application: Using the ICAP framework
11:00 AM - 11:25 AM	Round Table #2: Reflections
11:25 AM - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Collaborative Activity: Assessing Lesson Plans
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	ICAP framework in Review Exit ticket - Participant formative assessment

ICAP framework: The basics

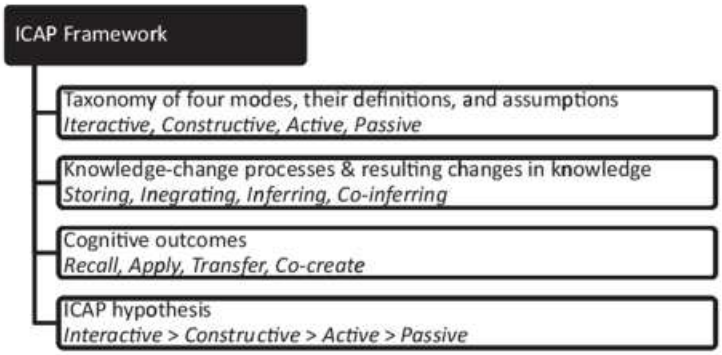
Who created the ICAP framework?

When was the ICAP framework created?

What is the ICAP framework?

Why is the ICAP framework important to me?

ICAP framework: The basics



ICAP framework: The basics

	PASSIVE *Receiving*	ACTIVE *Manipulating*	CONSTRUCTIVE *Generating*	INTERACTIVE *Dialoguing*
LISTENING to a lecture	Listening without doing anything else but oriented toward instruction	Repeating or rehearsing; Copying solution steps; Taking verbatim notes	Reflecting out-loud; Drawing concept maps; Asking questions	Defending and arguing a position in dyads or small group
READING a text	Reading entire text passages silently/aloud without doing anything else	Underlining or highlighting; Summarizing by copy-and-delete	Self-explaining; Integrating across texts; Taking notes in one's own words	Asking and answering comprehension questions with a partner
OBSERVING a video	Watching the video without doing anything else	Manipulating the tape by pausing, playing, fast-forward, rewind	Explaining concepts in the video; Comparing and contrasting to prior knowledge or other materials	Debating with a peer about the justifications; Discussing similarities & differences

Round Table #1: Preliminary reactions to the ICAP framework

Using the ICAP framework to assess lesson plans

Category	INTERACTIVE	CONSTRUCTIVE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Characteristic	Dialoguing	Generating	Manipulating	Receiving
Definition	Generating additional inferences and information via dialoguing with a peer	Generating new inferences or information beyond what is presented	Manipulating learning materials to focus attention	Merely paying attention to receive the learning material
Knowledge-change processes	Co-Inferring (taking turns, mutual benefit)	Inferring, connecting,comparing, reflecting		Storing isolated, encapsulated info
Expected cognitive outcomes	Co-Creating. inventing new products	Transferring to new contexts, interpret	Applying in similar contexts	Recalling verbatim in the identical context

Using the ICAP framework to assess lesson plans

Monday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			

Round Table #2: Preliminary reactions to using the ICAP framework to assess lesson plans

Collaborative activity - Assess lesson plans

1. Choose a partner
2. Have your ICAP handouts and lesson plan assessment handy
3. Choose a set of lesson plans
4. Assess the level of active learning students are engaged in during each lesson

ICAP framework in review

- Interactive > Constructive > Active > Passive
- Supported by research
- Can be used to measure the frequency and level of active learning students are engaged in

What's next?

Before our next session, you need to complete the online training activities available in the Google Classroom.

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about the ICAP framework

APPLY - the ICAP framework to your own lesson plans

Formative Assessment

Did you meet today's learning goal?

Complete Session 1's formative assessment form.

Session 2

Goals: 1) To identify active learning strategies appropriate to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities; 2) To create a digital toolbox of active learning strategies teachers can use.

Agenda:

8:00 AM - 8: 30 AM	Introductions and icebreakers Purposes and goals of training
8:30 AM - 9: 30 AM	Active learning and students with disabilities: What the research says
9:30 AM - 9:35 AM	Break
9:35 AM - 10:00 AM	Round Table #3: Reaction to research
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Identifying active learning strategies for students with disabilities
11:00 AM - 11:25 AM	Round Table #4: Reaction to learning strategies
11:25 AM - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Collaborative activity: Learning Strategy Toolbox
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	Active learning and SWD: in review Exit ticket - formative assessment

Introductions and Icebreakers

Welcome back!

Share ONE THING you learned or took away from the first training session.

Logo Love Icebreaker

Grab a name tag and a pen.

Write your name on the tag and draw logos you love.

Share why you chose that logo.

Active learning and students with disabilities: What the research says.

Traditionally, teacher-centered methods have been used to teach reading to diverse learners including students with disabilities (Head, Flores, & Shippen, 2018); however, recently, this type of instruction has been linked to low levels of student engagement, which has a negative impact on student achievement (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carraba & Farmer, 2018; Johnson & Cuevas, 2016).

Teacher-centered methods:

- Does not develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Emphasizes recitation of material
- Limits communication, participation, and peer interactions

Active learning and students with disabilities: What the research says

Conversely, it has been argued that for students to improve their literacy skills, they must be engaged in student-centered instruction that causes them to engage in active learning and allows them the opportunity to socialize, think, and reason (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carraba & Farmer, 2018).

During student-centered instruction, students are given activities that engage them in active learning and offer cooperative learning opportunities (Serin, 2018), both of which emphasize exploration and discourse as critical elements of learning. Student-centered instruction has been found to positively influence student motivation and learning outcomes in not only reading (Moon, Wold, & Francom, 2017), but science (Odom & Bell, 2014), math (Sengupta-Irving & Enyedy, 2015) and social studies (Worthington, 2018) as well.

Active learning and students with disabilities: What the research says

While researchers show that active learning can be an effective instructional strategy for students with disabilities (Bock & Erickson, 2015; Carraba & Farmer, 2018; Miller, McKissick, Ivy, & Moser, 2017; Moser, Grob, Wittich, Hasel-Weide, & Nuhrenborger, 2018; Terrazas-Arellanes, Gallard, Strycker, & Walden, 2018), several factors influence teachers' decisions to employ, or not employ, active learning including other teachers, content, and planning time (Edwards, 2015). Additionally, teachers' beliefs about students with disabilities and their ability to learn influence the instructional design decisions (Edwards, 2015; Ko & Hughes, 2015; Ruppar, Gaffney, & Dymond, 2015) made by middle school reading teachers (Siuty, Leko, & Knackstreet, 2016).

In other words, because teachers are worried that students with disabilities cannot do the work, they do not assign students with disabilities learning activities that cause them to engage in active learning.

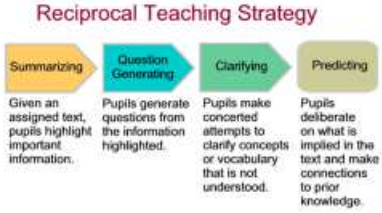
Round Table #1: Preliminary reactions to the research

Active learning strategies for students with disabilities

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching is a cooperative learning strategy in which students co-construct meaning of texts (Tarchi & Pinto, 2016). When using this strategy, students work with their peers to predict what may happen in a text, clarify confusing parts of a text, summarize the text, and make predictions about the text (Burns, Maki, Karich, & Coolong-Chaffin, 2017).

Studies have found reciprocal teaching to be an effective strategy for improving the reading abilities of students, with and without disabilities (Burns et al., 2017; Koch & Sporer, 2017; Lee & Tsai, 2017; Reichenberg, 2014; Tarchi & Pinto, 2016).



Active learning strategies for students with disabilities

Collaborative Strategic Reading

When using this strategy, students work together to activate prior knowledge, to self-monitor during reading, to identify the main idea of a text, and to generate questions after reading (Boardman et al., 2015).

Like the reciprocal teaching strategy, studies have found collaborative strategic reading to be an effective strategy for improving the reading abilities of students, with and without disabilities (Boardman et al., 2015; Boardman et al., 2016; Koch & Sporer, 2017; McCown & Thomason, 2014).

	Strategy	Description
Before Reading	**Preview**	Students activate *prior knowledge* and make predictions about what they will learn from the text.
During Reading	**Click and Clunk**	Students monitor their comprehension of *vocabulary* as they read, applying fix-up strategies to infer the meaning of unknown words by their context.
	Get the Gist	Students identify the most *important information* contained within each section of text.
After Reading	**Wrap Up**	Students *generate questions and answers* based on the information in the passage they have just read.

Round Table #2: Preliminary reactions to activity learning strategies

Active learning and SWD in review

- Researchers state that engaging students with disabilities in active learning may have a positive influence on their reading abilities.
- Don't let your preconceived notions about what students can and cannot learn keep you from integrating active learning in your classroom!
- Reciprocal teaching and collaborative strategic reading are active learning strategies you can begin using now in your classroom.
- Utilize the active learning toolbox you and your colleagues are developing.

Collaborative activity - Active learning toolbox

1. Choose a partner
2. Use resources from your own lesson plans, from materials, or from an online search to locate a variety of active learning strategies, activities, or lessons that can be used or taught in language arts classroom
3. Locate the Shared Drive called "Active learning toolbox"
4. Place a copy of your resource in the Shared Drive

Formative Assessment

Did you meet today's learning goal?

Complete Session 2's formative assessment form.

What's next?

Before our next session, you need to complete the online training activities available in the Google Classroom.

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about active learning strategies and SWD

APPLY - use one active learning strategy in your classroom.

Session 3

Goal: 1) To use the ICAP framework to write a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during reading instruction

Agenda:

8:00 AM - 8: 30 AM	Introductions and icebreakers Purposes and goals of training
8:30 AM - 10: 30 AM	Using the ICAP to plan lessons
10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Round Table #5: Reflection on lesson plan development
11:00 AM - 11:05 AM	Break
11:05 AM - 12:30 PM	Using the ICAP to plan lessons
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	Workshop in review

Introductions and Icebreakers

Welcome back!

Share ONE THING you learned or took away from the second training session.

Grab an index card and a few markers.

Draw a self-portrait and write your name, your nickname (real or imaginary), and a fun fact.

When everyone is finished, trade cards. People can trade as many times as they want, but they have to read each card they get before they trade.

After a few minutes, everyone will announce the name on the card they ended up with. People can even ask questions of the card's owner if they want.

Using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans

Category	INTERACTIVE	CONSTRUCTIVE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Characteristic	Dialoguing	Generating	Manipulating	Receiving
Definition	Generating additional inferences and information via dialoguing with a peer	Generating new inferences or information beyond what is presented	Manipulating learning materials to focus attention	Merely paying attention to receive the learning material
Knowledge-change processes	Co-Inferring (taking turns, mutual benefit)	Inferring, connecting,comparing, reflecting		Storing isolated, encapsulated info
Expected cognitive outcomes	Co-Creating, inventing new products	Transferring to new contexts, interpret	Applying in similar contexts	Recalling verbatim in the identical context

Using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans

Try to engage students with disabilities in multiple levels of active learning during a lesson.

Opening - active and passive behavior modes to review material

Work-Time - constructive behavior modes to have students apply and transfer what they have learned

Closing - interactive behavior modes to have students collaboratively apply and transfer what they have learned

REMEMBER: There is no secret formula to how often you should engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning. The bottom line is that we should, with regularity, ask students with disabilities to complete tasks that require them to exhibit constructive and interactive behavior modes.

Using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans

The ICAP framework can be used by teachers to design lessons that elicit specific levels of engagement as well as to assess the effectiveness of lessons (Lam & Muldner, 2017; Roscoe et al., 2014).

In the future, researchers believe that the ICAP framework may be recognized as a theoretically grounded system for instructional design that teachers may use to alter the way they think about creating and implementing lessons for students (Roscoe, Guiterrez, Wylie, & Chi, 2014).

The use of the ICAP framework in this manner may create a learning environment that is truly differentiated and uniquely suited for the learning needs of all students, those with and without disabilities.

Round Table #1: Preliminary reactions using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans

Collaborative Activity: Using the ICAP to write lesson plans

1. Choose a partner
2. Together, choose a standard and topic to teach
3. Using the ICAP framework, develop five days of lesson plans that include learning activities that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning

What's next?

Before our next session, you need to complete the online training activities available in the Google Classroom.

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about using the ICAP to develop lesson plans

APPLY - teach your lesson plans in class

Collaborative Activity - Using the ICAP to write lesson plans

Continue working with your partner to write five-days of lesson plans.

Formative Assessment

Did you meet today's learning goal?

Complete Session 3's formative assessment form.

Workshop in review

We need to engage students with disabilities in active learning during reading instruction as researchers have shown that doing this will have a positive influence on the growth of their reading skills.

The ICAP framework is a tool you can use to help you gauge the level of active learning your students are engaged in during instruction. The ICAP framework can be used to help you write lesson plans as well as assess how successful your lesson activities are in engaged students with disabilities in active learning.

Summative Assessment

Did you meet the training's learning goals?

When you have completed all if session 3's activities, please complete the Summative Assessment.

Implementation Schedule

Session 1 - Five hours of professional development face-to-face

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Introductions and ice breakers
	Purpose and goals of training
8:30 AM - 9:30 AM	ICAP framework: The basics
9:30 AM - 9:35 AM	Break
9:35 AM - 10:00 AM	Round Table #1: Preliminary Reactions to the ICAP framework
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Using the ICAP framework to assess lesson plans
11:00 AM - 11:25 AM	Round Table #2: Preliminary reactions to using the ICAP to assess active learning in lesson plans
11:25 AM - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Collaborative Activity: Assessing Lesson Plans
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	ICAP framework in Review
	Exit ticket - Participant formative assessment

3 hours of professional development

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about the ICAP framework

APPLY - the ICAP framework to your own lesson plans

Session 2 - Five hours of professional development face-to-face

8:00 AM - 8: 30 AM	Introductions and ice breakers

	Purposes and goals of training
8:30 AM - 9: 30 AM	Active learning and students with disabilities: What the research says
9:30 AM - 9:35 AM	Break
9:35 AM - 10:00 AM	Round Table #3: Reaction to research
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Active learning strategies for students with disabilities
11:00 AM - 11:25 AM	Round Table #4: Reaction to learning strategies
11:25 AM - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Collaborative activity: Learning Strategy Toolbox
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	Active learning and students with disabilities in review
	Exit ticket - Participant formative assessment

Three hours of professional development

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about active learning strategies and SWD

APPLY - use one active learning strategy in your classroom.

Session 3 - Five hours of professional development face-to-face

8:00 AM - 8: 35 AM	Introductions and ice breakers
	Purposes and goals of training

8:35 AM - 10:35 AM	Using the ICAP framework to collaboratively develop lesson plans
10:35 AM - 11:00 AM	Round Table #5: Reflection of lesson plan development
11:00 AM - 11:05 AM	Break
11:05 AM - 12:30 PM	Using the ICAP framework to collaboratively develop lesson plans
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM	Workshop in review
	Exit ticket - Participant formative assessment

<u>3 hours of professional development</u>

READ - the articles linked in Google Classroom

REFLECT - on the articles and the training today

DISCUSS - your thoughts about using the ICAP to develop lesson plans

APPLY - teach your lesson plans in class

Session 1 – Goals-Based Formative Assessment

Training Goal: To learn how to use the ICAP framework to increase active learning during reading instruction

In your own words, what did you learn about the ICAP framework today?

In your own words, explain how you might use the ICAP framework in your classroom to increase active learning?

How would you describe your progress in achieving this goal?

Depending on your response to question three, answer the appropriate question.

What additional training or activities would improve your ability to achieve this learning goal?

What training or activities helped you achieve this learning goal?

Session 2 – Goals-Based Formative Assessment

Training Goal: 1) To identify active learning strategies appropriate to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities; 2) To create a digital toolbox of active learning strategies teachers can use.

In your own words, what did you learn about active learning strategies and students with disabilities today?

In your own words, explain which activities you found today that you think may be appropriate for your students?

How would you describe your progress in achieving this goal?

Depending on your response to question three, answer the appropriate question.

What additional training or activities would improve your ability to achieve this learning goal?

What training or activities helped you achieve this learning goal?

Session 3 – Goals-Based Formative Assessment

Training Goal: 1) To use the ICAP framework to write a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during reading instruction

In your own words, what did you learn about using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans?

In your own words, explain why using the ICAP framework to write lesson plans may be useful to your instructional planning process?

How would you describe your progress in achieving this goal?

Depending on your response to question three, answer the appropriate question.

What additional training or activities would improve your ability to achieve this learning goal?

What training or activities helped you achieve this learning goal?

Goals-based Summative Assessment

For each goal, rate your mastery of it after completion of the training. If desired, elaborate on your ratings in the comment section.

Goal	Rating	Comments
To identify active learning strategies appropriate to use during reading instruction for students with disabilities	1 2 3 4 5	
To learn how to use the ICAP framework to increase active learning during reading instruction	1 2 3 4 5	
To use the ICAP framework to write a week's worth of lesson plans that engage students with disabilities in various levels of active learning during reading instruction	1 2 3 4 5	
To create a digital toolbox of active learning strategies teachers can use	1 2 3 4 5	

What were the most beneficial activities you completed during the training that helped you master or worked toward mastery of the training's goals?

What were the least beneficial activities you completed during the training?

What are your suggestions to improve this professional development training?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What types of learning activities do you assign most often to students with disabilities during the OPENING segment of class?
2. What types of learning activities do you assign most often to students with disabilities during the WORK TIME segment of class?
3. What types of learning activities do you assign most often to students with disabilities during the CLOSING segment of class?
4. How often do students with disabilities listen to a lecture during class?
    a. Probe: When listening to a lecture, are students just listening or are they taking notes?
    b. Probe: If students do take notes, do students take their own notes, or do you provide them a notes guide to fill in?
5. How often do students with disabilities watch an instructional video (youtube, edpuzzle, short clips, complete movie, etc.) during class?
    a. Probe: When watching a video, are students just listening during the video or are they taking notes?
    b. Probe: If students do take notes, do students take their own notes, or do you provide them a notes guide to fill in?
6. How often are students with disabilities asked to complete a worksheet during class?
    a. Probe: On these worksheets, what types of questions do students answer most often - comprehension questions or questions that require inferences and analysis?

7. How often are students with disabilities asked to apply knowledge or transfer knowledge to new concepts during class?
    a. If needed for clarity or direction: Examples of this would be students creating their own concept map, writing notes in their own words, asking questions or making predictions, creating original metaphors, answering questions that go beyond simple comprehension, and self-evaluating.
8. How often do students with disabilities work with another peer during class?
    a. Probe: What types of activities do students complete when working with a peer?
9. How often do you provide direct instruction to students with disabilities in your classroom?
10. What types of learning activities best help students with disabilities improve their reading abilities?
    a. Probe: Why do these types of learning activities benefit students more than other types of activities?
11. What types of learning activities are not as useful in helping students with disabilities improve their reading abilities?
    a. Probe: Why are these types of learning activities not as beneficial to students?

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Assessment Form

Monday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			

Tuesday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			

Wednesday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			

Thursday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			

Friday	Opening	Work-Time	Closing
Activity			
ICAP level			
Comments			