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A Comparative Case Study of Factors Distinguishing Between High and Low-Performance on Reading Achievement in Elementary Rural Appalachian Schools

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A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF FACTORS DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN HIGH AND LOW-PERFORMANCE ON READING ACHIEVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY RURAL APPALACHIAN SCHOOLS

By

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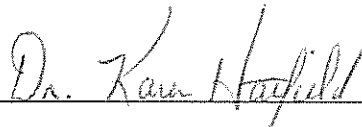ELEMENTARY RURAL APPALACHIAN SCHOOLS
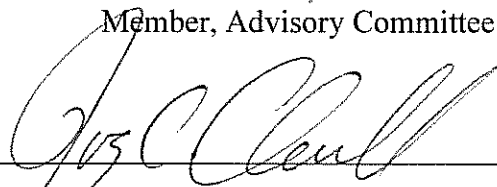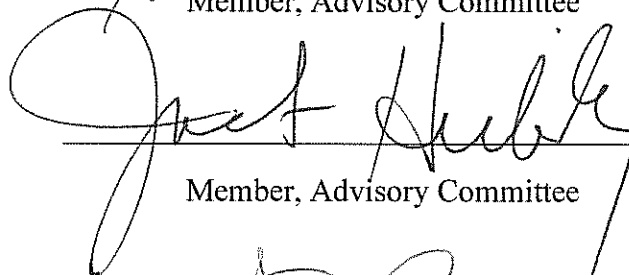

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter, Amber Renee Chambers. Always remember that you can do anything you set your mind to. There is no goal too big to achieve. Follow your dreams and follow your heart. Anything is possible. Thank you for always making me proud to be your Mom. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This qualitative comparative case study identified factors that distinguish between high and low-performance on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. This study determined the most effective instructional reading strategies, as well as other influential factors, implemented by school districts in the rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages. Data were collected through interview questions to assess the staffs' perceptions of their school's instructional program, leadership strategies, and teaching methods. The researcher also conducted observations of classrooms during reading instruction to determine practices being used. Results indicate high teacher morale, teacher efficacy, supportive leadership, meaningful professional development, and instructional strategies such as: explicit small group instruction, uninterrupted time spent on reading instruction, and inclusion of literacy centers are all variables that discriminate between these high and low performing schools.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A major function at the elementary school level is teaching children how to read. Research provides evidence that specific early literacy concepts can predict young students' later reading achievement (DeBruinParecki, 2004; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). If children do not acquire basic reading skills in their elementary school years, their future educational and occupational career could be severely affected. According to the National Right to Read Foundation (2007), forty-two million American adults cannot read; fifty million are unable to read at a higher level that is expected of a fourth or fifth grader. The National Institute for Literacy (2007) reported that forty-three percent of those whose literacy skills are the lowest live in poverty.

In 2000, Congress charged the National Reading Panel with the following specific tasks:

- Assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read.

- Report an indication of the readiness for application in the classroom of the results of this research.

- Report, if appropriate, a strategy for rapidly disseminating this information to facilitate effective reading instruction in schools.

- Recommend, if found warranted, a plan for additional research regarding early reading development and instruction.

In response to this charge, the panel identified a set of topics of central importance in teaching children to read. They were aided by a report of the National Research Council, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (2000). The Panel refined its selection using information from public hearings held in five major cities across the country. The topics the Panel studied intensively were: alphabetics, including phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction; fluency; comprehension, including vocabulary instruction, text comprehension instruction, and teacher preparation and comprehension strategies instruction; teacher education and reading instruction; and computer technology and reading instruction.

The findings of the Panel's subgroups are presented in detail in their reports and are summarized in the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (2000). Donald Langenberg, Chairman of the National Reading Panel (NRP) from April 1998 to April 2000, highlighted the following four findings in his testimony at the press release for *The Importance of Literacy* on September 26, 2000:

- The Panel found that certain instructional methods are better than others, and that many of the more effective methods are ready for implementation in the classroom. For example, there was overwhelming evidence that systematic phonics instruction enhances children's success in learning to read and such instruction is significantly more effective than instruction that teaches little or no phonics.

- Literacy instruction can and should be provided to all children beginning in kindergarten. To become good readers, children must develop phonemic awareness, phonics skills, the ability to read words in text in an accurate and

fluent manner, and the ability to apply comprehension strategies consciously and deliberately as they read. Children at risk of reading failure especially require direct and systematic instruction in these skills, and this instruction should be provided as early as possible. Such instruction should be integrated with the entire kindergarten experience in order to optimize the students' social and emotional development.

- Research on this significant subject must stand up to critical, scientific scrutiny. No reputable physician would normally subject a patient to a treatment or a drug whose efficacy had not been proven in rigorous scientific testing. We should expect no less of a teacher subjecting a student to curricular content or a teaching methodology. Without the necessary, proven knowledge base, we can expect our schools to continue to be besieged by education fads and nostrums.

- Most importantly, teachers are key! They must know how children learn to read, why some children have difficulty learning to read, and how to identify and implement effective instructional approaches for different children. They must learn to judge the quality of research literature and use it to develop curricula and teaching methods based on the most scientifically rigorous studies. To help them perform their critical role, teachers should be provided extensive pre-service and in-service training in a variety of instructional techniques.

Strong literacy skills are not the only determining factor in student success. However, it is logical to assume that students who have limited literacy skills have little chance of scoring in the proficient or distinguished target range on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT). The KCCT is a major component of Kentucky's Assessment and

Accountability Program. The results of this test are used to evaluate the school program in the state accountability system. The results from the reading and math content areas are also used to meet federal testing and reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB Law (2001) states that *all* students must be reading on their individual grade level by the year 2014 with no exceptions.

Statement of the Problem

Several school districts in Kentucky are not meeting the reading goals set forth by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Some of these same districts received the Reading First grant and still did not meet the 75th percentile goal on the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) by the end of the fifth year of implementation. Developed as part of NCLB (2001) and intended to help schools with high numbers of struggling readers get additional support for kindergarten through third grade, the Reading First initiative supported efforts to teach literacy and increase reading development of K-3 students. Under this initiative, $500 million dollars were distributed to states, districts, and schools through competitive awards for up to six years to support efforts to teach literacy and increase reading development of K-3 students, particularly low-income students. Kentucky schools received approximately 11 million dollars per year for the duration of the grant (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2008).

Reading is a skill that has often been taken for granted by many different stakeholders (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). However, after the federal government passed a law to hold school districts accountable for student reading levels, and the year 2014 appeared on the horizon, schools began paying closer attention to their reading scores and feeling the pressure of the NCLB Law. Effective reading ability

provides students with the weapons to combat the ever increasing demands of the world and to perform well on any test (Reading First, 2007).

Previous research has not typically examined high-performing, high-poverty schools in Appalachia or other rural areas. This study examines critical factors that may attribute to a student's achievement in rural Appalachia such as: teacher morale, within-school support and leadership, professional development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the classroom.

Rationale for study

Factors such as youth culture (Ferguson, 2007), student behavior (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Turner, Thorpe, & Meyer, 1998), and literacy stimulation in the home affect performance (Nord, Lennon, Liu, & Chandler, 2000), contributing to a gap in achievement between low-income students and their more affluent peers; school leaders must adopt strategies to address these factors. In addition to youth culture and student behavior, leadership (Kearnes & Harvey, 2001), instruction (Cawelti, 1999; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Wright, Horn, & Sanders 1997), and school culture (Cleveland, Powell, Saddler, & Tyler, 2008) influence student achievement. For instance, schools with low-income and minority students typically lack appropriate instruction, materials, and qualified or experienced teachers (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Daunic, Correa, & Reyes-Blanes, 2004; Borman & Kimball, 2005; Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nesmer, & McIntyre, 2008; Ingersoll, 2002; Knoeppel, 2007). In addition, low-income and minority students in these schools may not experience significant relationships with adults in schools (Becker & Luthar, 2002).

Schools in poverty are often characterized by few resources (Murphy & Datnow, 2003; Reeves, 2005), high teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2004), and low morale (Lumsden, 1998; Houchard , 2005). High-minority, high-poverty, and low-performing schools are most likely to have teachers with less experience and education and lower performance on entrance tests than teachers in low-minority, affluent, and high-performing schools (Wyckoff, 2003; Carey, 2004). Studies show that the school environment plays a part in attracting and retaining teachers (Knapp, Loeb, Plecki,& Elfers, 2004). A rank order of school characteristics that retain teachers include a positive school climate, support from administrators, supportive colleagues, and a collaborative work environment. Beginning in 1998 with teacher testing and culminating in No Child Left Behind legislation, teacher quality has received increased attention. Research supports that teachers are an important determinant of the quality of education and have an impact on student achievement (No Child Left Behind, 2001; Paige, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Hanushek, 1997, 2003; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). Improving teacher quality in low-performing, high-minority schools and narrowing the achievement gap between groups of students require students be taught by high quality teachers (Ramirez, 2003). Despite the shortcomings of programs for some low-income students and the deficit beliefs that abound, unique schools throughout the United States overcome obstacles and lead low-income and minority students in successful school environments. These schools have led their low-income student populations to high levels of achievement commensurate with their more affluent peers.

After applying in 2002 and receiving funding in 2003-2004, 74 Kentucky schools finally began Reading First implementation for the 2004-2005 school year. Schools across the state began the year by acquiring a baseline score on the required standardized

test GRADE which revealed that 30.1% of students in grades K-3 in the state scored at the 50th percentile or above. This translates to 5,593 students out of 18,538 were reading on or above grade level in the fall of the first year of Reading First. By the end of the fifth year of implementation, Kentucky had 77% of all K-3 students reading at or above proficiency (Carney, 2010). *See Figure 1.1*.
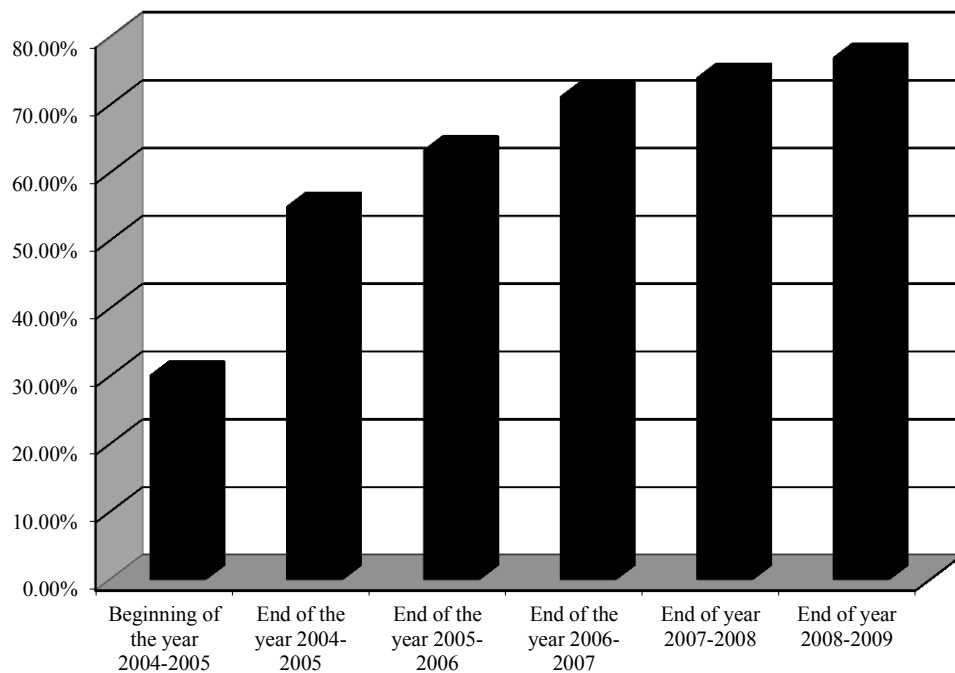
Figure 1.1: Percent of K-3 students reading at 50th percentile or above on GRADE

At the end of year four, students from eleven schools in Kentucky averaged the 90th percentile or better on GRADE; all eleven of these were rural Appalachian schools. The fact that all eleven schools were rural and Appalachian strongly recommends such schools for study. If we can develop an understanding of what policies and practices

characterize these schools, it might suggest recommendations that could be replicated in similarly situated schools with historically low performance.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that distinguish between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study compared instructional reading strategies, as well as other factors that distinguish between two schools in a rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages.

Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following question:

What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading?

Design of the study

This section of the chapter briefly describes the design of the study. Data was gathered through interviews and observations at both schools. A general interview guide approach was used with teachers and administrators. On-site interviews and email responses were analyzed and cross-coded for consistencies and similarities. To help ensure validity in observations, the standard Reading First Observation Forms was used along with field notes at the bottom. These forms are checklists that were used by schools, districts, and state coaches based on the five Reading First components for effective instructional practices as identified by the National Reading Panel. The components observed are phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and

fluency during whole group, small group, and centers. Each form has a place to fill in observer name, school name, teacher name, date, and class/grade level observed.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are briefly set forth in this section of the chapter. This is a qualitative comparative case study. Case studies are limited to describing particular phenomena rather than predicting future behavior (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2003), these studies,"...are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 10). Another limitation was the small sample size. Specifically, the researcher interviewed and observed only one teacher per grade level (K-3) at each school for this particular study.

Definition of terms

Assessment **-** Teacher-made tests, standardized tests, or tests from textbook companies that are used to evaluate student performance.

Coaching **-** A professional development process of supporting teachers in implementing new classroom practices by providing new content and information, modeling related teaching strategies, and offering on-going feedback as teachers master new practices.

Comprehension - Understanding what one is reading, the ultimate goal of all reading activity.

DIBELS – Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. An assessment tool used primarily for screening and progress monitoring.

Differentiated Instruction – Matching instruction to meet the different needs of learners in a given classroom.

Fluency – Ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression.

Learning Centers – Sometimes referred to as reading or literacy centers. Special places organized in the classroom for students to work in small groups, pairs, at computers, cooperatively or individually. Each center contains meaningful, purposeful activities that are an extension and reinforcement of what has already been taught by the teacher in reading groups or large groups.

Morale - A state of mind, emotional, or mental attitude (Mendel, 1987).

National Reading Panel – Group commissioned by the President of the United States to examine and make suggestions for improving reading practices in school districts.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – A law signed in 2001 by President Bush that requires all students to be reading on grade level by the year 2014.

Phonemic Awareness – The ability to notice, think about, or manipulate the individual phonemes (i.e., sounds) in words.

Phonics – The study of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent; also used to describe reading instruction that teaches sound-symbol correspondences.

Reading First - A bold national initiative aimed at helping every child in every state become a successful reader.

Vocabulary – All the words of our language. One must know words to communicate effectively.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has presented the introduction, statement of the problem, rationale and purpose for the study, research questions, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter Two reviews literature and research related to the factors being investigated that could affect student reading achievement. The methods and procedures used to gather data for the study and analyze it are presented in Chapter Three. Results and findings that emerge from the study will be advanced in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will include a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a discussion, and recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching children to read is a critical priority for America's educators. According to the Los Angeles Times (1998), no skill is more crucial to the future of a child, or to a democratic and prosperous society, than literacy. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 forced schools and districts to become more accountable by requiring all students to read on grade level by 2014. Fortunately, according to the United States Department of Education (2002), reading is an area where some of the best and most thorough scientifically based research is available. Through the use of research-based methods, Reading First was designed to improve reading instruction in the nation's most disadvantaged schools (Manzo, 2006). NCLB established Reading First as a major federal initiative designed to help ensure that all children can read at or above grade level by the end of third grade (Moss, et al., 2008).

While there are no easy or quick solutions to optimizing reading achievement, an extensive knowledge base of skills that students must learn in order to read well exists (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2003; Allington, 2001; Neuman, 2001). In 2001, the National Reading Panel was charged with reviewing research on reading instruction for students in kindergarten through third grade that identified methods related to sound reading practices. After conducting their study of more than 100,000 students, the panel established five areas of reading instruction that are beneficial to students reading development: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

This literature review begins with a summary of the National Reading Panel recommendations. Following these recommendations, the paper will review the literature

relating to other critical factors that may attribute to a student's reading achievement.

These factors include: teacher morale, within-school support and leadership, professional

development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the

classroom. Figure 2.1 is a visual representation of these factors.
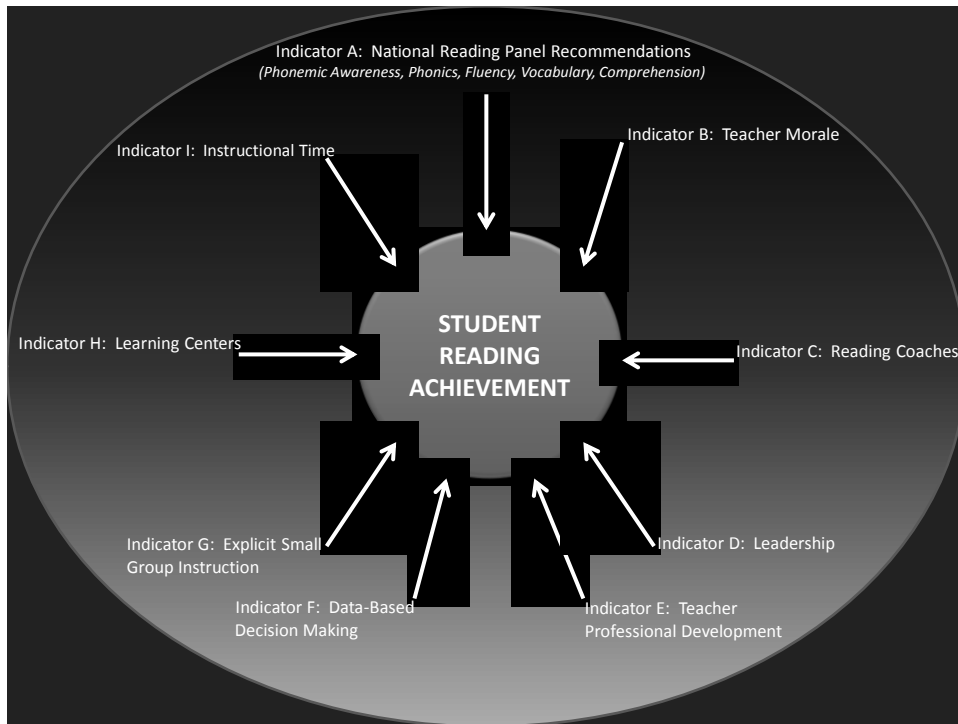
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model for Student Reading Achievement

National Reading Panel Recommendations

Phonemic Awareness

The term phonemic awareness can be defined in various ways. The International

Reading Association (1998) states that phonemic awareness is typically described as an

insight about oral language and in particular about the segmentation of sounds that are

used in speech communication. For example, children who are phonemically aware can

tell you all the sounds in the spoken word *cat*. The phoneme level of phonological

awareness is the most critical for learning to read (Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994).

Phonemic awareness instruction: 1) improves students' understanding of how the words in spoken language are represented in print; 2) helps young students learn to read; 3) is most effective when students learn to use letters to represent phonemes; and 4) helps preschoolers and early primary students learn to spell (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). The International Reading Association (1998) stated that recent longitudinal studies have demonstrated that phonemic awareness is highly predictive of success in learning to read and the best indicator of success may be at the kindergarten level.

A child's measure of phonemic awareness has a higher correlation to learning to read than intelligence or listening comprehension ability (Stanovich, 1986, 1994). Forty percent of students struggle with learning to read (Lyon, 1998), while twenty to twenty-five percent of beginning readers never grasp the alphabetic principle, according to Adams (1990, 1994). Uhry (1999) reported that this number is even higher for low-income students. Longitudinal studies have been conducted on economically disadvantaged students, beginning in kindergarten or first-grade (Uhry, 1999; Tangel & Blachman, 1995; Blachman, Ball, Black, & Tangel, 1994; Morris, 1993). These studies investigated the impact of direct instruction of phonemic awareness with students who entered school weak in phonemic awareness skills. Findings were consistent: directly teaching phonemic awareness to these students before the end of first-grade can have positive effects on later word reading and spelling.

Encouraging children to spell words as they sound has been shown to accelerate the refinement of children's phonemic awareness and to their acquisition of conventional spelling when it is taught in first grade and higher (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Students who enter school from poverty stricken families tend to struggle with phonemic

awareness and may need extra support. Students who fail to recognize phonemic

awareness at an early age are likely to fall behind in smaller, rural school districts due to

lack of resources (International Reading Association, 2001).

The issue of how much time should be devoted to phonemic awareness instruction

has been the subject of much debate. The National Reading Panel (2001) stated in their

research that many teachers were becoming obsessed with teaching phonemic awareness.

Armbruster and Osborn (2001) recommended that teachers use small group instruction

and spend no more than twenty hours in a school year teaching phonemic awareness.

Training programs in other research literature suggests that relatively modest amounts of

time result in increases in phonemic awareness performance (Brady & Moats, 1998;

Yopp, 1997). The duration of instruction in these studies ranged from ten minutes to

thirty minutes per session; in some studies, instruction occurred daily; in others the

instruction was less frequent, occurring two or three times per week. It is the *quality* of

the instruction and the *responsiveness* of the instruction to the students in the classroom

that should have greater consideration than the amount of time.

Phonics

The second component of reading instruction recommended by the National

Reading Panel is phonics. Phonics is the system by which children learn to make letter-

sound correspondences while engaged in word-recognition activities associated with

print, whereas most phonemic awareness tasks are oral. It involves an understanding of

the alphabetic principle on which the English language is based (Strickland, 1998). For

children learning to read English, phonics instruction unlocks a large proportion of the

system of English orthography (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005).

The research support for systematic phonics instruction extends back to the work of Jeanne Chall (1967). Chall did an extensive review of the theory and practical application of beginning reading instruction. She concluded that systematic phonics instruction that was initiated early in a child's school experience seemed to produce stronger reading achievement than instruction that was less systematic and began later. Since her early study of reading, the evidence to support the use of systematic phonics instruction has continued to grow (Adams, 1990; Foorman et al., 1998).

Developing the ability to independently read and write most regular words is a complex process and takes time and practice with a variety of activities (Cunningham, 2005). Several reading experts have suggested that children who struggle with obtaining literacy skills need explicit phonics instruction (Groff, 1998; Stahl & Duffey-Hester, 1998). The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that several different instructional approaches have been used in teaching phonics explicitly and systematically. These include synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, embedded phonics, analogy phonics, onset-rime phonics, and phonics through spelling.

Using a variety of phonics approaches seems to matter most for struggling readers. A study by Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000) confirmed the belief that the most effective phonics instruction for struggling readers was not limited to a single approach. Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000) observed four demographically similar classrooms over a period of one year. In each classroom, students were organized into reading groups of various abilities. They found that low-readers benefited most from structured phonics teaching, where the teacher modeled chunking words into units, encouraged the sounding

and blending of the individual phonemes within those units, used hands-on materials, and incorporated writing for sound tasks.

The National Reading Panel report (2000) emphasized that a strong reading program includes, but is not limited to, systematic phonics instruction. They addressed the importance of placing systematic phonics instruction within a comprehensive reading program by stating the following:

> Phonics instruction is never a total reading program. In first grade, teachers can provide controlled vocabulary texts that allow students to practice decoding, and they can also read quality literature to students to build a sense of story and to develop vocabulary and comprehension. Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached. It is important to evaluate children's reading competence in many ways, not only by their phonics skills, but also by their interest in books and their ability to understand information that is read to them. By emphasizing all of the processes that contribute to growth in reading, teachers will have the best chance of making every child a reader (p. 2-97).

Fluency

The third component, fluency, is one that comes with many definitions. In the *Literacy Dictionary,* fluency is defined as "freedom from word recognition problems that might hinder comprehension" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 85). Meyer and Felton (1999) define fluency as the ability to read text "rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading, such as

decoding" (p. 284). According to the National Reading Panel (2000), fluency is "the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression" (p. 3-5).

Fluency is critical to reading comprehension due to the attention factor. Children's brains can only attend to a limited number of things at one time. If a child's attention is more focused on decoding the words in a book or passage, there is very little attention left for actually comprehending the text (Cunningham, 2005). There are three dimensions of fluency that build a bridge to comprehension: 1) accuracy in word decoding; 2) automatic processing which requires students to use as little mental effort as possible to understand meaning; and 3) prosodic reading which requires readers to understand expressions in meaning (Rasinski, 2003).

In a large-scale study of fluency (Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995) the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that almost half of the fourth graders tested were unable to read fluently. The same study also identified a close relationship between fluency and comprehension. Students who were low in fluency also had a difficult time comprehending what they read. Research has identified two of the most essential components of reading instruction are fluency and comprehension (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Cunningham, 2003; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2001).

Two instructional practices that are widely used in classrooms to build reading fluency are *repeated oral reading* and *independent silent reading*. Both approaches offer students reading practice opportunities. Repeated reading can benefit most students throughout elementary school, as well as struggling readers at higher grade levels (Dahl, 1977; Samuels, 1979; Adams, 1990; NRP, 2000; Therrien, 2004; Cunningham, 2005).

During the first reading, a lot of attention is on identifying the words. The second time students are able to read in phrases as the brain puts the phrases together into meaningful units. The third time students read more rapidly with good expression and in a seemingly "effortless" way. Many teachers have found that echo reading, choral reading, timed repeated reading, paired repeated reading, and taped reading/listening work well with children across the elementary grades (Cunningham, 2005).

Struggling readers often need more practice opportunities than repeated readings in the classroom can provide. Students who are good readers read more, get more practice, and become better readers. However, students who have a difficult time reading and find it unrewarding will typically avoid reading (Stanovich, 1986; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Bowers & Newby-Clark, 2002). As a result, these students have less exposure to and practice with text, which leads to a delay in the development of word recognition automaticity. This delay will, in turn, slow comprehension development and limit vocabulary growth (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). For teachers of struggling readers, the challenge is to find additional opportunities for meaningful reading practice.

Instructional approaches that have been most successful in building fluency involve students reading text at their *instructional level* (containing mostly words that students know or that they can decode easily) or even at the *frustration level* (text read with less than 90% success) if there is strong guidance and feedback (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (1999) found that teachers in high-achieving primary classes allotted more time for independent reading. Struggling readers are unlikely to make reading gains unless teachers find ways to encourage them to read more on their own, both inside and outside of school. Even fifteen minutes a day of

independent reading can expose students to more than a million words of text in a year (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1998).

Vocabulary

"Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together…making comprehension accessible for children" (Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1999, p. 5). Understanding the meanings of words and their relation to text comprehension and reading achievement has been the focus of considerable correlational and causal research. For example, Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found correlations ranging from .55 through .85 between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel report in 2000 played an important role in highlighting vocabulary as a component of reading instruction.

Most children enter kindergarten with substantial oral vocabularies and very small reading vocabularies. Students with disadvantages are likely to have substantially smaller vocabularies than their more advantaged classmates (Templin, 1957; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990). Growing up in poverty can seriously restrict the vocabulary children learn before beginning school and can make attaining an adequate vocabulary a challenging task (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004; Hart & Risley, 1995).

Research by Hart & Risley (1995) indicates that parents with higher levels of income: 1) engage in more interactive discussions with their children; 2) expand their children's verbal responses by repeating the child's statement as a question; and 3) use more sophisticated language with their children than parents from welfare homes. They also reported the quantitative differences in early language experiences included in Table

2.1.

Table 2.1

Quantitative Differences in Early Language Experiences: The Importance of Daily Oral

Language in Grades K-3

	Words heard per hour	Words heard in a 100-hour week	Words heard in a 5,200-hour year	Words heard in 4 years
Group A (Welfare homes)	616	62,000	3 million	13 million
Group B (Working Class homes)	1,251	125,000	6million	26 million
Group C (Professional homes)	2,153	215,000	11 million	45 million

Forty-two families were observed one hour each month for almost two and a half years

from the time the children were ten months old to three years of age. The three types of

families included: professional families (i.e., some parents were professors), working

class families, and families who were on welfare. Children ranged in socio-economic

status, sex, birth order, number of siblings and family structure. All families were

considered "well-functioning" (Hart & Risley, 1995). There are profound differences in

vocabulary knowledge among learners from different ability or socio-economic (SES)

groups from toddlers through high school (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

　　　　Explicit vocabulary instruction has repeatedly been shown to be an important

principle of vocabulary instruction (Baumann, Kame'enui et al., 2003; Fukkink & de

Glopper, 1998; Harmon et al., 2005; Jitendra et al., 2004; NRP, 2000; Read, 2004).

Explicit instruction can include teacher-provided definitions and extend to teacher-directed activities that combine multiple strategies in scaffolded situations that are aimed at providing a rich and deep understanding of the word's meaning. The National Reading Panel (2000) reported these key findings regarding vocabulary instruction:

1. Vocabulary instruction ***should be*** incorporated into reading instruction.

2. Vocabulary items that are required for a specific text should be ***taught directly***.

3. The more ***connections*** that can be made to a specific word, the better it is learned.

4. ***Pre-instruction*** of vocabulary in reading lessons has been shown to have significant effects on learning outcomes.

5. Teachers should ***select vocabulary words*** that are important for *understanding text* and that students will *encounter* often.

6. Dependence on a single vocabulary instructional method will ***not*** result in optimal learning.

Comprehension

Comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and the reader (Harris & Hodges, 1995). The National Reading Panel (2000) posits that comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate ideas in print to their own knowledge and experiences and construct mental representations in memory. All readers comprehend text by recognizing particular words and thinking about them as they read. Students may read and understand the word, and still do not comprehend the word meanings (Lipson, 2007).

Comprehension is complex and requires a flexible and adaptive approach by the teacher.

Over the past several years, researchers have found that good readers are active or strategic readers who use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading a text. These strategies include previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating (McLaughlin & Allen, 2002). Explicit instruction in the application of comprehension strategies has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding (National Reading Panel, 2002). The Reading First Summer Institute in 2005 gave these five steps of teaching comprehension strategies:

"I Do It, We Do It, You Do It"

1. Teachers give an explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used;

2. Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action;

3. Teacher/student collaborative use of the strategy in action;

4. Teacher leads guided practice using the strategy with gradual transfer of responsibility (i.e., scaffolding); and

5. Student independently uses the strategy in real reading situations.

Even teachers in the primary grades can begin to build the foundation for reaching comprehension. Beginning readers as well as more advanced readers must understand that the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension (National Institute for Literacy, 2001).

Other Critical Factors that Could Affect Student Reading Achievement

This section discusses the research dealing with other critical factors that may attribute to a student's reading achievement. These factors include: teacher morale, reading coaches, leadership, professional development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the classroom.

Teacher Morale

America has an ambivalent relationship with teachers; teachers' duties and responsibilities are expanding continuously (Lumsden, 1998; Zemelman & Ross, 2009). With these increasing demands on teachers, it is imperative that school administrators lead for high teacher morale. Lumsden (1998) noted the major contributing factors to declining teacher morale: "Teachers are being stretched to the limit. Expectations placed on them seem to be expanding exponentially. Increasingly their role encompasses not only teaching specific content and mentoring students in the love of learning, but functioning as frontline social workers" (p.1). Teachers matter to the achievement of students, including cognitive and social development (Day et al., 2007).

Morale is referred to as a state of mind, emotional, or mental attitude (Mendel, 1987). According to Webster's Dictionary (2010), morale is a person's mental state that is exhibited by assurance, control, and motivation to perform a task. Houchard (2005) studied teacher morale and student achievement using the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire and the students' final grades. It was concluded from the research that the teacher's state of mind and ability to foster a positive climate can have an impact on student learning. Motivation, effort, and job satisfaction can be linked to teacher morale (Huysman, 2008). A study was conducted in a rural Florida school district, and it was concluded that job

satisfaction was tied to intrinsic factors such as security, ability utilization, and service. Extrinsic factors such as: compensation, authority, company policies, advancement, recognition, politics, bargaining, and distribution of power were linked to job dissatisfaction (Huysman, 2008).

There is a significant relationship between teacher morale and student achievement (Miller, 1981; Andrews, 1985; Lumsden, 1998; Tanriogen & Ermec, 2008). Boosting teacher morale can improve standardized test scores, the culture and climate of the school, and enhance relationships with all educational stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents, etc.) (Miller, 1981). When schools have teachers with high morale, they also have a good chance of having students with high morale; this has a direct impact on student achievement (Keeler & Andrews, 1963; Whitaker et al., 2000). Teachers are single-handedly the most important factor in boosting student achievement; more than class sizes, expenditures per student, or the quality of textbooks and materials (Wallis et al., 2008).

Reading Coaches

One of the "non-negotiables" of the Reading First grant was that all schools must provide a coach throughout the entirety of the grant who was responsible for providing support and feedback through observing and modeling. The coaches were highly trained individuals who provided professional development to teachers through grade- level team meetings, afterschool trainings, summer institutes, and individual job embedded consultations. The role of the coach was also to collect and organize data, as well as empower teachers to analyze the data themselves (IRA, 2004).

The role of the reading coach is highly complex. Research conducted by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) indicates coaching requires analytic and inferential skills. Their research highlights specific skills of effective coaches including: clear understanding of the reading and writing process, the ability to identify critical aspects of an observed lesson, the ability to identify important learning points, skill in stimulating reflection on the part of teachers, and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships based on trust. Toll (2005) identifies five categories of understanding that reading coaches must possess including: adult learning theory; effective coaching processes; reading and writing processes; literacy assessment; and effective instructional strategies.

The most effective coaches motivate, inspire, and teach. They use language to build trust. Trust is not built upon teaching practices. It is built upon dialogues infused with a sense of commitment to others, humility, and faith in humankind (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Freire, 1970, 2005). Reading coaches in the United States had a powerful opportunity to assist teachers in the difficult and challenging work of improving student learning (Dole & Donaldson, 2006). Many districts opted to keep a reading coach in place as part of their sustainability plan after the grant. The roles and responsibilities of reading coaches vary across educational settings. In response, researchers have called for studies which focus on the actual practices of effective literacy coaches as a means of informing the evolving reading/literacy coach position (Dole, 2004; Walpole, & Blamey, 2008).

There are several studies, specifically in literacy education, that stand out as support for reading coaching. Coaching has been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement in a large-scale evaluation of early literacy learning (Foundation for

California Early Literacy Learning [CELL], 2001). Lyons and Pinnell (1999) found a correlation between literacy coaching and increased achievement in reading and writing. They also found that teachers and coaches who work together do so as colleagues, engaging in collaborative problem-solving and inquiry-oriented conversation (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). In San Diego, reading specialists provided half-time peer coaching and half-time student tutoring in three high-poverty schools. As a result, student literacy achievement increased markedly (Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Frey, 2003).

Leadership

At the school level, the building principal is the key to any attempt to reform and/or transform the school's ability to improve student performance (Kearns & Harvey, 2001). Principals need to be at the center of building culture and capacity within their schools. It is important that the principal distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the staff, so that a network of people, cultures, and structures forms naturally, based on the interrelations and connections among staff (Fullan, 2002). The principal can support the school culture by maintaining time for staff to engage in collaborative discussion and planning. She/he should be at the helm of this collaboration and be "leading the learning" by nurturing the professional learning community and preserving continual learning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). By doing so, the principal ensures that teachers' learning occurs in their own context, resulting in learning that is meaningful and tailored to students' needs. The principal, coach, and teachers share a common mission to create a community which fosters student and teacher learning, high expectations, and accountability in a safe, caring environment. School leaders influence and exercise a

measurable effect on student achievement by an indirect process through the influence they have on teachers (Gurr, 1997; Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Studies of teacher expectations have shown that principals play a key instructional leadership role by shaping teachers' attitudes concerning students' ability to master school subject matter (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Oakes, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter et al., 1979). Thus, one way principals can influence student achievement is through raising teachers' expectations for student learning. This is accomplished both through personal actions of the principal and through policies developed in conjunction with staff (Duke, 1982; Duke & Canady, 1991; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1989). In a study conducted by Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis (1996) on the school principal's effects on reading achievement, their data found no significant direct effect of principal leadership on student achievement in reading. However, their findings did suggest that elementary school principals who are perceived by teachers as strong instructional leaders promote student achievement through their influence on features of the school-wide learning climate.

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) synthesized over 5,000 studies on the effects of principals' leadership behavior and practices on student achievement. Based on the results of their analysis, the researchers found a statistically significant, positive correlation between effective principals and student achievement. They concluded that principals' behaviors and practices matter. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) explained twenty-one leadership responsibilities, listed below, significantly correlated with student achievement in their work entitled *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tell us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement.*

1. culture – fosters shared beliefs, sense of community, and cooperation;

2. order – establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines;

3. discipline – protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract them from their teaching time and focus;

4. resources – provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs;

5. curriculum, instruction, assessment – is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;

6. focus – establishes clear goals;

7. knowledge of curriculum, instruction assessment – is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;

8. visibility – has quality contact and interactions;

9. contingent rewards – recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments;

10. communication – establishes strong lines of communications;

11. outreach – is an advocate or spokesperson for the school and faculty;

12. input – involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies;

13. affirmation – recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments;

14. relationship – demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff;

15. change agent – is willing to and actively challenges the status quo;

16. optimizer – inspires and leads new and challenging innovations;

17. ideal/beliefs – communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling;

18. monitors/evaluates – monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning;

19. flexibility – adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent;

20. situational awareness – is aware of the details and undercurrents of the running of a school; and

21. intellectual stimulation – ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices (p.4).

Evidence reported from large-scale quantitative studies between 1980 and 1998 was reviewed in several studies by Hallinger and Heck (1996a, 1996b, 1998). These reviews concluded that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on student achievement are small but educationally significant. In the Wallace Foundation review (2004), the evidence showed small but significant effects of leadership actions on student learning across the spectrum of schools and demonstrated that the effects of successful leadership were considerably greater in schools that were highly impacted by difficult circumstances. Although it was recognized that there are other factors that contribute to school improvement and turnarounds in the most difficult circumstances, leadership was generally seen as the catalyst (Leithwood et al., 2004). School effectiveness researcher Richard Sagor wrote, "Educators are unlikely to find the single reading program that succeeds with all learners...It's time to cool our infatuation with programs and instead escalate our investments in people" (Sagor, 2000, p.35).

Professional Development

Professional development has been referred to as the skills and knowledge attained for personal and professional advancement (Killion, 2002). For many years, professional development consisted of seminars held in half-day or full-day workshops on site at the schools (Marzano, 2003). Districts offered little participation in professional development conferences that were held anywhere other than on campus. In the 1990s and early 2000s, new initiatives for staff development began to evolve. NCLB (2001) encouraged school districts to promote teacher development by consulting with teachers and administrators to determine the needs of the staff. The staff is asked to complete needs assessment questionnaires which allocate how professional development dollars are to be spent toward relevant, useful, and focused information to assist improvement in student achievement (NCLB, 2001). Teachers, for the first time, became more forthcoming about their individual needs as educators (Murphy, 2002). The new approaches began to center on how to best meet the needs of the learner and to assist teachers in recognizing those needs when they saw them (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

One common approach to professional development is Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Rick DuFour and Robert Eaker are considered to be two leaders in this approach for improving schools by engaging entire staffs in professional learning communities. In a PLC, an environment is created by educators to support mutual cooperation, emotional support, instructional practices, and personal growth by working together as a team to accomplish goals that cannot be reached alone (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). PLCs focus on many factors at the same time, such as educational research, best

practices, standards, organizational development, change processes, leadership, and successful practices being employed outside the school district (DuFour, et al., 2004).

A study conducted by Louis and Marks (1998) concluded that when a school is organized into a professional learning community, the following outcomes occurred:

1. Teachers set higher expectations for student achievement;

2. Students can count on the help of their teachers and peers in achieving ambitious learning goals;

3. The quality of classroom pedagogy is considerably higher; and

4. Achievement levels for students are significantly higher.

The findings of this study also stressed the important role that teacher professional development has on student growth. This finding is especially important because every year school districts look for ways to provide meaningful learning growth opportunities for teachers. The direct connection of professional development to the goals created in a PLC has implications for the kind of professional development that might need to be offered (Louis & Marks, 1998).

Like students, teachers need brain-based learning experiences that are relevant and challenging and that provide opportunities for active participation (Sousa, 2006). In order for professional development to be effective, it must be job-embedded, specific to teacher concerns, and presented in non-threatening ways. Teachers need learning structures that empower them professionally and enable them to collaborate with colleagues (Houk, 2010). Schools in various states are beginning to use the lab classroom model project to provide teachers with in-depth, sustained professional growth within a collaborative learning community.

The concept of teacher efficacy (i.e., teachers' perception of their own teaching ability) is at the heart of effective teaching instruction. Teacher efficacy relies on convincing teachers to believe in what they do and take ownership of their teaching. This ownership occurs when teachers have influence over the substance and process of the professional development they receive and can develop mastery in the skills they are learning. Teachers who have time, resources, and technical support to develop competence in practice are more likely to continue the practice when faced with obstacles (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003).

Research on teacher learning indicates that professional development that is ongoing is related to the depth of teacher change (Garet et al., 2001). Professional development that includes collaboration of teachers has the goal of improving student achievement. When professional development is embedded in student learning and in the curriculum, it commonly appears in the literature for effective professional development and can positively influence teacher change and student achievement (Garet et al., 2001). Darling-Hammond and Ball (1997) concluded that teacher expertise is the most important factor in determining student achievement. Teacher professional development affects student achievement through three areas: teacher knowledge, teacher skills, and teacher motivation. As teachers improve their knowledge and skills, motivation to improve will enhance classroom teaching and improve student achievement (Yoon et al., 2008).

Data-based Decision Making

In the twenty-first century, student assessments have become the foundation for accountability in school districts. An increasing number of school systems, researchers,

professors of education, school administrators, and teachers are beginning to accept a data-driven decision-making model (King, 1999). Assessment is an essential element of education used to inform instruction (Wren, 2004).

Analyzing assessment data serves as a tool to motivate teachers to change instruction, continually improve, and determine if a program is progressing in a direction that will help to achieve its mission (Bryant, 2002). Students enter the classroom with diverse backgrounds and skills in literacy. Individual needs can be determined by initial and ongoing reading assessments. Data analysis and data-based decision making were critical aspects of assessing student outcomes in Reading First. Schools that received Reading First funds were required to practice systematic screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based reading assessments. This prevention approach focused on early intervention to alter struggling students' reading trajectories before they fall too far behind.

Progress monitoring provides careful links between assessment and the instructional process. Progress monitoring is a research-based practice used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Hamlett, 1989). Systematic progress monitoring involves screening all students for potential reading failure, diagnosing specific skill deficits and making data-driven instructional decisions (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, & Allinder, 1991; Speece & Case, 2001).

Progress monitoring has also been shown to assist in making eligibility decisions as a part of the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) framework in which student eligibility for special education services is a function of the students' non-responsiveness to effective interventions (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). In most models of RTI,

students are first exposed to high quality interventions and are only considered eligible

for special education once they have not responded to these or more intensively focused

intervention strategies. Therefore, progress monitoring has become a valuable

evidentiary tool used to determine whether students are responding to high quality

interventions (Speece & Case, 2001; Speece, Case, & Molloy, 2003).

DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and *GRADE* (Group

Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation) assessments were often used as a part of

the Reading First initiative as student data. Reading First assessment data, along with

KCCT scores were used for the site selections in this study. DIBELS has subtests

designed to measure reading skills emphasized in the National Reading Panel report

(National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2002) including phonemic

awareness, phonics, fluency, and, to some degree, comprehension. DIBELS subtests

intended to measure lower level reading skills such as phonological awareness (Phoneme

Segmentation Fluency subtest, or PSF) and alphabetic principal (Nonsense Word Fluency

subtest, or NWF) are administered in kindergarten and first grade to identify students at

risk for reading difficulty and in need of intervention. Beginning in the middle of first

grade, an additional subtest measuring students' speed and accuracy in reading connected

text (Oral Reading Fluency subtest, or ORF) is administered to identify students in need

of intervention.

GRADE is a norm-referenced group test that helps teachers confidently assess

pre-literacy, emerging reading and core reading skills, plan focused instruction, and

document student progress. This reading assessment provides detailed diagnostic

information about individual skill levels, making it possible to identify students who may

need further testing and intervention. Two parallel forms at every level, each with fall and spring norms, enable teachers to follow progress and monitor growth over time.

Data-based decision making can have several uses. The use of data can "provide the quantifiable proof, taking the emotion and rancor out of the decision making process" (AASA, 2002, p.1). Data provides for the continual means to examine the impact of instruction on student learning to a group of educators (Mann & Shakeshaft, 2003). In the classroom, the gathering of evidence through the collection of assessments not only reflects student growth but also teacher growth as a result of their professional learning. Furthermore, "both effective assessment procedures and effective use of the associated data are fundamental to a school's continuing achievement and improvement" (Blankenstein, 2004, p. 142).

Togneri (2003) conducted a qualitative study of five effective districts across the United States. The report listed seven factors that were essential to improvement, including data analysis. These five districts made decisions based on data to plan appropriate instruction and additional assessment procedures aside from standardized testing data. They fostered a system-wide culture for the use of data, held schools accountable, and continually assessed student and school progress (Togneri, 2003). Not only has data-based decision making been useful for schools and districts in tracking student progress, it also has demonstrated an impact on school culture, teacher collaboration, and promoting reflective inquiry.

Effective Instructional Strategies

Teachers need more than deep conceptual knowledge; they need strategies for adapting practices to meet students' instructional needs (Vaughn, Klinger, & Hughes,

2000). Some of the critical elements included in the teaching of reading are: explicit and systematic small group instruction, learning centers, and use of instructional time.

Small Group Instruction

Small group instruction is effective because the teaching is focused on precisely what the student needs to learn to move forward (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). During small group instructional time, teachers are there to support students' reading. In one scenario of small group instruction, the teacher selects a text and introduces it; then each student reads the text softly or silently while the teacher observes them. After the story is finished, students discuss the story with the teacher. The teacher helps students practice processing strategies and engages the students in phonics/word study group (Fountas, Lyons, Pinnell & Scharer, 2005).

One of the most common concerns among teachers with using small group instruction in their classroom is how to structure it. The structure of the classroom during small group instruction should not be a complete change from the daily classroom routine. Ford and Opitz (2002) discuss the significance of building on classroom routines: "Routines provide a predictable way for teachers to plan instruction that minimizes concerns, confusion, and chaos along the way" (p. 713). Well established routines allow student success without teacher guidance, minimizing interruptions during small group instruction.

Planning for small group instruction can be a difficult task. The goal for having students in small groups is to meet the needs of students. Rule, Dockstader, and Stewart (2006) discuss the importance of using a variety of approaches to teach important skills,

pointing out that "Each child has unique learning needs and one approach in a classroom will probably not address all student needs" (p. 195).

Learning Centers

Providing learning centers, or stations, are one way of involving all students while enhancing their understanding of the curriculum at their own level. Centers allow students the opportunity to work independently while the teacher addresses individual needs of those students who benefit from additional help in a small group setting. Learning centers give concrete experiences and encourage students to make choices. As they participate in centers, students are gaining experience in social interactions (Cowles & Aldridge, 1992). Activities used in centers should be interesting and designed to need very little to no assistance from the teacher (Patillo & Vaughan, 1992).

Learning centers can also be used to provide a chance to draw on student interest which may result in more student engagement, higher motivation and student productivity (Cox, 2008). Centers offer a chance to reach the needs of diverse learners relative to readiness, interest and learning style by including differentiating strategies such as tiered learning, choice boards, cubing, Think-Tac-Toe and interest groups (Tomlinson, 2001). All of these strategies provide an opportunity to address different levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

Instructional Time

Teachers and school administration should focus on *making every moment count* by the careful and intentional organization of daily instructional time (Allington, 2005). Extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency (Krashen 2001; Stanovich, 2000). It is imperative that schools ensure adequate, prioritized, and protected

time for reading instruction and practice. Figure 2.2 is a visual representation of the

School-wide Model, where instructional time is referred to as "Triple A" (AAA) time.

This diagram was obtained from the University of Oregon website

Source: http://dibels.uoregon.edu/swm/instruct.php#time.
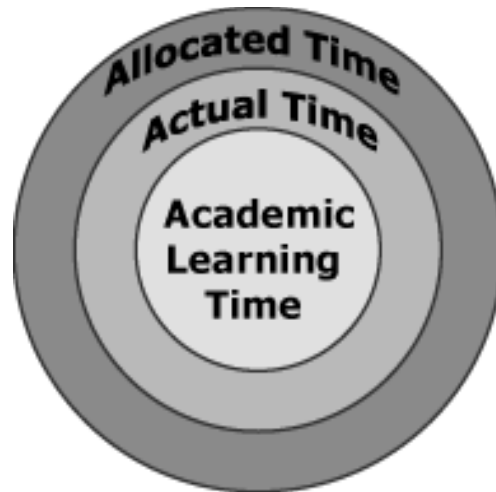
Figure 2.2: "Triple A" (AAA) Instructional Time

Triple A time is best conceptualized as three concentric circles. The large outer

circle represents the total amount of time *allocated* to reading instruction. For example, if

a school uses a 90-minute reading block, 90 minutes is the *allocated* time for reading

instruction. Next, the middle circle represents the *actual* time that is spent in reading

instruction. The goal should always be to maximize the actual amount of time spent in

reading instruction; however, the actual time does not always match the allocated time in

every school. The inner circle represents the most important element of instructional

time which is *academic learning time.* This refers to the amount of time children are

engaged in tasks in which they can be highly successful, are being taught at their

instructional level, are being provided many opportunities to respond and practice, and are getting many opportunities to receive corrective feedback. Aronson, Zimmerman, and Carlos (1998) refer to this time as "the precise period when an instructional activity is perfectly aligned with a student's readiness and learning occurs" (p. 3). In the best of worlds, *academic learning time* would equal *allocated* time.

Clark, Pearson, Taylor & Walpole (2007) concluded from their studies of first through third grade students that more time spent on reading instruction was conducive to student learning. In fact, the most successful districts spent an average of twenty minutes longer in reading instruction daily. Such studies have convinced some school districts to implement additional time for reading instruction throughout the day. The National Reading Panel recommended at least ninety minutes per day of protected time devoted to reading instruction within the classroom. Carnahan & Levesque (2005) suggested that schools should provide ninety minutes of protected instruction time and student intervention with supplemental reading. Since students all learn at different paces, some need additional time and resources to understand instruction.

Summary

Strong literacy skills begin in the lower elementary grades where students eventually learn to read such things as signs, daily papers, or even restroom walls (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). Reading is a skill learned in primary school and one that continues to serve through adulthood. The NCLB law (2001) requires every student to be reading on grade level by the year 2014. As the year 2014 approaches, school districts are searching for better instructional practices to get their students reading on grade level.

This chapter has given a summary of the National Reading Panel's recommendations followed by a review of the literature and research related to other critical factors that may attribute to a student's reading achievement. These factors included: teacher morale, within-school support and leadership, professional development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the classroom. Chapter three describes the methods, context of the study, data collection, data analysis and synthesis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes the purpose, research question, and research design. It also describes the context of the study, sample population, methods of data collection, and data analysis and synthesis. Finally, it discusses ethical considerations, and concludes with the limitations of the study.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe and identify factors that distinguish between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study compared instructional reading strategies, as well as other factors that distinguish between two schools in a rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages.

Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following question:

What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading?

Research Design

Qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior. It investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making, as compared to the *what, where,* and *when* of quantitative research. Another characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for

data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Stake, 1995). Qualitative research implies an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). It describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions.

Qualitative research is exploratory while quantitative research is generally conclusive. It is "…exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context sensitive" (Mason, 2002, p. 24). Isaac and Michael (1995) stated that qualitative research addresses the manner of generating data by underscoring its contrast to quantitative methods. It principally reflects the role of subjective judgment in generating data. Common themes within a body of information are sought and interpreted as are discrepancies and inconsistencies. Finally, because qualitative research focuses on meaning, process, and understanding, the product of interpretive inquiry is thickly descriptive (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Case studies are a common approach to qualitative inquiry. The popularity of case studies in testing hypotheses has developed only in recent decades. One of the areas in which case studies have been gaining popularity is education and in particular educational evaluation (Stake, 1995). Although scholars differ about what constitutes a case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), they concurred that the use of observations and interviewing helps create a case study that is an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam 1998, p. 19).

Yin (2003) proposes three criteria that justify the case study method as a strategy to complete research: analysis of the research question, the extent that the researcher has control over events studied, and the degree of focus on contemporary events. The primary research question for the study, "What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading?" drove the choice to use case study as a method.

Context of the Study

Site Selection

In addition to being rural elementary schools, criteria for selection of the two school sites for this research included these decision rules:

1. Each elementary school is located in an Appalachian county in Kentucky.

2. The schools serve a high poverty student population; both have over fifty percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

3. The ethnicity of students tested in both schools is one hundred percent Caucasian.

4. The student to teacher ratio for each school is fifteen to one.

5. Both schools were recipients of the Reading First grant.

6. One school had to be high performing and the other low performing based on Kentucky's state accountability model.

Kentucky's Interim School Testing and Accountability System has three parts: the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT); readiness tests by grade level; and other measures of a school's performance including attendance, retention, and dropout rates. The goal is that, by 2014, nearly all students will score proficient or distinguished in every subject area tested. For this study, the KCCT reading scores and Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) in reading were examined in order to choose a top ranking school and compare it to a lower ranking school with similar demographics.

In the most recent school report cards, School A (ARC Elementary)[1] had 95.24% of their third grade students score proficient or distinguished on the KCCT for reading in 2008-2009 and 100% in 2009-2010. The school's attendance rate for 2009-2010 was 95.1%, and their grade retention rate was 0%. ARC Elementary has met AYP every year. The mission statement of the ARC Elementary School is… "to provide all students with the BEST respectful academic, social, and emotional learning experiences and environment where every student experiences SUCCESS ON THE ROAD TO PROFICIENCY".

School B (Bohman Elementary) had 57.69% of their third grade students score proficient or distinguished on the KCCT for reading in 2008-2009 and 53.7% in 2009-10. Bohman Elementary's attendance rate for 2009-10 was 92.7%, and their retention rate was 0.9%. This school did not meet the requirements for AYP in reading for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. The school status in 2010-11 for two years of not making AYP was School Improvement – Year 1. The consequences were to notify parents, implement school choice, and write or revise the school plan. Bohman Elementary's mission statement reads: "We, the staff, students, and parents, do believe in the following: Our teacher's will always teach all students to do the best of their ability, our students will always do their very best, our parents will always help all students to do their very best, and our school will always be a great place to learn."

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[1] ARC Elementary and Bohman Elementary are pseudonyms used in this study.

Participants

The participants in this study included the principal at each school and one teacher from each grade level (K-3). Due to the small size of each school, there was only one teacher per grade level observed and interviewed at each site. The average years of teaching experience at ARC Elementary is 9.5 years, and at Bohman Elementary, the average is 11.2 years experience. Both schools report 100% of classes taught by teachers who participated in content-focused professional development. Neither of the schools has teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Standards nor have a doctoral degree. At ARC Elementary, 27.3% of all teachers have a bachelor's degree, 36.4% have received a master's degree, and 36.4% have acquired a Rank 1. Bohman Elementary reports 30% of all teachers hold a bachelor's degree, 60% have received master's degrees, and only 10% have acquired a Rank 1.

Data Collection

Particular circumstances guide qualitative researchers in their choices of data collection strategies. The purpose of the study, days in the field, the availability of participants, and the availability of resources have to be considered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In this study, the author gained access to both sites by obtaining permission from the school administrator. The purpose of the study, the type and number of participants required, and the time frame of the study were explained via email.

For this case study, several data collection methods were used including observations, interviews, and document analysis. The data collection process began by reviewing the information on each school's website, as well as accessing each school's

report card from the Kentucky Department of Education website. Multi-method data collection strategies increase validity in the investigation and facilitate triangulation.

Observations

The school principal was contacted via e-mail. Permission was granted and all teachers were asked to participate. The observations took place during each grade levels reading instruction and lasted approximately sixty to ninety minutes each (depending on the length of the literacy block in each school). To help ensure validity in the observations, the researcher used the standard Reading First Observation Forms which were also used by school, district, and state coaches, along with field notes at the bottom. These forms are checklists based on the five Reading First components for effective instructional practices as identified by the National Reading Panel. The components observed are phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency during whole group, small group, and centers. Each form has a place to fill in observer name, school name, teacher name, date, and class/grade level observed. See Appendices A, B, and C for the elements included in the observation checklists.

Interviews

The interview was the secondary method for collecting data in this research. The general interview guide approach was used in order to collect the same information from each interviewee. This also allowed for the interviewer to modify the order and wording of the questions, as well as, an opportunity to clarify statements and probe for additional information. According to Patton (2002), in an interview guide, "…the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area and enables the interviewer to explore, probe, and ask questions that elucidate and illuminate that

particular subject…and to establish a conversational style" (p. 343). Interviews were chosen in addition to observations in order to get more information about the "why" behind the instruction of the teachers. This also allowed teachers to share their perspectives about various factors and how these factors have influenced their teaching practices. The principal at each site was also interviewed using some of the same questions. A few modifications were made to the questions regarding their leadership role.

The interviews were conducted during planning periods or whenever someone was available to cover that teacher's classroom. The interviews lasted approximately ten to twenty-five minutes and were conducted in the teacher's classroom or in a private office outside of their classroom. The principal interviews were conducted in their offices. With consent of all participants, interviews were tape recorded for later transcription and analysis; notes were also be made during the conversation. As recommended by Patton (2002), notes will consist primarily of key phrases, lists of points made by the respondent with key terms or words shown in quotation marks to capture the interviewee's own language. The interview questions were developed in order to find out more about the teachers experience levels, feelings about their instruction prior to and after Reading First implementation (if they were there during that time), professional development, and how they feel supported by the administration. All questions were designed to inform the research question, "What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading?" These questions can be found in Appendix D.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

As noted above, multiple methods and sources of data were used as information including interviews, observations, and analysis of documents such as school report cards. Using a variety of methods helped the researcher understand the proposed inquiry as well as provided reliability and validity to the study (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Observation Analysis and Synthesis

After collectively reviewing the observation data, it was organized onto a spreadsheet in order to interpret and compare the findings from each classroom at both schools. The top of each column was coded using numbers to identify the teachers observed (T1=Teacher 1). See Appendices F-H. Then, the findings were analyzed to look for and compare consistencies and/or inconsistencies of policies and practices being used in each classroom at both schools.

Interview Analysis and Synthesis

The process of data analysis for the interviews began by typing out the interview questions and making a separate sheet for each participant. The participant's responses to each question from both schools during the interview were recorded.   Interview data was transcribed verbatim into a word processing document. Line by line coding was used to get as close to the original interview data as possible. The concept of line by line coding requires the researcher to take every line of the document and assign a code to each line. Charmaz (2006) noted that this type of coding works especially well in interview settings.

The participant's responses to each question from ARC Elementary were compared to the responses from the participant's at Bohman Elementary. Each interview was analyzed inductively to look for patterns and relationships in order to see

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if categorical themes emerged. If categories were formed, the data was reviewed deductively to determine if the categories were supported by the overall data set.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines address informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and caring (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In order to address the ethical consideration embedded in observing classrooms and performing interviews, permission was obtained from the principal of each school. This was first done through e-mail correspondences and then by formal letters of written permission from each principal. The teachers were informed of the researchers visit and were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Before each interview was conducted, a brief introduction was given by the researcher that included the purpose of the study, how long it would take, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. Participants were then asked if they had any questions and to sign an informal consent form before the interviews were conducted. The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants and then stored in a locked cabinet along with observation forms. Electronic data was kept on a password protected computer. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' answers were ensured, and they were encouraged to be as honest as possible. Identifying characteristics of the site and sample populations were kept confidential by using pseudonyms.

Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure valid and reliable data in this study, a variety of strategies were used. The strategy of triangulation, recommended by Merriam (2009), was used in order to enhance internal validity and to corroborate the findings of the phenomenon. In this

study, data from teacher and principal interviews, observations of instructional lessons in reading, and document analysis were collected as multiple sources of evidence to support the findings of this study.

To enhance external validity of the study, rich, thick description was used in the description of the data collection process. Merriam (2009) noted that this strategy involves providing an account that is so detailed that others can determine if their situation is similar enough to replicate the phenomenon and achieve the same results. In addition, the sites selected for this study were both rural elementary schools that had similar demographics and were both recipients of the Reading First grant.

Researcher Issues

This qualitative comparative case study was designed to answer the question the researcher had about what factors distinguish between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. This purpose was central in the researcher's mind during all phases of the research process from data collection to analysis to reporting the findings from this study. The researcher's bias in data collection, analysis, and reporting came from experience as a practitioner in an urban lower-performing/high poverty public school that was a recipient of the Reading First grant. Understanding that there was a personal bias, the researcher made sure to include literature that demonstrated critical factors that affect student reading achievement. The researcher also used reflexivity both before and after each interview and during analysis of all transcripts and documents and reporting of results to ensure the reliability of the study.

Limitations of the Study

In doing the qualitative research of this case study, there were limitations to consider. Case studies are limited to describing particular phenomena rather than predicting future behavior (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2003), these studies,"...are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 10). One can hardly design a single study that takes into account all persons, places, and periods to which one hopes the findings will generalize. This qualitative comparative case study identified factors that distinguish between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools.

One limitation was the small sample size. Specifically, the researcher interviewed and observed only one teacher per grade level (K-3) at each school for this particular study. Another obvious limitation was time constraints. Classroom teachers have a limited amount of time during the day in which they are willing to give up to participate. The interviews were conducted during planning times or during a time that the teacher could be covered by another staff member. Other limitations may include that this was not a longitudinal study and the teachers' ability to reflect accurately about professional development sessions they may have received in the past. These limitations are not, however, significant enough to render the benefits of the research findings unworthy.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this comparative case study was to describe and identify factors distinguishing between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study will compare instructional reading strategies, as well as other influences that appear to be critical factors, implemented by school districts in the rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages.

Review of Data Collection Process

For this case study, several data collection methods were used including observations of instructional lessons in reading, interviews with teachers and principals, and a review of documents from each site. The data collection process began by reviewing the information on each school's website, as well as accessing each school's report card from the Kentucky Department of Education website.   Multi-method data collection strategies increase validity in the investigation and facilitate triangulation.

Observations

Data collection for this study involved the observation of instructional reading lessons in eight classrooms using the data observation collection forms located in Appendices A, B, and C. One instructional reading lesson at kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade was observed at each of the school sites. Each observation encompassed a sixty to ninety minute reading block. The time of each observation varied in order to coincide with the assigned reading block for a particular teacher.

Interviews

Four individual teacher interviews were conducted at each school. All of the teacher interviews were conducted after the classroom observation had been completed. The interviews consisted of twenty-two questions (see Appendix D). For all of the interviews, probes were used in addition to some of the questions presented in this document because there were times throughout the interviews that the participant did not provide detailed answers. In addition, there were times where the participants would reference a key component of the research questions so probing was instituted to gain further knowledge in these areas. In summary, the study employed a semi-structured interview protocol.

At ARC Elementary, all of the interviews occurred in a quiet office outside of the teachers' classrooms. At Bohman Elementary, the interviews occurred in the classrooms of the individual teachers during their planning times. Each interview was recorded using a digital recording device. In addition to the teacher interviews, an interview was conducted with the principal of each site. The interview process with each principal consisted of eight questions (see Appendix E). Probing and follow-up questions were also used with the administrators that were not presented in the original set of questions. Each interview took place in the office of the individual administrator.

Upon completion of the interview process, each interview was listened to again and transcribed verbatim into a word document. The main idea and key themes from each participant's interview were presented electronically to an outside party as part of the member checking process.

Documents

Prior to the interviews and observations, the researcher reviewed the information on each school's website, as well as accessing each school's report card from the Kentucky Department of Education website.   Multi-method data collection strategies increase validity in the investigation and facilitate triangulation. The next section will describe how data for this study were analyzed and synthesized.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Observation Analysis and Synthesis

This section of the paper presents the data acquired through observations. Eight observations of elementary school teachers were conducted for this study. The observations included one teacher at grades kindergarten through third at each of the sites selected for the case study. Each observation took place during the course of the teachers' literacy instruction time. Data collected during the eight observations were recorded on the data observation collection forms located in Appendices A, B, and C.

After collectively reviewing the observation data, it was organized onto spreadsheets for each school in order to interpret and compare the findings from each classroom at both schools. The top of each column was coded using numbers to identify the teachers observed (T1=Teacher 1). See Figures 4.1-4.5. Then, the data were analyzed to look for and compare consistencies/inconsistencies of policies and practices being used in each classroom at both schools.

The following sections present findings from the observations at both sites. The checklists that were used are categorized by whole group, small group, and literacy

centers. They are based on the five components for effective instructional practices as

identified by the National Reading Panel.

Whole Group Instruction

At ARC Elementary, four out of the five components were observed during whole

group instruction. *See Figure 4.1.*

Components Observed: Phonemic Awareness ⊠ Phonics ⊠Comprehension ⊠
Vocabulary ⊠ Fluency ☐

Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4
Core materials provide basis for instruction	X	X	X	X
Physical arrangement of the room facilitates student movement/learning	X	X	X	X
Materials organized and available to facilitate appropriate pacing of the lesson.	X	X	X	X
Review of previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge	X	X	X	X
Direct instruction of skills/strategies	X	X	X	X
Adjusts and extends instruction through scaffolding	X	X	X	X
Use of concrete materials (text, word cards, magnetic letter, etc.)	X	X	X	X
Opportunities for students to practice skills/strategies	X	X	X	X
Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions	X	X	X	X
Effective pacing of instruction to: maintain student engagement and complete essential elements of the lesson	X	X	X	X
Monitor students' understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback	X	X	X	X
Variety of student movement (i.e.. floor, desk/tables, fine/gross motor)	X	X	X	
Assessment of students knowledge of skills/strategies	X	X	X	X

Figure 4.1: ARC Elementary Whole Group Instruction

Fluency was the only component that was not observed. Teachers 1, 2, and 3 demonstrated all thirteen of the policies and procedures as outlined on the observation form. Teacher 4 demonstrated all of the policies and procedures except a variety of student movement. The students were seated at their desk the entire time during whole group instruction; movement did not take place until literacy centers started.

Each teacher used their core reading series as a basis for providing whole group instruction. All teachers had a focus wall in their classroom that displayed the title of the story, author, genre, phonics skill, comprehension skill, and vocabulary words being focused on for the week. Teachers used scaffolding to adjust and extend instruction. For example, Teacher 4 used the "I do it, We do it, You do it" strategy as discussed in chapter two for explicit comprehension instruction.

All teachers provided an opportunity for students to practice the skills or strategies being taught. Teacher 3 gave each student a paddle labeled "hard g" on one side and "soft g" on the other side. Students were instructed to hold up their paddles showing the correct side after the teacher said a word. For example, if the teacher said "goat" then students would hold up the paddle displaying the side that said "hard g". This gave the students an opportunity to practice the skill that was taught, as well as the teacher an opportunity to monitor understanding and provide feedback.

At Bohman Elementary, three of the five components were observed during whole group instruction. *See Figure 4.2.*

Components Observed: Phonemic Awareness ⊠ Phonics ⊠ Comprehension ⊠
Vocabulary ☐ Fluency ☐

Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4
Core materials provide basis for instruction		X	X	X
Physical arrangement of the room facilitates student movement/learning		X	X	X
Materials organized and available to facilitate appropriate pacing of the lesson.		X	X	X
Review of previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge	X	X		
Direct instruction of skills/strategies	X	X		X
Adjusts and extends instruction through scaffolding		X		
Use of concrete materials (text, word cards, magnetic letter, etc.)	X	X	X	X
Opportunities for students to practice skills/strategies	X	X	X	
Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions	X			X
Effective pacing of instruction to maintain student engagement and complete essential elements of reading instructions		X		
Monitor students' understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback	X	X		X
Variety of student movement (i.e.. floor, desk/tables, fine/gross motor)	X	X	X	
Assessment of students knowledge of skills/strategies		X	X	

Figure 4.2: Bohman Elementary Whole Group Instruction

Vocabulary and fluency were the two components that were not observed during this

time. The only indicator met by all four teachers observed was the use of concrete

materials during whole group instruction. Teachers used concrete materials such as:

student textbooks, workbooks, letter cards, and white boards during instruction. Five of

the items on the checklist were only being met by two or fewer teachers. These included:

1) review of previous lesson/activates prior knowledge; 2) adjusts and extends instruction

through scaffolding; 3) provides opportunities for students to practice skills/strategies; 4) effective pacing of instruction to maintain student engagement and complete essential elements of reading instructions; and 5) assessment of students knowledge of skills/strategies.

Teacher 2 was the only teacher that adjusted and extended her instruction through scaffolding. She used the "I do it, We do it, You do it" strategy when teaching a lesson on community sounds. First, she gave students an example of something that she might hear when she is out in the community and added it to a graphic organizer. Then, she had students close their eyes and think about what they might hear and filled in more parts of the graphic organizer with their ideas. Finally, students filled out the remainder of the graphic organizer on their own. She was also the only teacher observed who effectively paced instruction to maintain student engagement. The other teachers spent a large amount of time on one activity and had a difficult time maintaining the interest of students. Teacher 1 was the only teacher who did not use the core materials as a basis for instruction. She used supplemental materials outside of the core to provide instruction.

Small Group Instruction

The analysis of small group instruction at ARC Elementary showed that two of the five primary components were observed. *See Figure 4.3.*

Components Observed: Phonemic Awareness ☐ Phonics ☐ Comprehension ☒
Vocabulary ☒ Fluency ☐

Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4
Core/Supplemental materials provide basis for instruction	X	X	X	X
Students' text is at their instructional level	X	X	X	
Before Reading: provides a thorough book introduction	X	X		X
Before Reading: connections made to previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge	X	X	X	X
Before Reading: review of needed vocabulary	X	X		X
Before Reading: mini-lesson of skill/strategy	X	X	X	X
During Reading: various reading formats (shared, partner, choral, etc…)		X	X	X
During Reading: students practice fix-up strategies		X	X	X
During Reading: use of various levels of questions	X	X	X	X
During Reading: Apply/practice the skill/strategy taught during mini-lesson	X	X	X	X
After Reading: Clarify/Summarize text	X	X	X	X
After Reading: Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions		X	X	X
After Reading: Summary of lesson		X	X	X
After Reading: Students given opportunity to practice fluency				
Transition provided for next activity	X	X	X	X

Figure 4.3: ARC Elementary Whole Group Instruction

The two components observed at this time were vocabulary and comprehension. Seven of the fifteen items on the checklist were met by all four teachers, and seven of the items were met by at least three teachers. The only item on the checklist that was not met by any of the four teachers observed was giving students the opportunity to practice fluency after reading.

Teacher 1 demonstrated ten out of the fifteen items outlined on the observation form. The five items that she did not demonstrate were due to students not practicing reading during small group time. These five items were: 1) using various reading formats (shared, partner, or choral) during reading; 2) opportunities for students to practice fix-up strategies during reading; 3) providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions after reading; 4) summary of lesson after reading; and, 5) giving students the opportunity to practice fluency. Teacher 2 demonstrated all fifteen of the items on the checklist. Teacher 3 demonstrated thirteen out of fifteen items. Before reading, she did not provide a thorough book introduction. During a later conversation with her, she stated that she had done this on the first day the story was introduced. The other item she did not meet was giving students the opportunity to practice fluency. Teacher 4 demonstrated fourteen out of fifteen items on the checklist. The only item she did not meet was providing time for students to practice fluency. ARC Elementary has a supplemental reading time and Response to Intervention (RTI) in addition to the small group instruction that takes place during the literacy block.

Teachers at Bohman Elementary do not include any type of small group instruction as part of their literacy block. Their only small group instruction time occurs during RTI. This is thirty minutes per day where each teacher works with approximately ten students at a time focusing on those students' needs for reading growth.

Literacy Centers

The last observational data focused on literacy centers. At ARC Elementary, all four of the teachers observed met each of the eight items listed on the observation form. *See Figure 4.4.*

Components Observed: Phonemic Awareness ⊠ Phonics ⊠ Comprehension ⊠ Vocabulary ⊠ Fluency ⊠

Participants	T1	T2	T3	T4
Organizational pattern of centers is evident (Work Board, Center Chart, etc…)	X	X	X	X
Materials are organized and accessible to students.	X	X	X	X
Centers have clear objectives.	X	X	X	X
Centers include an assessment component. (i.e. Literacy Center-students respond to text using story elements graphic organizer)	X	X	X	X
Student movement between centers is organized.	X	X	X	X
Help system for students is evident.	X	X	X	X
Specific location for completed student work (pocket folder, hanging folder, clipboard, etc…)	X	X	X	X
Students' behavior follows classroom rules	X	X	X	X

Figure 4.4: ARC Elementary Literacy Centers

An organizational pattern of centers was evident where each teacher used a work board or center chart with students' names and colors beside each name with a number indicating their center rotation. This also enabled student movement and transitions between centers to be organized with minimal loss of instruction time. Teachers used baskets to organize materials and make them accessible to students. They also used signs that hung from the ceiling indicating where each center was located. For example, Teacher 4 had a yellow sign that said "Vocabulary" hanging over the table where she wanted her students to work on their vocabulary center. She also had a green sign for comprehension, a blue sign for fluency/writing, and a red sign indicating where the teacher center was located.

Each literacy center included clear objectives, instructions, and an assessment component for students. For example, for her vocabulary center, Teacher 3 had her students complete a four-square vocabulary activity. In the first square, the student

would write the word. Square number two would be a definition in the student's own words. In square number three, students would use the vocabulary word in a sentence. Finally, in square number four students would draw a picture related to the word. Each student would turn their completed work into a folder for the teacher to assess.

The teachers at Bohman Elementary do not include Literacy Centers as part of their reading instruction. The next section presents data regarding the amount of instructional time each school spends on reading instruction.

Instructional Time

ARC Elementary has an uninterrupted literacy block that lasts one hundred to one hundred fifteen minutes each day (some grade levels vary depending on their lunch time). Grades K-3 also has a supplemental reading time for forty minutes every day for all students. Students are placed in groups that target specific needs based on data from the GRADE and DIBELS assessments. A phonics screener is also given to early primary students. Response to Intervention (RTI) is taught three times per week for forty-five minutes to only those students who fall in tier three.

The literacy block at Bohman Elementary lasts ninety to one hundred minutes; some classes' literacy blocks are split up due to RTI/Supplemental/Enrichment time. Each grade level has a thirty minute block of time for students in Tiers one, two, and three. During this time, students in tier one receive enrichment instruction, while students in tier two receive supplemental instruction, and students in tier three receive Response to Intervention. Teachers use Lexia Reading during this time of instruction.

Lexia Reading is a computer based program designed to supplement classroom instruction and assessment of students' progress. Once a student is placed at the

appropriate level and activity based on the teacher's assessment of the student's needs, a recursive branching system that is built into the software automatically directs a student to the needed level of activity difficulty, depending on the student's responses. Lexia Reading is intended to complement a strong core curriculum that includes the five components of reading.

Summary of Observational Data

Overall, the data analysis from the eight observations indicated clear differences between the teachers at ARC Elementary and Bohman Elementary relative to their instructional practices. Analysis of the observation data also indicated that administrator beliefs about teaching and learning were clearly evident in the instructional reading practices that were observed in the classrooms. The principal at ARC Elementary supported reading improvement by implementing the practice of differentiated instruction throughout her school. In contrast, the principal at Bohman Elementary concentrated her support for improving reading achievement by providing resources and concentrating on student data.

At ARC Elementary, differentiated instruction was identified in every classroom through implementation of small group instruction and literacy centers. The differentiated instruction offering tiered assignments or using flexible groups were observed in all four classrooms. At Bohman Elementary, teachers used a variety of instructional strategies, but none of the teachers incorporated small groups or literacy centers into their instruction. They provided the same assignments and instruction for all of the students in their classrooms, with no evidence of differentiated instruction during the reading block. Therefore, analysis of the observation data found that the beliefs of

the school administrators about instructional practices were reflected in the instructional practices used by the teachers at their schools.

Interview Analysis and Synthesis

This section of the paper presents the data acquired through the interviews conducted with teachers at each site. They are organized by the categories presented in the conceptual model (see page 13). The first step taken during the interview analysis was to listen again to all of the interview audio files and transcribe them into a word processing document. To help ensure accuracy, the completed transcriptions were compared to the original audio files. Line by line coding was used to get as close to the original interview data as possible. The concept of line by line coding requires the researcher to take every line of the document and assign a code to each line. Charmaz (2006) noted that this type of coding works especially well in interview settings. The researcher is able to compare the data and clump ideas within the same code into major categories. Charmaz also explained that using detailed coding of this nature also helps eliminate any preconceived ideas that a researcher may have about the data because every line has been taken into account. The teacher interviews consisted of twenty-two questions that were closely aligned to the research question posed in the study (see Appendix D). Demographic data were collected on teachers at both sites. The variables are included in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Teacher Interview Responses

Interview Questions 1, 2, and 9 asked, "How many years have you been teaching?"; "How many years in your current position?" and "How many years were

you a part of Reading First?" This information was recorded into demographic tables

for easy reference.

Table 4.1
Study Participants Information – ARC Elementary

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Current Position	Years in Current Position	Years involved in RF
Participant 1	Female	White	12 years	K teacher	1 year	2 years
Participant 2	Female	White	11 years	1st grade	2 years	6 years
Participant 3	Female	White	11 years	2nd grade	10 years	6 years
Participant 4	Female	White	10 years	3rd grade	9 years	6 years
N=4						

Table 4.2
Study Participants Information – Bohman Elementary

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Current Position	Years in Current Position	Years involved in RF
Participant 1	Female	White	3 years	K Teacher	2 years	0 years
Participant 2	Female	White	3 years	1st grade	3 years	1 year
Participant 3	Female	White	7 years	2nd grade	5 years	6 years
Participant 4	Female	White	12 years	3rd grade	2 years	6 years
N=4						

Factors Affecting Reading Achievement

Interview Question 4 was an open ended question that asked, "What factors do

you feel affect student's reading achievement at your school?" Responses to this

interview question led to the emergence of several categories. These categories were:

Economic Background, Social Home Life, Parental Involvement, Small Group

Instruction, Teacher/Student Relationships, and Instructional Practices. One out of four

teachers at ARC and Bohman stated that economic background was a factor. Two out of

four teachers at ARC and three out of four teachers at Bohman felt that social home life

was a factor. All four teachers at Bohman Elementary stated that parental involvement was a factor affecting students reading achievement at their school. However, at Bohman, it is important to emphasize that parent involvement was seen less as an asset and more of a factor out of teacher control and to blame for low student achievement. In contrast, none of the teachers that were interviewed at ARC Elementary mentioned parent involvement as a factor.

Teachers at ARC Elementary took various approaches to answering this question. T1 at ARC responded by saying she felt that students' economic background and social home life were the biggest factors that affected student achievement. T2 and T3 focused more on some of the positive factors they feel have affected student reading achievement. They talked about how the three tiers of instruction has helped; the small group setting and teachers really knowing their students, and what they need to work on. T4 took a different approach and responded by looking at how positive strategies could overcome challenges students come to school with. She described her beliefs about factors that affect student's reading achievement as follows:

You know, something that's really holding against them is their lack of support at home, so when they come here we have to make sure that we provide them with their background information and really build their vocabulary. That really helps them out so much. I try to do a lot of discussion with them and that just really lets them be able to open up and talk. With all the professional development we've had, hundreds of hours of things, we've learned so many different strategies and activities and ways of teaching things that just really boost their achievement.

Teacher responses at Bohman Elementary were consistent. All four teachers made reference to a lack of help at home and parental involvement being the biggest factors affecting student achievement. Teacher 2 stated:

I think a lot of it is parental involvement. I can send home homework and it's not touched. The folder hasn't been opened, and if your parents aren't interested in what you are doing, you're not going to be interested either. I can teach all day here and they can do great, but if they go home and they want to tell their parents how well they did and their parents aren't even interested in it then that's a problem.

Morale

Interview Questions 3,8,21 and 22 were categorized under teacher morale. Question 3 asked, "How would you describe your ties to this community?" This question was asked to see if having strong ties to the community increased morale or made teachers feel more invested in facilitating the success of the school and students. When people are more personally invested in their work and community, they genuinely have control over what happens to them. In return, their work has a higher meaning and they tend to serve a higher purpose (Maehr, Midgley, & Urdan, 1993). When teachers have a greater sense of community, they feel less sense of isolation and more motivation. Also, when the community is more connected, there is more capacity with greater resources. Two of the four teachers at ARC Elementary were born and raised here. The other two teachers were both from West Virginia and moved here after they got married because their husband's were from this area. At Bohman Elementary, three out of the four

teachers said they were born and raised here; the other teacher moved here after getting married.

Interview Question 8 asked, "Describe how the faculty work together at your school?" When teachers work together, better decisions are made, implementation of decisions improves, morale and trust increases, and teachers are energized (Barth, 2001). The teacher responses at ARC Elementary were consistent. All four teachers responded by saying that they work really well together and are always sharing ideas. T1 went a little more in-depth by saying:

> We are constantly talking, bouncing ideas off each other, and changing what
>
> we're doing to accommodate what needs to be done for the kids and their success.

T3 added that they have all worked together for years and that they are friends outside of school as well. All four teacher's at Bohman Elementary responded by saying they felt they worked really well together within their own little groups or grade level. T4 noted that there wasn't a lot of interaction with each other outside their grade level and she felt that was something that needed to change.

Interview Question 21 asked, "How would you describe the morale of the building?" Teachers at ARC Elementary all responded similarly using words such as: great, high, good, and positive. T3 was more specific by saying:

> I think it's great. I think we've all got the positive attitude. We know what our
>
> goal is, to have high test scores. That's what we work toward, and we're all
>
> willing to work together. I think we have a great, great staff.

Two of the four teachers at Bohman Elementary stated that they felt the morale was overall good. However, they also noted morale fluctuated and added that there was

disagreement on how to improve and some resistance among teachers. T3 noted, some days it's good and some days it's bad. T4 was more specific by explaining:

Hmm… (Long pause) I think everyone wants our school to do better, but we have different views on how it should be done. And of course, you always have some that don't want to change at all and then some that are open for anything, but pretty much we all get along.

Interview Question 22 asked the teacher to describe ways the school celebrates success and/or boosts morale for students and teachers. Both schools immediately started by responding to how they celebrate success for students. All four teacher responses at ARC Elementary were consistent and included how they were constantly celebrating and offering rewards and incentives for students to do well. Some of these rewards and incentives include: a large awards ceremony at the end of the year for students who have scored proficient or distinguished on the test, banners hanging throughout the building, public notifications, reward trips or picnics, and large inflatables brought in for students to enjoy. T1 noted:

We are always bragging on the kids in front of them and to others.

Responses at Bohman Elementary were also consistent with all four teachers referring to MAP celebrations and rewards for Accelerated Reading. The MAP test is given three times per year and if students meet their goal or show gains they get to attend a party. The parties usually include popcorn, slushies, and a movie in the cafeteria; or, a dance in the gymnasium. The librarian gives a pizza party to the class with the most Accelerated Reader points each nine weeks.

After each teacher discussed how their school celebrated student and teacher success, they were prompted again to assess if anything was in place to boost teacher morale at their school. All celebrations mentioned prior to this second probe were student focused. Each teacher at ARC Elementary mentioned the principal treating them to lunch or dinners, pats on the back, and individual emails of specific praise. The teachers at Bohman Elementary all started out by saying: "No, not really." Then, after a little probing, each teacher stated that a cake was bought when MAP scores came out this year. T3 stated:

As far as teacher celebrations are concerned, there's not a whole lot of that.

I think there could be more.

Reading Coach

The primary category for Interview Questions 7, 18, 19, and 20 was the reading coach. Question 18 asked, "Do you have a Reading/Literacy Coach in your building?" All four teachers at ARC Elementary confirmed that there was no longer a reading coach in the building. When asking the same question at Bohman Elementary, I received various responses. T1 responded by saying:

Um… I think it's still (says name)… I think she helped a lot with our Reading

First and then when that was gone, she still is here as the reading coach.

T2 stated that there was no longer a reading coach in the building. T3 and T4 both responded by saying that there is a reading coach in the building, the same one that was here during the Reading First grant; however, she currently only helps with Title One reading and no longer comes to the regular classrooms.

Question 7 asked, "What was it like working with your reading coach?" Six of the eight teachers that were interviewed expressed positive attitudes toward having a reading coach. They used words such as: wonderful, great, helpful, and supportive. T1 at Bohman Elementary did not work with a reading coach due to teaching fifth grade at the time. T4 at Bohman Elementary was very hesitant about answering this question and finally expressed that she would have liked to have more support from their coach.

Question 19 asked, "How often is/was the coach in your classroom?" All four teachers at ARC Elementary said that during the Reading First grant, the reading coach was in their classroom at least once or twice a week. T1 stated that she felt like the first year of the grant that the coach was in her classroom just about every day or every other day. T2 stated that the coach was in her classroom roughly once a week. T3 noted:

> She was in my class at least three or four times a week. She would just come in
>
> and sit down while I was doing whole group or walk around while I was doing
>
> centers.

T4 stated that the reading coach was in her room at least once or twice a week.

At Bohman Elementary, since T1 was not teaching during the grant, she could only answer for the present time. She stated that the coach has never been in her classroom. T2, T3, and T4 at Bohman also stated that since the grant has ended, the reading coach does not come into their classroom. T2 said that during the grant, the coach would visit her classroom once a week. T3 stated that during the grant, the coach would visit her classroom once a month. T4 responded by saying:

> During Reading First she (takes deep breath)… now in some classes, not in

my class personally, but in some classes she did go in and teach lessons. Well

maybe when we first started because it was new to us, so she did come in and

model a little lesson, but after that from time to time she would go in different

classes and teach lessons.

Interview Question 20 asked, "In what ways does/did your coach support you?"

All eight teachers stated that when they did have a coach she was very helpful with

pulling resources and getting various materials they needed. The teachers at ARC

Elementary added that their coach also provided trainings, modeled lessons, and would

come into the classrooms to help with literacy centers if needed.

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Leadership

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Interview Questions 6, 16, and 17 were focused on principal leadership.

Question 6 asked, "What is it like working with your principal?" All of the teachers at

ARC Elementary responded with a resounding: Great; or, Wonderful! T3 gave this

specific description:

> Oh, I love her. She's really good about working off our strengths, knowing what
>
> we're good at and what we're not comfortable with. She knows our personalities;
>
> she knows what we can handle and what we can't.

Similarly, T4 added:

> She's wonderful! She's so good to get along with, and she really wants what's
>
> best for the students. She allows us to teach to our strengths.

Teachers at Bohman Elementary had varying responses about what it was like working

with their principal. T1 stated:

> She's really good to work with. She's a good listener. No problems.

T2 was a little more detailed by giving this description:

> She's very hard-working. She is the first here in the morning; she's the last
>
> to leave. Um…she's very, very interested in student achievement and results.
>
> I feel that she is a little strict, but she gets results.

T3 responded by saying:

> We get along fine. I mean, anything that I ever need, I mean she tries her
>
> best to accommodate me.

And finally, T4 stated:

> I have no problems working with her. We have a pretty open relationship.
>
> She is a stickler for following the rules though, which I'm kind of like her too.
>
> You have your way of doing things and it's kind of hard not to expect that from
>
> everybody else. But usually if you address her in a way and tell her well…this is
>
> why I want to do it this way… she's okay with it.

> *Question 16 asked, "How often is the principal in your classroom observing the*

literacy block?" Teachers at ARC Elementary said that the principal pops her head in at

least a couple of times per week, if not more. T4 stated that she does not do as many

formal observations as she used to because she trusts them and knows they all do their

job. T1 and T2 at Bohman Elementary both stated that the principal comes in their rooms

about three times a year. T2 added that the principal is very present and she's up and

down the halls a lot. T3 and T4 both responded that the principal is not in their

classrooms very often. T4 stated that she had not been in her classroom any this year; T3

said that she thinks she has been in her classroom one time this year.

Question 17 asked, "In what ways do you feel supported by your principal?"
Teachers 1, 2, and 3 were all consistent at ARC Elementary by saying that the principal
gets them whatever they need. T1 elaborated by saying:

> Usually anything that we need, she can manage to find the funding if at all
> possible; coming in and teaching if we need to do something with a group;
> willingness to take kids out and do things with them; very supportive with
> anything we need that's for the benefit of the kids.

T4 simply noted; she's just incredible. She's behind us 100%.

Teachers at Bohman Elementary had various responses to this question. T1 and
T4 both stated that she is open for discussion and offers suggestions to them on questions
they may have. T3 responded by saying that the principal enforces discipline and backs
the teachers up on those types of things. Finally, T2 (after a long pause) stated:

> Um… she really makes sure all the students are on track, doing what they're
> supposed to do. (Long pause) And, she's really interested in their scores and their
> ability. We keep the student data notebooks, and she looks at those. I make
> sure mine go from red to yellow to green so that she can see visually. She helps
> us organize those, and makes sure we keep up with them.

Professional Development

*Interview Question 11 asked teachers to describe the types of professional
development they have received focusing on literacy instruction.* In many cases, this
question required further probing, by asking for ones that may stand out the most or that
were the most beneficial. Many of the teachers stated that it was hard to remember since
they had eighty hours or more of professional development each year during the Reading

First grant. T1 at ARC Elementary said she had received a lot of phonemic awareness training, assessment and research based training for DIBELS, and a lot of hands-on training during the grant. T2 stated that she also had a lot of trainings on phonemic awareness and phonics. She said that she probably learned the most from actually giving a training herself. She did one with a group of teachers on the five components of reading instruction recommended by the National Reading Panel (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency). She was in charge of the phonemic awareness component and noted that just preparing for that taught her a lot. T3 and T4 both agreed that the trainings where they actually created activities they could use when teaching were the most beneficial to them.

At Bohman Elementary, T1 and T2 both referred to attending the Kentucky Reading Project after the grant. This was offered through Eastern Kentucky University, and teachers could receive six professional development hours, as well as a college credit for attending. Both teachers said they learned a lot from participating and really enjoyed it. T3 responded by saying it had been so long ago that the only thing that really stood out to her was the most recent Lexile computer training that teachers received. Finally, T4 stated that she remembered receiving PD that focused on the five component areas, but didn't feel like she really got anything from it that she didn't already do. She also stated that the district would give the teachers a survey on what they would like to have PD on, but it seems like apparently what I want is not the majority because we don't get that. She also noted that the PD in this county tends to be one size fits all.

Data-Based Decision Making

Interview Question 14 asked teachers to describe how they meet the needs of students in Tiers two and three. All four teachers at ARC Elementary described how they use data from assessments such as GRADE, DIBELS, and KCCT to group students according to their needs. Supplemental instruction is provided for each tier forty minutes per day at the same time throughout grades K-3. The librarian, instructional assistants, resource teachers, Title One teachers, and all K-3 teachers serve a specific group during this time. Tier three students are pulled out of the classroom three times per week for forty-five additional minutes of reading instruction.

At Bohman Elementary, teachers were consistent in describing the thirty minute block that is set aside for grade levels to break into small groups based on students needs. Teachers use Lexia, a computer based program, to assess students and find their specific needs. This supplemental time is designed to meet the needs of students in tiers one, two, and three.

Implementing Instructional Strategies

Interview Questions 5, 10, 12, and 13 were all categorized under Implementing Instructional Strategies. Question 5 was an open ended question that allowed teachers to describe some of the instructional practices or activities they use in reading. Two common themes that emerged from all four teachers at ARC Elementary were *Hands-on Activities* and *Centers*. T1 also mentioned explicit instruction and using examples/non-examples in her lessons. T2 referred to using the Florida Center for Reading Research as a resource for obtaining many of her center activities. T3 stated:

I use a lot of hands-on activities, especially during whole group. We use

paddles, white boards, and sorting activities. We also do the word wall chants

and anything to get them moving and going. I do a lot of games and different

hands-on activities in centers too.

T4 noted that she uses a variety of activities to focus on vocabulary. She specifically

described a vocabulary sort activity that she does with her class that they really enjoy.

Teacher responses at Bohman Elementary were more varied. T1 said she uses a

lot of hands-on activities as well as allowing her students to talk out loud, shout out

answers, and dance. She likes to keep them moving. T2 gave the following examples of

activities/strategies that she uses in her classroom:

I like Think, Pair, Share. I use it a lot. I learned it through the Reading First

grant. I like to assign peanut butter/jelly. I know a lot of people do that, and I

even have it on their desk so there's no confusion. I really like them to talk. I

don't feel like they should be separated. I don't like the individual work stations.

I feel like if they can talk it and discuss it, then they can tell you what they're

thinking. And if they can tell you that, then they know what they are talking

about. I also like using I do, We do, You do. I use it a lot just because you know,

it's so fast; it's like instant results. And I do a lot of the whole brain teaching. I

do it a little bit more during math because they're my kids. They're the ones I

have most of the time, and so they can get that immediate response. So I use it.

T3 referred to using power points along with the reading series. She stated that her

students do a lot of independent work. T4 noted that she teaches mostly through whole

group instruction and focuses a lot on comprehension. She found a book that has

different characters to teach the strategies, and the students get more involved. And she

feels like they are concentrating more when she uses that. Today's character was: Claire the Clarifier.

Interview Question 10 asked teachers to describe their literacy instruction before Reading First. A common theme that emerged from the teachers at ARC Elementary was *Literacy Centers*. T1 simply stated that she only taught the basics, what was required. T2 admitted that she did not do as well with phonemic awareness. She used old basals and had to pull from what she knew. She did centers, but she did not do them like she does now. They did not all focus on reading. She incorporated math centers along with the reading centers. T3 took a different approach to answering this question by stating:

> Well, it wasn't very good, but I didn't realize it until we went through Reading First. I was like… Get those kids back and redo it! You know, I started out with the four block because that was the big thing when I started teaching, but then once you go to Reading First and all the trainings they give you, you're like what did I do? You know, what have I done to these kids?

T4 noted that she never taught centers because she just did not understand how they would work at all. She also said that she did not do as many hand-on activities with her students.

T1, T2, and T3 at Bohman Elementary were unable to respond to this question due to the fact that they did not teach before Reading First. They were able to better explain how their teaching methods have changed since Reading First ended, which was asked in the next question. T4 was able to answer this question and simply stated:

I didn't know much about literacy instruction, just what I received in college

and what I had learned on my own.

Interview Question 12 asked, "How did your teaching methods change (if at all)

in literacy since Reading First? Whole group? Small group? Centers? Two common

themes that emerged from this question as the biggest changes at ARC were *Explicit*

Instruction and *Centers*. In addition to explicit instruction and centers, T3 stated that it

used to be lecture, lecture, lecture, and now it's mostly hands-on activities. She added

that she only did centers approximately once a week, and they were nothing like what she

does now. T4 stated:

> I just know that I'm a much better teacher. I cover so much more and eliminate
>
> the fluff stuff.

T1 specifically described how her teaching methods have changed.

> *Whole group* – I learned a lot of important parts of the explicit instruction,
>
> breaking things down into smaller parts and how important using examples
>
> and non-examples are for the little ones because you can tell them, but that
>
> doesn't necessarily mean they get it. *Small group* – being able to group based
>
> on the needs of those students and rearrange groups according to those needs.
>
> *Centers* – Just actually using them! I hadn't used centers a lot prior to Reading
>
> First, and they're wonderful because you can actually see what they do and don't
>
> know. They are very beneficial. You wouldn't think ten or fifteen minutes would
>
> tell you anything about a student, but it makes a big difference working with them
>
> in that small setting.

At Bohman Elementary, since T4 was the only teacher that taught before Reading First, she was the only one who could answer my original question. She replied by reiterating that her focus remained mostly on comprehension during whole group instruction. She added that she did do centers during the Reading First grant, but that they were not done with reading groups; instead, they were done in homeroom.

I re-worded the question for T2 and T3 at Bohman by asking, *"How did your teaching methods change since Reading First? Do you do anything different now than you did when you had the grant? Whole group? Small group? Centers?"* Both teachers' responses were approached with very different attitudes. T1 responded by saying:

> Yes, Reading First was so structured. We had no… like that little teachable moment I had earlier; I couldn't have done that because if someone had walked in they would say: "Well, you're not on target; you're not following this scripted plan." And I couldn't do that, and I just felt so trapped. And we had to move at a certain pace. I felt like the pressure was just to hit it and cover it, not to master it. And so now I feel like I can teach to mastery. We had to do centers. I didn't do it…we didn't do it during our reading block; we did it later on if I'm remembering correctly, but yeah we had to do centers every day. And we did the word wall, but I still do the word wall. I really like it.

T3 had a different attitude and responded by saying:

> I have tried to stick with it, because I really liked the Reading First. I liked the centers. Unfortunately, I don't get to do centers in my group because I don't have any help. I have a large class so it's hard for me to break them into centers

and get them to stay focused. And so I don't get to do the centers like we used to.
I wish I could, and hopefully, eventually I'll get to again if they get me some help
in here.

*Interview Question 13 asked teachers to describe how Reading First changed the
way they interact with other teachers for literacy (if at all).* Responses were varied at
ARC Elementary. T1 explained:

It made a big difference because it opened up our being able to feel comfortable
taking advice from other people good or bad; and the willingness to go in and
observe others and learn from them. Also, being willing to let other people come
in and observe your class and not be a nervous wreck. You never knew when the
door was going to open and five or six people would come in. It made you
realize you could handle it.

T2 noted that it helped them as teachers find what their strengths are. T3 stated that she
felt it brought them together more because they went to a lot of trainings and discussed
more of the activities and what they can do and what they should not do. T4 did not feel
that it had really changed the way she interacts with other teachers.

At Bohman Elementary, T1, T2, and T3 were unable to answer this question due
to their years of teaching experience. T4 stated that she felt it really did not change for
her.

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Key Factor

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*Question 15 was an open-ended question that asked, "What do you think the key
factor has been in the success of your scores in K-3?"* Responses to this interview
question led to the emergence of three common themes. These themes were: *Working*

Together, Explicit Instruction, and *Instructional Strategies*. All four teachers at ARC Elementary responded by saying that working together and relationships were definitely factors that had led to their success. T1 at ARC Elementary added that building confidence in the students, having a positive attitude, and being able to teach to their strengths were also factors that played roles in the success of their scores. T2 noted that working together and analyzing the data in order to know exactly what the students need instead of just guessing was also a huge factor. T3 stated that all the activities they do along with practice, practice, practice and reinforcing them has helped getting her students to read on grade level.

 T1 at Bohman Elementary stated that she felt working on the curriculum map with the whole county and getting everyone on the same page without having gaps should be very helpful for the future. T4 simply stated that she felt explicit instruction was the key factor to students' achievement. T3 at Bohman Elementary took a different approach to answering this question. She responded by saying:

> Well, I really enjoyed Reading First. I mean it was a lot of paperwork and
>
> it involved a lot of things that I probably didn't even really learn because you
>
> know you just hit and miss. And they're always trying new things, but you
>
> know... I really feel this class that I have this year is, I think, the first class that did
>
> not have the Reading First, and I can tell a difference. They didn't come in with
>
> the Reading First strategies and all that, and so I can see a difference.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Throughout the interview process, one common theme at ARC Elementary was *Working Together/Collaboration.* Whether the question was geared toward curriculum

or leadership, *Working Together/Collaboration* was evident in the respondents' answers. For example, when addressing the idea of how the faculty works together, T3 responded,

> We rely on each other, and we're all real close. I mean, we've worked together for years, and we know each other too. I think that's another reason why we're successful because we work so well together and know each other so well. We're friends outside of school too. You know, the first grade teacher (states name) and I are very close. We go on vacations together, and we've watched our kids grow up together. I think that helps us with our job too.

T2 also expressed that she feels like the faculty works together really well. She notes that they are all roughly the same age, and it makes it easy to relate and tell each other things. Finally, T4 commented,

> We're really a real team. We really help each other out, we're always discussing students and different activities and sharing our ideas. So we work really well together.

The desire for and experience with working together and collaborating was a recurring factor at ARC Elementary. In contrast, evidence of *Working Together/Collaboration* was minimally categorized at Bohman.

Another common theme at ARC Elementary was *Supportive Leadership.* For example, when asked how teachers felt supported by their reading coach or principal, teachers were quick to respond with comments such as:

> She offers lots of positive feedback and suggestions.

> She's wonderful!

> She is just incredible!

She's great!

She has the buy in to what we are doing. She is a good support system.

 I love her!

In contrast, teachers at Bohman Elementary were hesitant to answer these questions and often had more impersonal responses. For example, teachers referred to their principal or coach as being hardworking; strict; a stickler; helpful with discipline; helpful with testing; interested in student scores; and, open-minded.

Principal Interview Responses

The administrator interviews consisted of eight questions that were also closely aligned to the research question. Both administrators were asked how many years they had been a principal before beginning the actual interview. Both principals were former teachers. The principal at ARC Elementary (P1) has been the principal for ten years. The principal at Bohman Elementary (P2) has been the principal there for six years.

Factors Affecting Reading Achievement

Interview Question 1 asked, "What factors influence the level of reading achievement at your school?" A common theme that emerged from this question from both principals was *Professional Development*. P1 responded by saying,

One of the major things that I think is the professional training that our teachers had, through Reading First. I think you and I kind of talked a little about it earlier, but because they had 120 hours of PD every year for 5 years, they've become experts in the reading area. Another thing that I think is really working for us here is the way we do our scheduling, making sure we have a dedicated block for reading that's more than the 90 minutes that research shows that we should have.

85

And, I think if you don't devote the time for that, and also that we have a multi-tiered level of reading instruction here so they do have all 3 tiers of instruction. Another thing is that our teachers have been trained and really use explicit instruction in their classroom, and they actively engage the students.

The principal at Bohman Elementary began by discussing some of the positive factors that she felt influenced the level of reading achievement and then concluded by adding negative factors that impact student achievement. The following is her response,

Well, like I said we're a former Reading First school, so we've had lots of PD on the scientific based reading research and what strategies work the best. We look at our MAP data especially right now in reading and in math. We look at AIMSWEB for RTI intervention for our students. We also compare and look at the data from the KCCT, classroom observations; and classroom scrimmages, things like that. Some of the factors that influence the reading achievement for our students is the *lack* of reading materials in households; the *lack* of, for basically a better word…is just parental involvement with our students. A lot of the students in our school, or a lot of the parents of our students, feel like education begins when they enter the schoolhouse door and not before.

Interview Question 2 asked, "What one thing do you believe to be the most influential factor in the academic success of this school?" The principal at ARC felt that the biggest factor is the school culture. She also mentioned instructional rigor and how her staff does not waste any time, but believes that it all goes back to school culture. She states:

We expect the best from our students and I expect the best from my staff. And I

try to model the best myself by just having great work ethics. All of those

things come into play when I think of school culture.

The principal at Bohman gave the credit to her school's academic success to the

hard-working staff. She specifically stated:

Teacher's who are compassionate and they just really care about their students.

They work hard and they give it 100%.

Interview Questions 4 and 5 referred to instructional practices and support

students receive that influence reading achievement. A common theme that emerged in

response to this question was *Data-based Decision Making.* Both principals referred to

looking at data in order to group students based on their needs. ARC's principal also

credited the following instructional practices as being influential to reading achievement

at ARC Elementary: explicit instruction, active engagement, formative assessments,

progress monitoring, modeling proficient and distinguished work, providing Tier 2 and

Tier 3 instruction, and additional tutoring through the AmeriCorps worker. In addition to

looking at data and grouping students based on their needs, Bohman's principal focused a

lot on the various technology programs used at Bohman Elementary such as: Study

Island, Lexia, and Accelerated Reader.

Interview Question 7 asked, "If I were to ask teachers what role you played

influencing reading achievement levels, what would they say?" A common theme that

emerged from this question was supplying teachers with the resources they need. ARC's

principal also focused on the fact that she works really hard to put a schedule in place that

allows teachers to teach to their strengths. She stressed that this is best for the kids, and it

makes the teachers happier. Second, she stated that she felt they would tell me that she is

really fair to them and that she cares about them. Finally, she hoped they would say that

she does not expect them to do anything that she would not do and feels that is very

important to model that for teachers.

Bohman's principal added that along with getting them the materials they need,

she does her best to cover classes to make sure that reading groups go on. She also said

that she would hope they would say that she is very supportive. She admitted that they

would also probably say that she is sort of hard-nosed; that she will accept no excuses

because she believes that all children can learn. It may be at different levels, but she does

not accept when a teacher tells her that they cannot get a child to where he/she needs to

be.

Interview Question 8 asked principals to tell me what they do personally to

promote high reading achievement. The principal at ARC Elementary primarily focused

on the celebrations they have to reward students who do well. She mentioned giving out

medals and certificates on Awards Day, as well as bringing inflatables in for the students

to enjoy. The principal at Bohman Elementary focused on expectations. Specifically,

she stated:

> I have very high expectations and again, accept nothing else. We will do
>
> whatever it takes to make sure that every child is successful because success
>
> breeds success. Once a child figures out that it can do it… it will increase.
>
> It will keep on doing it. So… high expectations, getting them
>
> materials they need, being there, being a cheerleader for them (the students
>
> and the teachers). We work very hard here, and we want the best for our students.

We have lots of barriers; we just try to make sure that through Family Resource,

through our school nurse, through any resource, any avenue we have to try to

meet those barriers and decrease them. We do that so we can have success. \

Challenges Working with Students or Teachers

Interview Question 3 asked principals to discuss some of the challenges they face

working with students or teachers at their school. A common theme that emerged from

this question as far as students were concerned was *Parental Issues/Home Life*. ARC's

principal elaborated by talking about how many of the students come from homes where

drug addiction is a big issue. She also discussed barriers such as limited vocabulary and

students lacking experience on how to interact with others in a public setting. Bohman's

principal added that at her school, there is an issue with truancy. She also pointed out

that parents are more interested in sports related activities than academic related

activities.

As far as challenges each principal faces with their teachers, the principal at ARC

Elementary discussed that as a result of their status as a small, rural school, they don't

have a lot of the extra personnel that larger schools have; therefore, they have to find

ways to make up the difference for their students to have a well rounded curriculum. For

example, not having an art teacher or a P.E. teacher can be a barrier to student success.

The principal at Bohman Elementary stated,

Even though I have a hard-working staff, you do have some teachers who are

maybe at retirement age who are burnt out. They've taught so long the old way,

they're not willing to accept the new curriculum or the new interventions; the new

styles of teaching. And then, you have those who have already retired, and you

have the young ones coming in that may not have sufficient educational

background to be in teaching or the maturity.

Principals' Perceptions of how they are Viewed by Students

Interview Question 6 asked, "If I were to ask students what their principal is like, what do you think they would say?" The principal at ARC Elementary responded by saying, I think they would tell you that I love them. I really think most of them would tell you that. That I'm fair with them, but I also think they would tell you that I'm tough and you don't want a spanking from me. And I think that a lot of the kids would tell you that because I go in and I talk to them about effort, that's one of the things that I read and researched, it says that a lot of the time that at-risk students do not realize that it takes a great deal of effort to be successful. And so we talk about how it's important to start the first day and like especially if a group is in trouble and I go in and talk to the whole group or something, you know I'll talk to them about how important it is to me. And the main thing is that I want them to love school, but that they have to get a good education. So, I think a lot of the kids would tell you that I want them to learn a lot at school. I actually have a pretty good relationship with my kids where it's small here.

The principal at Bohman Elementary responded to the same question by saying, I think they would say that I'm very structured and have very high expectations, but I'm also accessible. They know that they can come and share with me the good things as well as getting sent to me for discipline. My door is always open and I have students who like…just for instance… a few moments ago they were learning a song about verbs, and they wanted to sing me that song. The door works both ways.

Summary of Interview Data

The interviews for both teachers and principals provided rich sources of data related to the central research question. Teachers addressed ways in which their principals provided both administrative and instructional support. The teachers also provided insight as to how that support along with other factors impacted reading achievement. The principals described how they provided administrative and instructional support to teachers and how they believed that their support influences reading achievement. Each principal also described the specific types of support they offered their teachers and why they believed that support was beneficial in promoting reading achievement.

The interview questions were closely aligned to the central research question of this study, and therefore, both the teacher and principal responses provided data to answer that question. Furthermore, the interviews provided the researcher with a framework concerning teacher and principal beliefs about teaching and learning as well as their role in student's reading achievement. The interviews also allowed for a comparison of beliefs among teachers and principals at both sites. Finally, the interviews allowed for exploration of the perceptions of both teachers and principals and the impact that those perceptions may have on student achievement in reading.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of a comparative case study that described and identified differences in factors affecting students' reading achievement in one high and one low-performing elementary rural Appalachian school. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study compared instructional reading strategies, as well as other

influences that appeared to be critical factors, implemented by school districts in the rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages. Eight observations of elementary school teachers were conducted for this study. The findings were analyzed to look for and compare consistencies/inconsistencies of policies and practices being used in each classroom at both schools. The interviews were transcribed and coded using line-by-line coding as recommended by Charmaz (2006) and were also organized around each individual question presented to the participants in this study.

Chapter five will present the interpretation of the findings as they relate to the conceptual model and research question of this study. Recommendations for action and future research will also be discussed. Implications for change will be presented as well as researcher reflections about the research process.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose of the study and research question followed by a review of the context. Reading is a skill that has often been taken for granted by many different stakeholders (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). However, after the federal government passed the NCLB law to hold school districts accountable for student reading levels, with the expectation that all students be proficient by 2014, schools began paying closer attention to their reading scores and feeling the pressure of this accountability. Effective reading ability provides students with the weapons to combat the ever increasing demands of the world (Reading First, 2007).

After applying in 2002 and receiving funding in 2003-2004, 74 Kentucky schools began Reading First implementation during the 2004-2005 school year. Schools across the state began the year by acquiring a baseline score on the required standardized test GRADE, which revealed that 30.1% of students in grades K-3 in the state scored at the 50th percentile or above. This translates to 5,593 students out of 18,538 reading on or above grade level in the fall of the first year of Reading First. By the end of the fifth year of implementation, Kentucky had 77% of all K-3 students reading at or above proficiency based on GRADE results (Carney, 2010).

At the end of year four, students from eleven schools in Kentucky averaged the 90th percentile or better on GRADE; all eleven of these were rural Appalachian schools. The fact that all eleven schools were rural and Appalachian strongly recommended such schools for study. Previous research has not typically examined high-performing, high-poverty schools in Appalachia or other rural areas. If stakeholders can develop an understanding of what policies and practices characterize these schools, it would inform

recommendations that could be replicated in similarly situated schools with historically low performance.

The purpose of this study was to describe and identify factors distinguishing between high and low-performing on reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study compared instructional reading strategies, as well as other factors that distinguish between these two schools in a rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages.

This particular study was developed to answer the following question: What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading? It examined critical factors that previous research has identified as influencing to a student's reading achievement, predominantly in studies of urban contexts, but in rural Appalachian schools. These factors include: teacher morale, within-school support and leadership, professional development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the classroom.

Overview of the Context and Sample

In addition to being rural elementary schools, criteria for selection of the two school sites for this research included these decision rules:

1. Each elementary school is located in an Appalachian county in Kentucky.

2. The schools serve a high poverty student population; both have over fifty percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

3. The ethnicity of students tested in both schools is one hundred percent Caucasian.

4. The student to teacher ratio for each school is fifteen to one.

5. Both schools were recipients of the Reading First grant.

6. One school had to be high performing and the other low performing based on data collected under Kentucky's state accountability model.

The participants in this study included the principal at each site and one teacher from each grade level (K-3). Due to the small size of each school, there was only one teacher per grade level observed and interviewed at each site.

Overview of the Research Methods

Qualitative research methodology was selected for this study. The researcher was the instrument for gathering the data through observations and interviews. Case study research provided the framework for this study because of its usefulness in addressing questions of how and why. The primary research question for the study, "What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading?" drove the choice to use case study as a method.

Particular circumstances guide qualitative researchers in their choices of data collection strategies. In this study, the author gained access to both sites by obtaining permission from the school administrators. The purpose of the study, the type and number of participants required, and the time frame of the study were explained via email. The sources of data for the study were observations, transcripts from interviews, and document analysis. The observations took place during each grade level's reading instruction. Interviews were conducted with one classroom teacher per grade level (K-3) and the principal at each site. Each school's website, as well as their school report card, was utilized to review demographics and test scores.

Interpretation of Major Findings

The findings of this study are organized into sections based on the overall

research question and common themes that emerged from observations and interviews.

The first section entitled "Teacher Morale" discusses teachers' perceptions on how the

faculty works together at their school, the general morale of their building, and ways their

principal boosts morale. The next section entitled "Teacher Efficacy" describes the

differences in levels of efficacy between teachers at these schools. It also focuses on how

teachers from each school demonstrate differences in levels of internal and external locus

of control. The third section entitled "Leadership" reports teachers' perceptions on how

they feel supported by their principal. This section also highlights the principals'

perceptions on the role they play in influencing and promoting high reading achievement.

The next section is called "Teacher Professional Development" and discusses

professional development for teachers in conjunction with whether or not they are

receiving professional development opportunities that focus on literacy instruction. The

last section is entitled "Instructional Practices." This section discusses the differences

between practices such as: explicit small group instruction, literacy centers, and

instructional time spent on reading at each school.

Teacher Morale

When schools have teachers with high morale, they also have a good chance of

having students with high morale; this morale has a direct impact on student achievement

(Keeler & Andrews, 1963; Whitaker et al., 2000). In this study, it was evident from data

collected during observations and interviews that teachers at ARC Elementary have a

high morale. Many activities, rewards, and celebrations are in place to recognize student

and teacher achievement. Teachers expressed that their school was a happy place to be and that everyone has a positive attitude. One teacher went as far as comparing them to a big happy family. The principal at ARC Elementary noted that she feels school culture and work ethics are the two most influential factors in the academic success of her school. As a result of working where there is a positive school culture and good work ethics, teachers and the principal at ARC Elementary have a high morale.

In contrast, teachers at Bohman Elementary were hesitant and put more thought into the questions that focused on morale during their interviews. Most teachers expressed that the morale of the building was good overall. One teacher was more specific by explaining that some days it is good and some days it is bad. There are a couple of celebrations for students that takes place during the school year; however, there is nothing in place to celebrate or boost teacher morale. Many teachers noted that there just was not enough time or they were too busy. Two of the teachers reported that there was little done for teachers and felt that there could be more. The principal at Bohman Elementary stated that the teachers at her school were hard-working and credited them as being the most influential factor to the student's success at her school.

Studer (2008) found that it is the role of the administrator to create a culture where the staff believes that their work environment is unlike any other. The goal of the school leader is to promote the type of school climate that will foster excitement and commitment to the improvement of the school. Studer (2008) discovered that when employees develop a purpose for their work and perceive it as meaningful, increased performance within the organization results. The principal at ARC Elementary creates opportunities to motivate her staff and support them in achieving their goals. Data

analysis revealed that teachers at ARC Elementary felt valued and inspired by their principal. In analyzing the data from Bohman Elementary, however, this type of support and motivation was not clear.

The principal at ARC Elementary recognized that motivation and celebrating success was critical to boosting teacher morale. Whitaker (1999) found that keeping teachers motivated and enthusiastic about their job is an important task for principals. Thompson (1996), author of *Motivating Others* stated, "The principal is not only responsible for self-motivation, but, more importantly, is held accountable for the motivation of the school staff and even students" (p.3). A true leader is continually lifting up employees participating in their day-to-day grind in order to help them do the best job possible. Thompson (1996) also pointed out, "Principals who are effective 'motivators' create other conditions which satisfy the needs of individuals within the school" (p.5). Principals also celebrate teachers' achievements knowing that school success depends on the hard work of the teachers employed there. Teacher 4 at Bohman made reference to the fact that there was a lack of celebrations and felt that there could be more.

<div align="center">Teacher Efficacy</div>

Teacher efficacy has been defined as the extent to which teachers believe they can affect student learning (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Teacher efficacy relies on convincing teachers to believe in what they do and take ownership of their teaching. Self-efficacy and locus of control must be distinguished, but they work together, because the way in which a person tends to attribute control informs that person's beliefs about their abilities (Bandura, 1997). Generally, those who believe that situations cannot be controlled or

changed do not persist as long when a task is difficult, and it becomes easy to relinquish personal investment or responsibility in that situation.

Teachers at ARC Elementary demonstrated a high sense of efficacy and an internal locus of control. Even though they work in an environment with many disadvantages, they were still motivated to change the system and held themselves accountable for finding ways and implementing strategies to make their students successful in reading. In contrast, teachers at Bohman Elementary demonstrated a low sense of efficacy and an external locus of control. All four teachers that were interviewed at Bohman indicated that they felt parental involvement was a factor that affects student's reading achievement. They saw this as something that was out of their control and a factor to blame for low student achievement, as opposed to viewing parents as untapped assets. Teachers with low general teaching efficacy do not feel that teachers in general can make a significant difference in the lives of students, while teachers with low personal teaching efficacy do not feel that they, personally, affect the lives of the students (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Leadership

Principal's Perceptions of Teachers

Teachers at the two schools in this study reported contrasting perceptions regarding support from their principal. Each principal used a different approach to offer administrative support. The teachers at ARC Elementary voiced that they felt extremely supported in terms of instructional practices and relationships. The principal at ARC Elementary takes a personal interest in each of her teachers. She makes concentrated efforts to meet with teachers in order to discover their strengths, individual personalities,

and instructional needs. Teachers feel that she is behind them 100% and has complete buy-in to whatever they are doing. The principal at ARC Elementary stated that she views her teachers as experts.

The principal at Bohman Elementary took a different approach to administrative support in relation to improving reading instruction for students in grades K-3. She focused her efforts on providing resources that teachers need in order to increase student achievement. Teachers described her as hard-working and a stickler for following the rules. The teachers perceived her as very helpful in reference to discipline and enforcing rules. The principal at Bohman Elementary is very interested in looking at student data and their achievement. In contrast to the principal at ARC who described her teachers as experts, the principal at Bohman described some of her staff members as teachers who are ready for retirement and resistant to change. She also viewed the newer teachers in the building as lacking maturity and indicated that some of them may not have the sufficient educational background to be in the profession of teaching.

The different views that each principal held about their teachers, in turn, affected their leadership styles and how they interact with teachers. This has implications for relationships and long term sustainability. Principals might be unaware of their personal leadership styles; but in reality, they could be practicing one or more theories in their day to day activities. McGregor (1960) classified leadership as either an authoritarian style (Theory X) or a more egalitarian style (Theory Y). Implementing a Theory Y approach, an administrator nurtures an environment and recognizes that employees have the capability to be high performers, to develop and assume responsibility, and to be self-motivated.

The principal at ARC Elementary clearly demonstrated a Theory Y style approach to leadership. She created an environment in her school that promoted effective communication and trust. Effective principals trust the teachers to do their jobs without constant supervision, and the teachers feel this support and empowerment. Hughes (1994) maintained, "The principal relates in ways that make teachers want to comply. They like their principal and how he or she treats them. Principals set expectations by believing in and assuming the best of teachers" (p.39). Blasé and Blasé (1994) challenged principals to "build a trusting environment by encouraging openness, facilitating effective communication, and modeling understanding, the cornerstone of trust" (p.20). Due to the principal at ARC Elementary creating this type of environment, the teachers became self-directed and channeled their efforts toward the achievement of organizational goals.

In contrast, the principal at Bohman Elementary implemented a Theory X approach to leadership. McGregor (1960) contended that a tough or soft approach to managing may be used by embracing Theory X. One who practices a Theory X leadership style may drive their employees at work because they think they are lazy and this is the only way to get things accomplished. They will also insist on complete compliance, rigid organizational patterns, and controls based on imposed authority. While the principal at Bohman clearly cares about student achievement and providing her teachers with the resources they need, she lacks close personal relationships and a level of trust with her teachers that is important for strengthening school culture. This problematic culture stems in part from her Theory X leadership style, which is based from the poor views she holds of her teachers.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Principals

The principals' perceptions of their roles in supporting teachers and reading achievement at both schools were very closely related to their teachers' perceptions. Leithwood et al. (2004) identified that offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and appropriate models of best practices and beliefs that are considered fundamental to the organization all contribute to developing people. A leader must have interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to "develop people." She or he must demonstrate the ability to empathize, develop relationships with others, and display social responsibility (all interpersonal) in order to "develop people" as Leithwood suggests. A leader must also be able to demonstrate self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization (all intrapersonal).

The principal at ARC Elementary demonstrated the interpersonal and intrapersonal traits Leithwood suggests that are needed to "develop people." She discussed her efforts of working hard to put a schedule in place that allows teachers at her school to teach to their strengths. She added she will do just about anything to get them the resources they need for instruction. Finally, she talked about how she strives to be fair and how much she cares about her staff. She does not expect anything out of them that she would not do herself and stressed how important it is that they know that. While the principal at Bohman Elementary also discussed how important it is for her to provide her staff with the resources they need, she also admitted to being "hard-nosed" and that she accepts no excuses. She stands firm on her belief that all students can learn and she will accept nothing else. This attitude relates back to the Theory X style approach to leadership where there is less of an emphasis on building relationships.

These findings about school leadership are supported by the research of Studer (2003) who found that personal relationships within business have a profound impact on the sustained improvement of an organization. Studer argued that it was the daily relationships with employees that provided the foundation for motivation in their jobs. Studer found that the way leaders interact with and treat their employees is the primary mechanism by which a leader can improve performance. This emphasis on relationships was characteristic of the ARC principal. However, the Bohman principal was focused on the task with little attention to relationships. In fact, she viewed her staff through a deficit lens, which further diminished relationships with them because the teachers were less interested in having one as well.

Rooney (2008) found that building solid relationships is vital to the success of a school. Principals must create environments where everyone is known in a personal manner. According to Rooney, creating these personal relationships begins with the principal. Kearns & Harvey (2001) also contend that at the school level, the building principal is the key to any attempt to reform and/or transform the school's ability to improve student performance. Principals need to be at the center of building culture and capacity within their schools.

Teacher Professional Development

Despite the eighty hours of professional development that was mandated for teachers during the Reading First grant and the twenty-four hours that teachers are still participating in on a yearly basis, teachers at ARC Elementary and Bohman Elementary could not specifically pinpoint a professional development session that focused on literacy instruction that stood out to be beneficial. The teachers at ARC Elementary

noted that the sessions they enjoyed most were the ones that were hands-on and allowed them to make things they could take back to their classrooms and use. One teacher at Bohman Elementary expressed that she felt many of the professional development sessions at their district were "one size fits all" and rarely offered ideas or suggestions that she does not already do.

Organizational change literature, along with experience in general, indicates that innovations can disappear quickly once the impetus for them disappears (Rogers, 1995). While conversations about professional development were not ideal at either school, teachers at ARC Elementary spoke more favorably about their experiences than teachers at Bohman Elementary. For example, one ARC teacher went into great detail that the training she received during Reading First made her realize she was not teaching effectively and enhanced her instruction. Two of the teachers at Bohman Elementary were newer teachers and had not received the trainings offered during Reading First. However, the teachers that did receive professional development during Reading First did not sustain the practices that were set forth by the grant.

On the contrary, the teachers at ARC Elementary sustained many of the practices after the Reading First grant was over. In particular, they continue to implement differentiated and small group instruction through utilization of personnel across the domains of general education, special education, and entitlement programs. They also continue to apply the information gained through training on the use of instructional materials, programs, strategies, and approaches based on scientifically based reading research. Finally, they have sustained the use of the GRADE and DIBELS assessments and utilize the training they received on how to use screening, diagnostic, and classroom-

based reading assessments to identify student difficulties. ARC Elementary sustained these practices as a result of higher student achievement in reading.

Literature reviewed in this study presented a strong argument that teacher professional development plays an important role on student growth. Sousa (2006) found that like students, teachers need brain-based learning experiences that are relevant and challenging and provide opportunities for active participation. In Bohman Elementary's case, there is a significant disconnect between the way the district and the school expects teachers to differentiate instruction to raise student achievement yet provides professional development that is "one size fits all" and not specific to the needs of the students or teachers.

Instructional Practices

Explicit Small Group Instruction, Literacy Centers, & Instructional Time

Another finding in this study is that there are differing approaches to instructional practices for reading in Grades K-3 at each school. Teachers at ARC Elementary meet with small groups of students for explicit differentiated instruction during the literacy block, as well as an additional forty minutes during a supplemental reading time. This small group instruction during the literacy block occurs with groups of three to four students during the literacy center time.

On the contrary, teachers at Bohman Elementary do not meet with small groups of students during their literacy block. The teachers do not implement literacy centers as part of their reading instruction. Instead, they implement a traditional approach to learning using the basal text and whole group instruction as their primary means of instructional practice. However, they do meet with small groups of students during a

thirty minute block that occurs at a different time of day where they work with students in tiers one, two, and three where the instruction focuses on the students' needs.

Literature supports that small group instruction is effective because the teaching is focused on precisely what the student needs to learn to move forward (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Tomlinson (2003) centered her instructional theory on the construct of responsive teaching, which asks teachers to tailor their reading instruction to the individual performance level of every student. Centers allow students the opportunity to work independently while the teacher addresses the individual needs of those students who benefit from additional help in a small group setting. Centers offer a chance to reach the needs of diverse learners relative to readiness, interest, and learning style by including differentiating strategies (Tomlinson, 2001).

The literature reviewed in this study indicated that the most successful school districts spent a longer amount of time in daily reading instruction. Carnahan & Levesque (2005) suggested that schools should provide ninety minutes of protected instructional time and student intervention with supplemental reading. Observational data for this study indicated that the implementation of explicit and differentiated small group instruction practices was a consistent part of the instructional reading lessons at ARC Elementary. Such practices were implemented not only during the uninterrupted literacy block but also during an additional forty minute supplemental reading time every day. However, at Bohman Elementary, explicit and differentiated small group instruction only took place during the thirty minutes of supplemental reading time that occurred outside the literacy block.

Implications for Practice

Research findings from this study supported many of the same characteristics identified as important by previous studies of factors that affect student achievement: teacher morale (Miller, 1981; Andrews, 1985; Lumsden, 1998; Tanriogen & Ermec, 2008), leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Kearns & Harvey, 2001; Walters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004), professional development (Louis & Marks, 1998; Garet et al., 2001; Yoon et al., 2008), and instructional practices (Vaughn, Klinger, & Hughes, 2000; Carnahan & Levesque, 2005; Docstader, Rule, & Stewart, 2006; Clark, Pearson, Taylor, & Walpole, 2007). In regard to these factors, this case study adds credence to the findings from previous research that these are factors to be considered for influencing student achievement in reading in rural Appalachian schools as well.

The results from this qualitative study of high and low performing elementary rural Appalachia schools point to recommendations for practice to improve student achievement in reading.

Recommendations

1. Maintain high teacher morale and a positive school culture. District administrators should hire school principals who believe in developing positive relationships with teachers in an effort to increase teacher morale and thus, promote schools that have a positive culture and climate.

2. Provide supportive leadership that includes personal relationships. District administrators should offer training in building relationships between teachers and administrators in order to increase their collaborative efforts to improving student reading achievement. Also, district administrators should provide

opportunities for a discussion panel with ARC Elementary teachers to discuss the supportive leadership and instructional practices they deem most valuable in terms of student reading achievement.

3. Low performing schools should provide opportunities for other principals to observe the principal at ARC Elementary. Principals from these schools should utilize this opportunity to identify the best practices and support of the principal's implementation of administrative support and instructional strategies.

4. Districts should support professional development opportunities that are led by the principal at ARC Elementary for other school principals in relation to the support and instructional strategies implemented at ARC Elementary.

5. The district and school should offer professional development trainings that include active participation and are relevant to the success of student achievement in reading. Professional development opportunities need to be differentiated to meet the learning needs of all teachers. This will provide a model of the way they should teach to the learning needs of all the individual students in their classrooms.

6. The district and school should offer job-embedded professional development opportunities that include collegial walk-throughs or instructional rounds to help develop an understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like. These could take place during teachers' planning times.

7. Teachers should implement quality instructional practices that incorporate explicit and differentiated small group instruction, literacy centers, and a

generous amount of instructional time focused on reading. Schools should implement core, supplemental, and intervention programs that work together to support each other and student learning. This could be particularly helpful to low-performing schools. Schools should ensure adequate, prioritized, and protected time for reading by specifying that there be at least ninety minutes of uninterrupted literacy instruction. Principals should guide teachers to the implementation of effective, thoughtful, and creative use of grouping practices to increase the effectiveness of reading instruction and monitor such practices through follow-up observations.

Implications for Policy

Most principals would agree that student achievement is the main goal of any school. While some schools experience success meeting state mandated scores, others continue to struggle meeting AYP. This study was conducted to try to develop an understanding of what policies and practices characterize successful schools in order to suggest recommendations that could be replicated in similarly situated schools with historically low performance.

The first implication for policy recommendation would be that job-embedded professional development should count as part of the mandated twenty-four hours of professional development required for teachers. Follow-up to professional development which occurs in the classroom would ensure the transfer of instructional change more than requiring teachers to attend professional development trainings that are not connected to classroom practice. Secondly, districts should adopt a mentoring or socialization program for new teachers to ensure that they are informed and receive past

professional development trainings that pertain to instructional strategies that have been previously implemented at their school. Finally, districts should implement a policy for an uninterrupted literacy block of at least ninety minutes for all elementary schools.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this qualitative comparative case study offer particular insight into the types of leadership support and instructional strategies that contribute to student reading achievement in grades K-3 at two elementary schools in rural Appalachia. Since there is limited research on this topic, the opportunity for further exploration of this topic has strong merit. This study could be replicated in other schools to inform stakeholders regarding factors that increase student reading achievement.

Further research should be done in this area to determine whether or not it would be beneficial for low performing schools to implement specific instructional methods. Further research could also be done comparing other schools which meet AYP and those which consistently fail to meet the standards to determine whether instructional methods and leadership support are different. Comparing other schools in this area could identify different methods and trends in student reading achievement.

Another possible area for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study of low and high performing schools over time. It would be important to assess the sustained impact that leadership support and the implementation of specific instructional practices such as explicit and differentiated small group instruction have on reading achievement over a given period of time. Principals could document all instructional changes over an extended time while tracking student achievement to determine which strategies are most effective for growth in student reading achievement. Further studies

could include comparing urban schools to rural schools in order to compare and contrast the factors affecting reading achievement. Finally, research linking specific teachers in a school to their student's achievement as opposed to an index score based on all teachers, and research quantifying variables in a model (i.e., morale or professional development) to see which ones are the most powerful predictors of student achievement should be conducted.

Summary and Reflections

This study examined reading achievement in one high performing and one low performing elementary rural Appalachia school. The central question that drove this research was: What factors differ in rural Appalachian elementary schools that are high and low-achieving in reading? It examined critical factors that may attribute to student achievement in rural Appalachia such as: teacher morale, leadership, professional development, data-based decision making, and effective instructional strategies in the classroom. Results from this study led to the conclusion that high teacher morale, teacher efficacy, supportive leadership, meaningful professional development, and specific instructional strategies are all factors that affect student achievement in reading.

It was interesting to see the completely different cultures that existed between the two schools that were compared in this study. Despite the fact that these schools had similar demographics and were both situated in rural Appalachia, there were startling significant differences that existed between them in relation to leadership and instructional practices. Even though there were significant differences between these two schools, the common desire for students to be successful was still evident for teachers and principals at both sites. However, one school clearly implemented strategies to

achieve this desire, the other clearly did not. While there is no one size fits all approach to teaching reading, this study revealed that there are research based instructional practices that need to be considered and implemented. It is the duty of every educator to seek out the research in these areas and implement those practices that will increase achievement in reading. While this researcher remains open to other factors that may affect reading achievement, as a result of this study, it is clear that differentiated and explicit small group instruction and supportive leadership that includes genuine relationships with teachers are critical factors for improving student reading achievement in rural Appalachian schools.

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the California Reading Association, San Diego, CA.

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APPENDIX A:

OBSERVATION FORM FOR WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION

Whole Group Instruction
Progressing – X
Not seen at time of observation – Leave blank
Not applicable – NA

Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

1.	Date:		
	Core materials provide basis for instruction		
	Physical arrangement of the room facilitates student movement/learning		
	Review of previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge		
	Direct instruction of skills/strategies		
	Adjusts and extends instruction through scaffolding		
	Use of concrete materials (text, word cards, magnetic letter, etc.)		
	Opportunities for students to practice skills/strategies		
	Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions		
	Effective pacing of instruction to include essential elements of reading instructions		
	Monitor students' understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback		
	Variety of student movement (i.e.. floor, desk/tables, fine/gross motor)		
	Assessment of students knowledge of skills/strategies		

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX B:

OBSERVATION FORM FOR SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Small group instruction
Progressing – X
Not seen at time of observation – Leave blank
Not applicable – NA

Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

2.		Date:		
	Core/Supplemental materials provide basis for instruction			
	Students' text is at their instructional level			
	Before Reading: Provides a thorough book introduction			
	Before Reading: Connections made to previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge			
	Before Reading: Review of needed vocabulary			
	Before Reading: Mini-lesson of skill/strategy			
	During Reading: Various reading formats (shared, partner, choral, etc…)			
	During Reading: Students practice fix-up strategies			
	During Reading: Use of various levels of questions			
	During Reading: Monitor students' understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback			
	During Reading: Apply/practice the skill/strategy taught during mini-lesson			
	After Reading: Clarify/Summarize text			
	After Reading: Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions			
	After Reading: Summary of lesson			
	After Reading: Students given opportunity to practice fluency			
	Transition provided for next activity			

Additional comments

APPENDIX C:

OBSERVATION FORM FOR LITERACY CENTERS

Literacy Centers
Progressing – X
Not seen at time of observation – Leave blank
Not applicable – NA

Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

3.	Date:		
	Centers focus on the five essential elements of reading.		
	Organizational pattern of centers is evident (Work Board, Center Chart, etc…).		
	Materials are organized and accessible to students.		
	Centers have clear objectives.		
	Students can articulate center objectives.		
	Centers include an assessment component (i.e. Literacy Center-students respond to text using story elements graphic organizer).		
	Student movement between centers is organized.		
	Help system for students is evident.		
	Specific location for completed student work (pocket folder, hanging folder, clipboard, etc…).		
	Students' behavior follows classroom rules.		

Additional comments:

APPENDIX D:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. How many years in your current position?

3. How would you describe your ties to this community?

4. What factors do you feel affect student's reading achievement at your school?

5. Tell me about some of the instructional practices or activities that you use in reading.

6. What is it like working with your principal?

7. What is or was it like working with your reading coach?

8. Describe how the faculty works together at your school.

9. How many years were you a part of Reading First?

10. Describe your literacy instruction before Reading First.

11. Describe the types of PD you have received focusing on literacy instruction.

12. How did your teaching methods change (if at all) in literacy since Reading Firt?

    a. Whole group   b. Small group   c. Centers

13. Describe how Reading First changed the way you interact with other teachers for

    literacy (if at all).

14. Describe how your school meets the needs of students in Tiers 2 and 3.

15. What do you think the key factor has been in the success of your scores in K-3?

16. How often is the principal in your classroom observing the literacy block?

17. In what ways do you feel supported by your principal?

18. Do you have a Reading/Literacy Coach in your building?

19. How often is the coach in your classroom?

20. In what ways does your coach support you?

21. How would you describe the morale of the building?

22. Describe ways the school celebrates success and/or boosts morale.

APPENDIX E:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

Interview Questions for Principals

1. What factors influenced the level of reading achievement at this school?

2. What one thing do you believe to be most influential in the academic success at this school?

3. Tell me about some of the challenges that you face working with students or teachers at this school?

4. Describe some of your school's instructional practices that influence reading achievement.

5. What support do students get that helps with their academic achievement?

6. If I were to ask students what their principal is like, what do you think they would say? (Ex. discipline, expectations, interaction with them, etc)

7. If I were to ask teachers what role you played in influencing reading achievement levels, what would they say?

8. What do you do to promote high reading achievement?

APPENDIX F:

FINDINGS FOR WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION

Whole Group Instruction
Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4
Core materials provide basis for instruction				
Physical arrangement of the room facilitates student movement/learning				
Materials organized and available to facilitate appropriate pacing of the lesson.				
Review of previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge				
Direct instruction of skills/strategies				
Adjusts and extends instruction through scaffolding				
Use of concrete materials (text, word cards, magnetic letter, etc.)				
Opportunities for students to practice skills/strategies				
Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions				
Effective pacing of instruction to:				
Maintain student engagement				
Complete essential elements of the lesson				
Monitor students' understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback				
Variety of student movement (i.e.. floor, desk/tables, fine/gross motor)				
Assessment of students knowledge of skills/strategies				

APPENDIX G:

FINDINGS FOR SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Small Group Instruction
Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4
Core/Supplemental materials provide basis for instruction				
Students' text is at their instructional level				
Before Reading: Provides a thorough book introduction				
Before Reading: Connections made to previous lesson(s)/activates prior knowledge				
Before Reading: Review of needed vocabulary				
Before Reading: Mini-lesson of skill/strategy				
During Reading: Various reading formats (shared, partner, choral, etc…)				
During Reading: Students practice fix-up strategies				
During Reading: Use of various levels of questions				
During Reading: Apply/practice the skill/strategy taught during mini-lesson				
After Reading: Clarify/Summarize text				
After Reading: Opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions				
After Reading: Summary of lesson				
After Reading: Students given opportunity to practice fluency				
Transition provided for next activity				

APPENDIX H:

FINDINGS FOR LITERACY CENTERS

Literacy Centers
Components observed:
Phonemic Awareness __ Phonics __ Comprehension __ Vocabulary __ Fluency __

Participants	T1	T2	T3	T4
Centers focus on the five essential elements of reading.				
Organizational pattern of centers is evident (Work Board, Center Chart, etc…)				
Materials are organized and accessible to students.				
Centers have clear objectives.				
Students can articulate center objectives.				
Centers include an assessment component (i.e. Literacy Center-students respond to text using story elements graphic organizer).				
Student movement between centers is organized.				
Help system for students is evident.				
Specific location for completed student work (pocket folder, hanging folder, clipboard, etc…).				
Students' behavior follows classroom rules.				

APPENDIX I:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT/ASSENT FORM
Principal and Teacher Consent to Participate in the
Research Study
FACTORS AFFECTING READING ACHIEVEMENT IN RURAL ELEMENTARY
APPALACHIAN SCHOOLS

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about factors affecting reading achievement in rural elementary Appalachian schools. You are being invited to take part in this research study because your elementary school is located in an Appalachian county in Kentucky, has at least 50% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, and were a recipient of the Reading First grant.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
The person in charge of this study is Jennifer R. Chambers, a student at Eastern Kentucky University. She is being guided in this research by her advisors Dr. Charles Hausman and Dr. James Rinehart in the Department of Educational and Leadership Studies at Eastern Kentucky University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this study is to describe and identify differences in factors affecting students' reading achievement in elementary rural Appalachian schools. In particular, this qualitative comparative case study will determine which instructional reading strategies seem most effective, as well as other influences that appear to be critical factors, implemented by school districts in the rural Appalachia area with similar student demographics and economic disadvantages.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE?
The research procedures will be conducted at elementary rural Appalachian schools.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
The researcher will conduct interviews with the principal, teachers who agree to participate in the study, and reading coach if available. The interviews will be tape-recorded. You may see a typed copy of the interview notes and annotate them. Also, each teacher will be observed in the classroom for an entire reading class period. The purpose of observations will be to gather information about instructional strategies and interactions with students in the classroom setting.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study unless you decide for personal reasons that you do not wish to participate.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. I cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any personal benefits from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic. Also, if we can develop an understanding of what policies and practices characterize these schools, it might suggest recommendations for other similarly situated schools.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?
If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?
Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. The results of this study may be published; however, I will keep your name and other identifying information private. As a researcher, I will make every effort to prevent anyone other than me from knowing that you gave me information or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from the information you give, and this information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or a password protected computer. This information that you will give will be identified only with a pseudonym, and the identifying pseudonym will be known only to the researcher.
I will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. The individual conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you. At any time that you feel that you no longer want to participate in the study, notify the principal investigator at any time.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact Jennifer R. Chambers, the principal investigator, at (859) 583-4250.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?
You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your condition or influence your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study:

_____

Date:

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study:

_____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent:

_____

425 OLD MITCHELLSBURG ROAD • PARKSVILLE, KY 40464
PHONE (859) 583-4250 • E-MAIL jennrc@kywimax.com

Jennifer Chambers
Curriculum Vita

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Eastern Kentucky University   *Richmond, KY*
  Degree   Educational Doctorate, Candidate
          ABD
          Expected Graduation Date – May 2012

  Dissertation
  Topic   "A Comparative Case Study of Factors Distinguishing
          Between High and Low-Performance on Reading
          Achievement in Elementary Rural Appalachian Schools"

  Committee
  Members   Dr. Charles Hausman, Dr. Jack Herlihy,
          Dr. Roger Cleveland, and Dr. Karen Hatfield

Eastern Kentucky University   *Richmond, KY*
  Certification Rank One
  Specialization Elementary Education
          May 2007

Eastern Kentucky University   *Richmond, KY*
  Degree   Master of Arts in Education
  Specialization Reading/Writing Endorsement
          June 2001

Eastern Kentucky University   *Richmond, KY*
  Degree   Bachelor of Science
  Certification Elementary Education (K-4)
          May 1997

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Teacher   2010 – Present
Mercer County Elementary, 3rd grade   *Harrodsburg, KY*

Assume all responsibilities of a regular classroom teacher including: professional development, communication with parents, assessment of students, staff meetings, and committee meetings. Collaborate with cooperating teachers to design curriculum, lesson plans, and assessments. Self-directed and enthusiastic with a passionate

commitment to student development and the learning experience. Skilled in designing challenging, enriching and innovative activities that address the diverse interests and needs of students. Possesses outstanding communication skills, presents information in a variety of ways emphasizing relevance of class material to the world beyond the classroom. Active team member who effectively collaborates with all levels of staff members. Experience in: curriculum design and development, cooperative learning, interactive learning, student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, student motivation, classroom management, curriculum map development, student assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, and aligning core content with new SB1 standards.

Teacher   1997-2010
Evan Harlow Elementary   *Harrodsburg, KY*
Primary Kindergarten, 1ˢᵗ, and 3ʳᵈ grade

Part-time Adjunct Instructor   2004-Present
Eastern Kentucky University   *Richmond and*
Department of English   *Danville campus*

P-12 LEADERSHIP

English/Language Arts Teacher Leadership Network Representative
School-Based Decision-Making Council member (2 years)
E-Walk Development and Implementation Team
School Climate and Professional Development
Portfolio Scoring Team
Rural Leadership Academy presented by Ohio University in Ironton, OH

PUBLICATIONS

Cleveland, R., **Chambers, J.**, Mainous, C., Powell, N., Skepple, R., Tyler, T., Wood, A. (2011). School culture, equity, and student academic performance in a rural Appalachian school. *Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning, 9*, 35-42.

JURIED RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Chambers, J. and Mainous, C. (2011). *Getting to Know Yourself as a Leader: An Interactive Session.* Symposium presented at the annual Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education State Conference, Louisville, KY.

Wood, A. and **Chambers, J.** (2011). *Implementing Lab Model Classrooms as a Viable Approachto Job Embedded Professional Development: A Teachers Perspective.* Paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Annual Meeting, Portland, OR.

Cleveland, R., Wood, A., and **Chambers, J.** (2010). *Examining School Culture in a Rural Appalachian School: A qualitative investigation to determine if there is a correlation between school culture and student achievement.* Paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

Johnson, J., and **Chambers, J.** (2010). *The Use of the Four Day School Week as an Alternative Schedule in Three Western States: A Descriptive and Investigative Study.* Paper presented at the National Association of Secondary School Principals Annual Meeting, Phoenix, AZ.

Johnson, J., Madden, K., and **Chambers, J.** (2009). *In Crisis no more!: An investigation of one highly successful Reading First school in Appalachia.* Paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration/American Association of School Administrators Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.

Chambers, J., Madden, K., and Johnson, J. (2008). *Narrowing the gaps: Student performance outcomes in Reading First schools in Kentucky.* Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Knoxville, TN.

Abney, K., Johnson, J., and **Chambers, J.** (2008). A *multi-year analysis of literacy scores among Reading First schools in Kentucky.* Paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA,

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Chambers, J. and Madden, K. (2010). *A Look Back at Reading First in Kentucky.* Final meeting of Kentucky Reading First Team, Lexington, KY.

ACADEMIC HONORS AND ORGANIZATIONS
Alpha Delta Kappa Education Honor Society

References Available Upon Request