Investigating the effectiveness of the intervention reading models of two teachers in grades K-2

Rachel A. Williams
Clark Atlanta University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Recommended Citation
INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERVENTION
READING MODELS OF TWO TEACHERS IN GRADES K-2

Advisor: Dr. Moses Norman
Dissertation dated May 2013

This study examines the effectiveness of two reading interventionists and their teaching methodologies with students in grades K-2. The two interventionists were selected because they are the two teachers responsible for reading intervention in the primary grades. The students were selected because they are being served by the interventionists and they are performing below proficient in reading.

Many students come into Title I schools underperforming for a variety of reasons. These include a lack of literacy resources in their homes and also a lack of outside experiences. Many parents in this school setting are working poor. They hold jobs, but do not have a much time to spend with their child due to making ends meet financially.

A case study approach was used to gather data. The researcher conducted three observations on each teacher for a total of six observations. All three grades levels (K-2) were observed in a pull out setting. The observer utilized an observation instrument and
also an interview protocol to interview both teachers. Additionally, student achievement was analyzed using DIBELS Reading 3D data. The data was collected at the beginning of the year and the end of the year and compared to measure student reading growth.

The researcher found that both teachers regardless of age, race, and experience were effective at raising student achievement with at risk students. There were no significant differences in the achievement between males and females, between students who received free and reduced lunch and those who did not, or among ethnicities. First grade students however made significantly higher gains than the other two grade levels in this study. Both teachers showed 100% growth according to Reading 3D scores. Additionally, they agreed that given autonomy and time to plan and build trust with regular education teachers they were more successful. They believe in the importance of accountability and providing supports to underachieving students.

The conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that various teaching methodologies which include differentiation, a focus on the big five components of reading, and small teacher to student ratios were successful. Strong connections with students were seen from each teacher as they both knew their children and their strengths and weaknesses. This research suggests that given full autonomy to deliver instruction without a scripted program, both teachers were highly effective. Districts should use teachers, such as the ones in this study, to conduct professional development trainings on best practices in literacy. Leaders are encouraged to give teachers more autonomy in their classrooms. Intervention should be considered in higher grade levels to bridge gaps in reading.
INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERVENTION
READING MODELS OF TWO TEACHERS IN GRADES K-2

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

RACHEL A. WILLIAMS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to Dr. Moses Norman. You guided me throughout the years and I thank you for being my chairperson. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Barbara Hill and Dr. Ward Groves for their feedback and expertise. Ms. Betty Cooke, you kept me on track with your positive spirit and kind words. You are an asset to the Leadership Department at Clark Atlanta University.

I would like to thank my school staff and colleagues in Georgia and North Carolina. Two teachers specifically allowed me to fully observe their teaching practices and it is because of them I was able to complete my dissertation on a topic I am passionate about, literacy.

To my mom, Kay McClure, you taught me to never give up even when it seemed impossible. To my stepfather, Donald McClure, my father, Donald Williams and my sister Lee Jenkins thank you for your encouraging words along the way. I could not have survived this process without your prayers and commitment towards my education.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Richard Reid. You were my immediate supervisor for six years. I thank you for teaching me everything I know about leadership while encouraging me to stay true to my beliefs. I pray for your continued strength as you fight your battle with cancer. It is because of you I have obtained my doctoral degree and I am competent public school leader. You are and will always be my inspiration.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|ACKNOWLEDGMENTS| ii |
|LIST OF FIGURES| v |
|LIST OF TABLES| vi |

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION
- Background of the Problem: 2
- Statement of the Problem: 8
- Purpose of the Study: 9
- Research Questions: 10
- Significance of the Study: 10

### II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
- Background on Reading: 13
- Teaching Reading to All Children: 18
- Effective Reading Programs: 19
- Socioeconomic Factors in Learning to Read: 23
- Teacher Effectiveness: 24
- Programs for Students: 28

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
- Theories: 31
- Definition of Dependent and Independent Variables: 32
- Definition of Terms: 33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship among Variables</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Subjects</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Setting</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection Procedures</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants/Location of the Research</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Procedures</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Data Analysis Methods</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. RESULTS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive of the Sample</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of the Quantitative Research Questions</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Observations</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the Findings</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Interview Protocol</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Classroom Observation Form</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES ................................................. 90
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Diagram of Research Focus</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Diagram of Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Triangulation of Data Sources</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE PAGE

1. Percentage of Students at or Above Grade Level Spring 2011 in Reading at the Research School .......................... 5

2. Percentage of Students (Grades 3-5) at or Above Grade Level Spring 2009-2011 in Reading at the Research School ........................................ 42

3. Description of the Sample ........................................................................ 49

4. Average Reading Gains of Students from the Beginning to the Middle of the Year by Teacher and Demographic Characteristic .................................................. 50

5. Results of $t$ Tests Comparing Reading Gains Between Genders and Student Eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch Program ........................................ 52

6. Results of Analyses of Variance Comparing Reading Gains Among Grades and Ethnicities ........................................................................ 53
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Under the federal 2001 No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), all students are required to score proficient at grade level in reading on state tests by 2014. NCLB also requires schools that receive Title 1 funding, additional funds designated to support low-income students, meet annual yearly progress (AYP) academic achievement goals for their particular student populations and subgroups. West, Denton, and Germino-Hausken (2000) mentioned that according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 37% of the nation's fourth graders do not achieve a basic level of achievement in reading. Subgroups such as English-language learners, low-income families, and minorities have an even greater incidence of failure. Studies have shown that children in the primary grades (kindergarten and first) have various ability levels of success with precursor skills which provide the foundation for literacy skills that are attained in later grades (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000).

In elementary schools across the nation, educators are faced with the challenge of building proficient readers. During the educational process, learning to read might be one of the most important life-skill concepts for a child. As children progress through school, learning to read text fluently with comprehension can become a challenge. Throughout the years, specially designed reading programs have evolved to meet the needs of the ever-changing student population.
Background of the Problem

In this study, the researcher focused on the two reading models designed specifically to target below-proficient readers in kindergarten through second grade in one elementary school. The study focused on word recognition and comprehension skills, two key areas of reading. Word recognition is "the ability to recognize words quickly and with a minimal analysis by sight" (Rasinski & Padak, 2008, p. 7). Word recognition goes hand in hand with fluency. Students who can easily recognize words with meaningful understanding are described as fluent readers. When students are exposed to a wide range of words in context, their vocabulary begins to grow. According to Beers (2003), reading comprehension is:

Both a product and a process, something that requires purposeful, strategic effort on the reader's part-anticipating the direction of the text (predicting), seeing the action of the text (visualizing), contemplating and then correcting whatever confusions we encounter (clarifying), connecting what's in the test to what's in our mind to make an educated guess about what's going on (inferencing). (pp. 45-46)

Comprehension also relates to a reader's level of understanding regarding the text. When children read a text and engage with it, they are able to construct meaning from the printed material. When students read words on a page, they interact with them and the words may trigger knowledge of thought and ideas that might pertain to the texts or other life-related experiences. This illustrates what happens when children are able to make connections with what they have read. Educators call these (a) text-to-text connections.
(when children make a connection between two books), (b) text-to-self (when children make a connection between the book and their own personal lives), and finally (c) text-to-world (when children make a connection with the book to something in the outside world).

**History of Reading Programs**

During the 18th and 19th centuries, core-reading programs were used to reflect the political and social climate of the times. In the early 1900s, reading took a more scientifically-based approach. A systematic approach was used, moving away from structured lessons of the earlier period. From 1930–1965, William Gray became a dominant reading expert, developing books we know and remember. Over 200 million Americans learned to read using the *Dick and Jane* series developed by Gray. Publisher Scott Foresman developed one of the first basal approaches to reading using the *Sally, Dick, and Jane* series. In the 1970s, Ginn and Company produced two core reading programs, *Reading 360* and *Reading 720* (Dewitz, Leahy, Jones, & Sullivan, 2010). These programs were developed to ensure consistency and support teachers who did not fully understand how to teach reading.

Since the start of the 21st century, there is a strong emphasis on the core-reading programs specifically as they relate to phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and phonemic awareness. Since the introduction of NLCB, basal readers are now referred to as core-reading programs. Research-based reading programs stress that the content has
been proven and there is evidence that it has been successful (Dewitz, Leahy, Jones, & Sullivan, 2010).

**Balanced Literacy at the School of Interest**

The school where this research was conducted takes a balanced literacy approach to reading. The goal of the balanced literacy approach is for children to discover that in order to read one must be able to write and in order to write one must be able to read. The balance literacy approach focuses on reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening skills. During instruction, teachers might be seen engaging students through guided reading/writing lessons, as well as shared and interactive reading/writing lessons. Oral reading and teacher modeling are also important concepts used in the balanced literacy approach.

Table 1 contains data providing a description of reading performance in spring 2011 at the school participating in this study. Based on the data it is evident there is a strong need for early intervention as the number of proficient students drops drastically in Grade 2. This is because in second grade students have to comprehend texts and give written responses for the first time on the reading benchmark assessment. This is the reason that the two reading interventionists in this study were placed in the second grade.

As a means of addressing the needs of the under-achieving students, an intervention reading program using the balanced literacy approach was implemented.
Table 1

Percentage of Students At or Above Grade Level Spring 2011 in Reading at the Research School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First grade</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second grade</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third grade</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth grade</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specialized reading interventionists provide additional instructional support time to targeted students who are not performing at grade-level expectations. The interventionist teachers assist students in obtaining basic reading skills to reach grade level proficiency as quickly as possible.

As students reach grade-level expectations, they are immediately exited out of the program and a newly-identified student is added to the interventionist’s caseload. It is the goal of the program that groups become fluent readers. Balanced literacy is the schoolwide literacy model, which means reading and writing go hand in hand. In the regular education classroom, teachers focus on the five components of reading: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency. When students are working with interventionists in a pull-out model they have the same focus; however,
it becomes more intensive because of the small class size and slower instructional pace. The interventionist is able to provide direct explicit teaching.

The two teachers in this study work strictly as reading interventionists. They are experienced educators, well grounded in teaching reading. One teacher has been a reading interventionist for several years. The other teacher was selected to become an interventionist 2 years ago by the principal, based on her performance on both formal and informal observational instruments. Both teachers have received above average ratings on past performance evaluations. The teachers have been given autonomy by the school administration to teach the way they know each child will learn best. They usually teach small groups with an average of six students for approximately 45-60 minutes daily.

These reading interventionists are not restricted by a particular program or reform model. Because they do not follow a prescribed program, they use multiple methods of engaging children and teaching reading. Both teachers make use of the school's leveled reading book room and expose children to fiction and nonfiction texts written by Rigby or Scholastic. Vocabulary is important and they review the alphabet while incorporating phonics and phonemic awareness.

The reading interventionists have proven their strategies are successful because many of their students are showing reading gains as seen in monthly progress monitoring data. The benchmark test used is the online Reading 3-D assessment. Both interventionists focus on lesson delivery, access to technology, and relationships with students. Their small tutorial rooms have limited technology but nonetheless, there are ways to incorporate this tool into the lessons. The intervention teachers have access to
netbooks, document cameras, flip cams, CDs, laptops, and projectors. They do not have access, like classroom teachers, to a Promethean system due to their limited room size and available space.

Students in this school are identified to receive services by interventionists at the beginning of the year during the month of August. Some enter behind in reading and lack readiness skills. Students are identified for reading intervention services during kindergarten assessment days before their first full day of school. During this time, kindergarten teachers informally assess reading readiness skills such as letter identification, letter sounds, and concepts of print. This assessment was created by a team of kindergarten teachers.

Data from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were used to identify students in Grades 1 and 2. These teachers use data from DIBELS and Reading 3-D assessments completed during the previous academic year. Students who are not meeting grade-level expectations are identified to receive supports. These supports might include time with a reading interventionist or more opportunities for small-group differentiated instruction in the regular education classroom. Individual teacher’s instructional methodologies may determine effectiveness.

Intervention programs provide explicit differentiated instruction to students in a smaller setting at the elementary school where this research was conducted. Students who receive intervention services in kindergarten for reading might continue to receive services continuously until they reach grade level or until they become proficient and exit out of the program. Most students (small groups of approximately six) are served in 45-
60 minute instructional segments. All students considered in this research study were being taught using the pull-out model. The intervention reading teacher pulls selected students from their regular homeroom class in order to provide an additional instructional period for reading.

The reading interventionists design lesson plans with student needs and outcomes in mind. Informal and formal observations reveal that both teachers have a positive impact on students. Personal relationships are evident and it is clear student opinions are valued. Students feel comfortable to share their ideas. Both teachers smile, laugh, and have a positive friendly demeanor with the students. The classroom is inclusive. Because of the nurturing support and high expectations, combined with student boundaries, children seem to enjoy intervention time. During the delivery of lessons, both teachers assess student progress through classroom observations and make notations related to their progress. Reading is the instructional foundation in the elementary setting; it is imperative students are given the proper supports to become successful and confident readers. By providing teachers with the proper staff development, giving parents strategies they can use at home, putting books in the hands of children, and building excitement and a love for reading, students will become more successful in the years to come.

**Statement of the Problem**

Students' lack of exposure to experiences and books can lead to them being underperformers in reading. In the Title 1 school where this research was conducted, many families are working poor. This means one or both parents in the homework at
more than one job in order to make ends meet. Some of the parents are often not able to read and spend a great deal of time on homework assignments with their children. This research is being conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of the two interventionists while teaching intervention reading in Grades K–2 at a Title 1 elementary school. School administrators all over the state of North Carolina, where this research is taking place, are concerned with funding cuts in public education, especially as teacher allotments come out each year. These cuts can severely affect intervention teachers who work with underperforming students typically outside of their educational setting because they are defined as an extra resource. Obviously funding for regular classroom teachers have to be considered firsts as schools must follow class size guidelines and regulations.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the intervention reading models of two teachers in Grades K–2. The researcher gained insight into the reading intervention to determine if the instructional strategies used by both teachers impact student achievement. This study is beneficial to educational leaders because it can shed light on multiple issues. First, should teachers be given autonomy to teach the way they know is best. This research study sought to determine the effectiveness of two reading interventionists. The leader of the school may select these teachers to be models for best practices in future professional development sessions if their methods are shown to be effective. If not, the leader may recommend program changes and may decide to
re-assign teaching positions. This study has the potential to affect instructional leadership program planning.

**Research Questions**

The evaluation research project focused on the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the implementation of various teacher methodologies affect student achievement?

RQ2: How do the two reading interventionists describe their instructional practice?

RQ3: How do the reading interventionists incorporate the big five components (comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary) of reading into their planning and daily lessons?

RQ4: Which NCLB subgroups show growth between benchmark periods?

**Significance of the Study**

Based on the results of this study, recommendations could be given to teachers and administrators to consider for further implementation as well as to serve as a guide for intervention reading schoolwide improvement. This research may require administrators to consider using new scripted programs or approaches to working with students who are performing below grade level. This study could shed light on best practices being used at the school where the research was conducted. The teachers in the study might become models for the district’s talent effectiveness initiative.
The findings of this research could directly affect possible instructional program changes. Intervention reading provides additional tiered support for students who are performing below grade level. Remediation and differentiation are two key concepts used each day with the students. In North Carolina, when students enter Grades 3–5 they are expected to take and score proficiently on the end-of-grade (EOG) tests in reading and math and fifth grade includes an additional subject, science. EOG tests were adopted by the North Carolina Board of Education. They measure goals and objectives taught in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Students who do not meet state requirements are allowed to retake the test prior to the end of the school year.

The goal of this research is to examine the effectiveness of teacher methodologies used by two reading interventionists in Grades K–2. By examining effectiveness, the aim of the study was to ensure more students are reaching grade-level proficiency before they enter third grade and are faced with formative EOG tests.

The findings of this study could be used to determine best practices in order to be a model for the district in reading. Student data will be examined to determine achievement on DIBELS and Reading 3-D assessments. Based on achievement data, methodologies could be shared with local and district personnel in order to demonstrate exemplary teaching with underperforming students.

District and building level leaders could benefit from this study by using it as a model for the teaching of reading intervention. Interventionists are key instructional teachers in Title I schools, therefore it might be possible for policy makers to consider funding more of these specific positions when creating state budgets. Institutions of
higher education could benefit from this study by understanding the significance of reading instruction at the college level. Education departments in colleges in universities need to focus on the importance of reading pedagogy in their teacher education programs. K-12 teachers should come out of college with a strong knowledge of how to teach and integrate reading in all content areas with a focus on the big five components of reading.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Children who transition from elementary schools to middle schools reading on grade level are more likely to be successful in school and move on to graduate in the 12-year time span. The literature review was conducted to gather more information about reading and teacher effectiveness. This literature review is divided into sections that include background information on reading, socioeconomics, and teacher effectiveness.

Background on Reading

According to Pikulski (1994), evidence suggests that reading problems might be preventable for the majority of students if they are given proper support in the form of early intervention reading rather than trying to correct the problem later. Scarborough (as cited in Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2009) reported that 5% to 10% of children who read satisfactorily in early grades struggle less later on in other grades. Data continue to show that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, regardless of race, continue to experience difficulties in reading. According to Luftig (2003), early intervention in the elementary setting in vital in decreasing the effects of poverty on reading achievement. According to the Florida Center for Reading Research's web page (2009):
When children come to school, they are very diverse in both their skills and preparation for learning to read. Students whose home backgrounds do not prepare them well for learning to read need more intensive instruction to make up for their lack of preparation and knowledge. Students with low ability in certain language domains require more intensive instruction because they learn critical reading skills more slowly than other students. The range of instructional opportunities (instructional intensity and power) must match the range of diversity among students, or many students will be left behind. (para. 2)

Tomlinson (2009) believed that children come into schools with unique backgrounds. Students have varying degrees of prior knowledge and readiness to learn, different life experiences, cultural orientations, languages, interests, and preferences for how they learn best, and different feelings about themselves as learners and about school. Teachers who differentiate instruction are mindful of the varied learning needs of their students and plan instruction accordingly. Tomlinson also believed that differentiated instruction is a way of teaching that respects the different learning needs of students and expects all students to experience success as learners. Learning activities may be differentiated based on students' readiness for learning or by interests.

In a differentiated classroom, learning may look different as it is typically not simply whole-group learning. It is not uncommon to see children working in small groups (with children having varied readiness levels, interests, or learning preferences) with a peer partner, individually, and sometimes as a whole group (Tomlinson, 2009). Additionally, according to Tomlinson, the differentiated instruction model includes the
(a) high-quality curriculum, (b) continual assessment, (c) respectful tasks, (d) community building, (e) flexible grouping, and (f) teaching up.

**High-Quality Curriculum**

High-quality curriculum means beginning with the end in mind. It begins with telling students what you expect at the end of the lesson. What do we want them to *know*, *understand*, and be able to *do* (KUDs) as a result of the learning experience? Curriculum starts with identifying the essential understandings—the concepts, principles, or big ideas of the unit. Understandings help students make a connection to what they are learning and why (Tomlinson, 2009).

Knowledge includes the key facts, vocabulary, and other examples that students should know. Knowledge is easily forgotten when taught in isolation. When knowledge is linked with the Understandings, the knowledge items help students to develop understanding (Tomlinson, 2009).

The content knowledge that students should be able to demonstrate proficiency might include basic skills such as reading and math concepts, thinking skills (higher level of Bloom’s) reasoning and synthesizing, discipline-based skills such as graphing, planning skills such as goal-setting and project planning, and social skills, collaboration and leadership. High-quality curriculum engages students in exploring important ideas and develops academic rigor (Tomlinson, 2009).
Continual Assessment

Continual assessment drives instruction in differentiated classrooms. Using ungraded tests or surveys to pre-assess students’ readiness and interests before or at the start of a unit will help determine where each student is in relation to the unit KUDs and guide in identifying initial student groupings and task assignments at the beginning of the unit. During the unit, a teacher must continually assess each student’s progress toward the learning goals (KUDs). This helps to guide the teacher in planning the next instructional steps in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2009).

Formative assessments such as ticket-out-the-door cards, questions of the day, journal prompts, observation and one-on-one dialogue with students all help in identifying when there is a need to reteach select skills to raise the learning challenge higher for others. Formative assessments can be differentiated as long as there is an alignment with the units KUDs. Summative assessments can also be differentiated based on readiness, interest, and learning profile. It is critical, however, that all variations of the summative assessment allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in reference to the unit’s KUDs (Tomlinson, 2009).

Respectful Tasks

In any school, it is important that tasks students are asked to perform are done in a respectful manner and that they challenging, interesting, and worth doing. In a differentiated classroom, students often work on different tasks simultaneously. The tasks may be adjusted for different readiness levels, interests, or learning preferences, but
regardless of which task a student is assigned (or selects) it should be respectful. If it appears that some students are working on a task that is challenging, engaging, and thought provoking while others are working on filling in a simplistic worksheet, the activities are not effectively differentiated and will affect how students perceive their status in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2009).

**Building Community**

In an effectively differentiated classroom, the teacher focuses on building a learning community. Students should feel safe and supported. In a differentiated classroom, students understand the elements of differentiation and that each person has a critical role in the community. Students have input in the classroom and they feel valued (Tomlinson, 2009).

**Flexible Grouping**

An effectively differentiated classroom makes use of flexible grouping. This means that: students work in a variety of arrangements:

1. Small groups with students of similar readiness, interest, or learning profiles.
2. Small groups with students of different readiness, interest, or learning profiles.
3. With a partner of similar readiness, interest, or learning profile.
4. With a partner of different readiness, interest, or learning profile.
5. Individually.
6. Sometimes as a whole class.
Grouping assignments may be selected by the teacher, by the student, or randomly. In this way, students have the opportunity to work with other students (Tomlinson, 2009).

**Teaching Up**

Teaching up raises the *ceiling* for all students. In a differentiated classroom, all students should be working at a level of difficulty that is just above their individual comfort levels. By providing each student with reasonable levels of challenge and instructional scaffolding as needed, students learn that hard work results in growth.

**Teaching Reading to All Children**

According to the Florida Center for Reading Research's web page (2009):

Another way to provide intensive interventions for struggling readers is to work with them in small groups outside the regularly scheduled 90-minute reading block. The essential concept with this model is that the intervention instruction be well coordinated with the instruction the students are receiving in the classroom. Intervention teachers should meet regularly with the classroom teachers to discuss student progress. (para. 5)

Regular "intervention team" meetings in which classroom teachers and intervention specialists discuss student needs and progress are keys to a successful school level intervention system. The goal might be to have these meetings monthly, but they might more realistically occur four to five times a year. It is very useful for the principal to attend these meetings as often as possible.
Small-group instruction is nonnegotiable at the elementary school where this research was conducted. Small group instruction is expected daily during the Reader’s Workshop block. Teachers at this site typically group their students using results from their DIBELS assessment or Reading 3-D results. Groups commonly consist of approximately 4–7 students depending on need. In order to prepare daily activities for small group instruction, teachers have been encouraged to use resources from the Florida Center for Reading Research.

The Florida Center for Reading Research (2009) was established by Florida State University in 2002. The center’s main goal is to conduct research pertaining to reading. Specifically the Reading Research Center gathers information related to scientifically based reading research. The Florida Center for Reading Research provides detailed activities that incorporate the big five components of reading—phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. All activities are pre-created and very explicit. Teachers go online, print the activities, laminate them, and place them in big envelopes. At that time, lessons have been created that can go in reading centers inside the classroom. These activities can be done individually, with a partner, or sometimes in small groups.

**Effective Reading Programs**

Christie (2004) mentioned that federal and state policies along with NCLB have demanded reading and math success for all subgroups of children. Pikulski (1994) reported a growing body of evidence that suggests reading problems are preventable for
students who are having difficulty with reading. Early intervention is designed to prevent problems in literacy from developing instead of correcting the problem later. According to Pikulski, the following programs have been documented as effective: (a) Success for All, (b) Winston-Salem Project, (c) Boulder Program, (d) Reading Recovery, and (e) Early Intervention Reading Program. All of the programs have as their focus small-group instruction, individual intervention instruction, or a combination of the two. In these programs, at-risk students spend additional time involved in reading and writing activities.

According to Pikulski (1994), the Success for All Reading Program as well as the Winston Salem Project involved a comprehensive reorganization of classroom routines. Reading and Language Arts instruction in grades 1 and 2 were arranged into 30-minute blocks of activities that included teacher-directed group reading, writing, self-selected reading, and word learning. In schools that served a high number of at-risk students, an additional 45-minute block was included for small-group instruction. During small-group instructional time, students were encouraged to practice their reading, writing, and word learning. The Success for All Program began in schools within metropolitan cities that served children who had little experiences with literacy and came from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Pikulski, 1994).

Additionally, Pikulski’s research indicated that the Boulder Program operated primarily using Title 1 resources. In this program, paraprofessionals worked with certified teachers to reduce the teacher to student ratio to 3:1. Instruction took place daily for 20 minutes. This student ration allowed for a more individualized instructional
program. Students and teachers had close proximity, thus more active student engagement took place.

Furthermore, Pikulski (1994) explained the Early Intervention Reading Program looks at things a little differently. First and Second grade teachers work for an extra 20 minutes daily with five or six students who find reading to be more difficult. Students are allowed to read for an additional 5–10 minutes per day by reading to the teacher, a volunteer, individually, or in pairs.

The U.S. Department of Education (2003) reported that five key components have been identified as scientifically-based reading research. In order for children to learn to read well, instruction must be explicit in all five of the areas.

1. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds and phonemes in spoken word. It is when a child is able to understand that sounds of spoken language makes words.

2. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes. When reading, students use these relationships to recognize familiar words automatically. It also helps them with decoding skills.

3. Vocabulary is stored information about the pronunciation and meaning of a word necessary for communication. There are four types of vocabulary and they include: speaking, writing, reading, and listening.

4. Fluency is the ability to read text quickly and accurately. It provides a connection between word recognition and reading comprehension. When
readers are fluent, they are able to recognize and comprehend words at the same time.

5. Comprehension checks a student’s understanding of the material or text.

Purposeful steps are used to help readers make sense of texts. Students who are able to comprehend can remember key ideas in the text and they are able to share with others what they read.

According to Routman (2004), reading teachers tend to focus more on procedures rather than enjoyment and learning. They are also likely to focus on programs rather than students. Teachers have been taught to trust scientifically-based research and tend to ignore the world of the classroom that contains children with various abilities, interests, and needs. Routman believed commercial assessments have been relied on too much when in actuality classroom-based assessments are the most reliable. Teachers commonly work in isolation rather than collaborate with colleagues. Many teachers also focus on test-taking strategies rather than engaging students through the curriculum.

The International Reading Association (2006) supported a value-added and student growth system to replace the current method of measuring adequate yearly progress. Accountability should be measured through multiple measures. Reading assessments should be used to determine instructional decisions and provide evidence to outside observers about the effectiveness of the techniques. In addition to the five components of reading, engagement, motivation, writing, and oral language are essential elements that improve reading instruction. Classroom organization and differentiated instruction are also crucial. According to the International Reading Association, 6 to 12
hours of reading coursework is required and suggested in most teacher preparation programs. They also suggested that teachers of math, science, and social studies need to be equipped to deal with the reading needs in their own classes.

Long (2005) reported that educational research has become increasingly important to teachers. Decisions such as which textbooks to buy, interventions to try, or programs to use, have been increasingly based on scientifically based research. To be considered scientifically based the particular concept needs to have been studied. U.S. government agencies fund various studies.

**Socioeconomic Factors in Learning to Read**

One in every five children lives in poverty (Poverty Facts and Figures, 2011). Since 2000, this is an increase of almost 4 million. Approximately 22% of children who live in poverty never graduate from high school; 26% of students who were poor for a year could not read proficiently by Grade 3. Children who live below the poverty line are also more likely to be absent from school in the elementary grades (Poverty Facts and Figures, 2011).

Educators are aware there is an achievement gap between middle- and low-income families (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). This gap becomes increasing evident as students enter the fourth grade. Evidence of this can be seen by way of informal classroom assessments, daily submitted class assignments, standardized tests, or the by the results produced on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test.
The fourth-grade slump has become a major challenge as evident in the upper grades where students are required to comprehend more difficult texts and are exposed to more vocabulary. Informational texts in upper grades are more difficult than narrative text in the lower grades. Children who lack vocabulary knowledge have difficulty with challenging tests. Another reason children have difficulty is due to their limited access to a wide variety of books. Many poor children have little access to books; therefore, are more inclined to have to borrow resources from public libraries. In low-income communities, there are funding inadequacies. Low-income children are impacted when there is less consistent structure at home and when there is a focus on too much test-taking skills and preparation for the end-of-the-year tests.

Children’s reading and vocabulary development are connected to the status of their families’ economic and educational situation. Children who come from low-income homes are exposed to half as many words as compared to their affluent peers. Children who struggle with vocabulary in the lower grades tend to struggle with comprehension throughout other grades. An important factor to consider in addition is the 3-month reading gap that can occur between low- and middle-income students during the summer (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009).

**Teacher Effectiveness**

Wilson (2011) said:

We know that almost all U.S. children, no matter where they live, will be academically endangered if they have poor teachers for three years in a row. We
also know that low-income elementary students who have good teachers three years in a row will have test scores that are more like those of their middle-class peers. And we know that the scale of the problem of creating a high quality teaching workforce is astonishing. There are nearly 4.5 million teachers in the U.S. (p. 64)

According to King-Rice (2003), teacher quality is the most important factor influencing student achievement. The United States invested $192 billion in teacher pay and benefits in 2002. With such a huge investment, there is little research on who to hire, retain, and promote.

Gabriel, Day, and Allington (2011) reported that several themes emerged in interviews that included 30 teachers who work in high-poverty schools. Professional development was mentioned as being a valuable tool because of the range of teacher experiences. All teachers interviewed mentioned collegial support in the form of mentoring or support networks as important. Engaged autonomy was mentioned. This is when administrators allow teachers freedom to teach the way they would like with little restrictions. Teachers expressed an excitement for being able to teach the way they wanted to with little required directives from administration. Others felt like their administration trusted them to teach the way they know how to teach best.

The essential elements of teacher policies were analyzed from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Essential Elements of Teacher Policy in ESEA, 2011). In order to close the gaps between subgroups effective teachers are essential. Students will grow academically when they have 3–4 strong teachers year after year. Those who have
weak teachers will fall behind. Research has shown that children in high-poverty schools have a greater chance at having a less effective teacher. In the future, schools must do a better job with teacher evaluation to ensure that students have access to great teachers: (a) school level quality measures should be collected and reported, (b) new evaluation systems should be implemented, and (c) states and districts must be held accountable for ensuring that students have access to strong teachers. All students in K–12 education deserve a rigorous education. We must begin to take serious the task of evaluating teachers based on their impact on student learning.

Ball and Forzani (2010) believed effective teaching can be taught. In today’s society, teachers are expected to instruct a wide range of learners. Some schools set different goals for different groups of students. Teaching is a common yet very complicated activity. Having patience with children is important but liking children and having content knowledge are also necessary. Teachers must unpack a skill so that it is learnable by students. Teaching requires a high degree of fluency and automaticity. Teachers are required to assists others with learning and see ideas from various viewpoints. Teaching is a skill that for many does not come naturally. Training is crucial in order for teachers to master skills. Teachers must be given opportunities to practice and develop their teaching craft. It is difficult to break down the meaningful skills of teaching.

Effective teachers create a positive climate by challenging student ideas and differentiating by student ability and interests (Economic and Social Research Council, 2009). Students have more opportunities to succeed and they have more control of their
environment. The best teachers may not be the ones with the most experience; rather they are the ones who set high expectations and are enthusiastic about their work.

According to the online website MET Project, in 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010) began what is known as the Measures of Effective Teaching Project (MET Project). For 2 years, multiple organizations collected data from over 3,000 teacher volunteers in various school districts: Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Hillsborough County Florida, Pittsburgh, New York, and Memphis. Data were studied in five areas: (a) student achievement gains on various tests, (b) class observations and teacher reflections, (c) teacher pedagogical knowledge, (d) student perceptions of the class environment, and (e) teachers’ perceptions of working conditions and the schools’ instructional supports. This project is a $45 million commitment from the Gates Foundation. Upon analyzing the results from the five areas mentioned above, researchers from RAND Corporation will combine various measures of teacher performance with value-added data to capture the impact a teacher has on student learning.

Teaching requires a large toolkit of skills (Moore, 2102). A teacher must be able to put skills to use based on various situations. Effective teachers must be organized and knowledgeable of the changing needs of society. Teaching requires knowledge, skills, and ongoing professional development. Moore believed that if teachers are to be effective, they must know the content they are teaching. Secondly, they must have professional knowledge of the philosophical, historical, and psychological aspects of the schools and students. Third, teachers must have strong pedagogical knowledge of theories, concepts, and research. Lastly, teachers must display pedagogical content
knowledge by being able to relate fully to their particular content area (i.e., math or reading).

Moore (2012) also suggested that effective teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of a diverse population of students. Teachers must be aware of each student’s academic, emotional, and cultural differences. The classroom environment should be one that addresses multiple learning styles, student needs, and a variety of academic levels. In sum, teachers must be mentors, effective subject matter experts, counselors, and social psychologists. Teachers must also understand the social forces and theoretical thoughts that have shaped schools and teaching to be more effective in the classroom. "Effective teachers must (a) engage in quality planning and preparation, (b) prepare a positive classroom environment, (c) use proven instructional techniques, and (d) exhibit professional behavior" (Moore, 2012, p. 2).

Programs for Students

In Atlanta Public Schools during 1975-1976, there was a program called *Follow Through*. This program was implemented in six schools in grades kindergarten through third. Dr. Lassar Gotkin developed the Interdependent Learning Model (ILM) which was part of *Follow Through* (Ballagas & Sylvan, 1977). The program focused on teamwork, games related to academics, language development, and the use of small groups for instruction. The program serviced the whole child by providing health, instructional, psychological, and social services to each student (Ballagas & Sylvan, 1977).
According to the Bright from the Start website (2012), in 1995 the state of Georgia began the lottery funded PreK program which was opened to all four year old regardless of their family income. The PreK program provides early intervention to students prior to them entering the K-12 public school sector. Governor Sonny Perdue created *Bright from the Start*, in 2004 in the state of Georgia. This program serviced children from birth to five years of age. The program was designed to provide children with safe, healthy, early, high quality childcare.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was designed to identify student outcomes in relation to two teachers’ implementation of reading intervention services. The research focused on teacher effectiveness and the impact on student outcomes as demonstrated on reading assessments such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Reading 3-D with anticipated student growth from the beginning of the year assessment to the mid-year assessment. The school in this research implemented an instructional schedule that includes reading intervention blocks. These intervention blocks are designed for selected intervention teachers to improve foundational reading skills with students who are performing below grade level.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the reading intervention program, using measurable schoolwide data, student outcome variables were identified and examined. The DIBELS/Reading 3-D was used to monitor student performance in Grades K–2. Growth in performance was measured at beginning of the year and again at the end of year point for purposes of this research.
Theories

This research can best be aligned with two theories. These include flow theory and the strategic planning/management cycle. Flow theory was developed by Csikszentmihalyi. In an interview with Whalen (1999), Csikszentmihalyi reported that:

Flow refers to an optimal state of immersed concentration in which attention is centered, distractions are minimized, and the person attains an enjoyable give-and-take with his or her activity. In this state, people report that they lose track of time and their daily problems, forget about hunger and fatigue, and feel well-matched to the activity at hand. Flow emerges when strong supports for performance are in place, such as clear rules, high expectations, personal encouragement, and opportunities for choice, while engaging in complex and interesting tasks. (p. 161)

Csikszentmihalyi also indicated that students have to be placed in rich environments so that they learn by interaction (Whalen, 1999). Students learn by interactions with various materials. Csikszentmihalyi believed students do not learn best by sitting in desks with a teacher standing in front of them. Csikszentmihalyi believed not all children can learn from the regular curriculum. They must be given opportunities to raise achievement a level above where they are currently performing.

Strategic planning and management is an action planning process (Chang, 2008). Objectives are specified and strategies, outputs, and responsibilities are projected on a timeline. Strategic planning describes who does what, how they do it, what materials are used, and the outcomes. The current research study illustrates this theory by identifying
students that have academic needs. Intervention teachers then develop objectives, find resources to help meet the students’ needs according to performance levels, and instruct the students by the use of various methodologies. This would be described as the *input*. The output would be the outcome or the result of these strategies as measured by performance assessments. Chang suggested five questions should be addressed:

1. What is the relevance? Are identified needs addressed?
2. Is it efficient? Are resources being used wisely?
3. Is it effective? Are you achieving the outputs desired?
4. What is the impact? Are changes occurring for targetec individuals?
5. Is the impact sustainable?

**Definition of Dependent and Independent Variables**

Teacher effectiveness is the dependent variable in this study. Effective teaching can be defined as teachers who “engage in quality planning and preparation, prepare a positive classroom environment, use proven instructional techniques, and exhibit professional behavior” (Moore, 2012, p. 2). Effectiveness of teaching methodologies was analyzed by conducting a case study approach on the daily activities of two interventionist teachers at the early primary level. In a school setting, academic performance is measured by tests including formal and informal assessments. Success can depend on established targets of the tests given and how well a student performs according to school, state, and national expectations. The dependent variable (teacher
effectiveness) in this study was measured by using the benchmark DIBELS/Reading 3-D assessments given in Grades K–2 in the fall and spring of one academic year.

The independent variables in this study are teacher methodologies and the students' socioeconomic status as determined by their participation in the free and reduced lunch program. Teacher methodology is the “planned patterned behaviors that are definite steps through which the teacher influences learning” (Moore, 2012, p. 218). Socioeconomic status, according to the online Merriam Webster Dictionary, is relating to or involving a combination of social and economic factors. It can be classified as differences of groups due to their financial situation.

**Definition of Terms**

**Comprehension.** According to the DIBELS website, comprehension is the complex cognitive process involving the intentional interaction between reader and text to extract meaning.

**Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).** One-minute measures of fluency used to monitor early literacy and reading skills in students. According to the University of Oregon, they assess early literacy skills acquisition.

**Fluency.** According to the DIBELS website, fluency is reading words with no noticeable cognitive or mental effort. It is having mastered word recognition skills to the point of over learning.

**Learning styles.** According to Moore (2012), these are the “set of cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors through which an individual learns most
effectively; determined by a combination of hereditary and environmental influences” (p. 415).

**Phonics.** According to the DIBELS website, phonics is similar to alphabetic principle, understanding that, words are composed of letters that represent sounds.

**Phonemic awareness.** According to the DIBELS website, phonemic awareness is essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes.

**Reading 3-D.** According to wirelessgeneration.com, Reading 3-D “combines a running record text reading and comprehension diagnostic with quick indicators of foundational skills development. It captures a student’s ability to read with comprehension.

**Reading intervention.** According to ehow.com, Reading intervention is a program, supplementary to an existing literacy curriculum that is provided to students for the primary purpose of increasing reading levels.

**Transient.** According to dictionary.com, transient means staying only a short period of time.

**Vocabulary.** According to the DIBELS website, vocabulary is access to the meanings of words that teachers or their surrogates use to guide them into contemplating known concepts in novel ways.
Relationship among Variables

All of the independent variables have the potential to affect the dependent variable, teacher effectiveness as demonstrated through student achievement. The way a teacher teaches skills through the strategic selection of materials and instructional practices will affect learning. Students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Because of this, socioeconomic status can correlate to academic knowledge. Figure 1 shows the goal of the research and Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between the dependent and independent variables.

**What?**
- Reading Intervention (Grades K-2)

**Who?**
- Two teachers will provide intensive instruction that is engaging, leveled, skill specific, and meets the needs of various learning styles to under performing learners.

**Goal?**
- Improved Student Outcomes: Progress towards grade level instruction and proven growth on Reading assessments.

*Figure 1. Diagram of Research Focus*
Methodologies vary among both teachers. However, they must focus on the big 5 components of reading: phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary.

Many students served qualify for FRL status and come from single-parent households. Most live in rental homes or apartments and the population is transient.

Teacher effectiveness in raising student achievement (Dependent Variable)

Figure 2. Diagram of Theoretical Framework

Limitations of the Study

This research was limited to three grade levels in the elementary setting (K–2). The research was conducted in a single school. During one-on-one interviews with only two teachers, there may be limitations due to the openness of their responses. Another limitation of the study might be the observer’s perceptions of teacher methodologies used during actual observations.
Summary

This chapter summarized the theoretical framework for this study. According to the Reading is Fundamental website (2012) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress Test in 2009, 33% of fourth grade students scored at or below basic levels. Fifty three percent of those students were African American and 52% were Hispanic. Fourth grade students who had access to more than 25 books at home had higher scores. Students who are regularly read to have better comprehension skills and are exposed to a wider variety of vocabulary. Informed teachers integrate various instructional strategies: (a) whole-text reading, (b) focus on individual words, (c) some work one-on-one, (d) in small or large groups, (e) some allow students the freedom to select their text, and (f) others require direct instruction. Overall, the idea is to have students keep the big goal in mind. That goal is for students to have meaningful, lifelong engagements with a variety of text (Rasinski & Padak, 2008). This study sought to determine how teacher methodology and student socioeconomic status affect academic achievement.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted qualitatively and quantitatively through a case study analysis. The qualitative research methods were selected because they allow the researcher to obtain an understanding of an unstudied area. Qualitative methods are used when little research is known and it requires an understanding of phenomena (Creswell, 2003). In a case study approach, the researcher can develop an understanding of complicated issues and add to the findings of previous research studies. A case study uses narrative analysis as a form of data collection (Yin, 2003). When the researcher cannot control the explored events a case study is the best approach to obtaining the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Often case studies are complex and require the researcher to analyze considerable amounts of data. Creswell (2003) reported that the unit of analysis distinguishes a case study. The teaching methodologies of two reading interventionists at the elementary level served as the unit of analysis for this study. A quantitative component was used to describe the reading growth of the students taught by the reading interventionists. The addition of the students’ reading data adds more clarity and meaning to the study and allows research questions to be answered in more depth (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004).
Human Subjects

The participating school system granted final permission to the researcher of this study to review achievement data within the school because the researcher is an employee of the school district. In order to comply with anonymity, the specific school is not named, nor were individual teachers and students identified. For the purpose of this research, teachers and students were identified by anonymous numbers or letters. Although individual student data were analyzed, names were replaced by student numbers. Teachers observed during this research had the option of withdrawing at any time. They also signed a consent form created by the researcher stating they were aware they were not being observed for evaluative purposes related to job performance. This study provided informative instructional benefit results to the local school, staff, and district.

Description of the Setting

The research setting was located in a school district in North Carolina. The school district is the 25th largest in the nation. Student achievement cannot take place without great teachers who provide academic rigor. The school district is deemed highly successful and has been recognized as one of the top academic performers in urban education. All schools in this school district are accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Some schools in the district are designated Title 1 schools and/or targeted assistance schools. These schools receive federal funding for identified students.

Title 1 was enacted in 1965 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Act was passed by Congress in an attempt to close the achievement gap
between low-income students and other students. The U.S. Department of Education provides over $14 billion in funding annually to schools across the United States for students who are at risk of not meeting specific academic standards. The goal of Title 1 is for all children to have a fair and equal opportunity to obtain a high quality education. Title 1 status is determined by the number of students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. The funds are allocated based on the number of qualifying low-socioeconomic students enrolled in the school and designated funds must be spent based on the needs of targeted students using federal guidelines.

In this particular school district, Title 1 funds must be approved by the local district’s federal programs office. At the school where the study took place, the administration had allocated Title 1 federal funds on many items. These include teacher salaries to provide for additional reading interventionists, curricular supplies, staff development, parental involvement activities, building a leveled reading book room, and enhanced technology in all classrooms.

This study was conducted in a Title 1 elementary school that has been open for 15 years. The school serves students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The current enrollment, including special education students, is approximately 920. The families of these students live in suburban areas mainly consisting of single-family homes or apartments. Student enrollment fluctuates because the student population is transient. Approximately 66% of the students at this school are African American, and over 80% come from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds and quality for the free and reduced lunch program.
During the 2010–2011 school year, the school in this study did not meet AYP requirements. AYP is an NCLB indicator used to measure the achievement of schools in reading, math, and science. AYP disaggregates data into subgroups, and those subgroups must meet reading, math, and science state targets.

It is important to note that with only 4 months remaining in the 2009–2010 school year a new principal was strategically placed at this site in order to begin a schoolwide transformation. When principals in this district are strategically placed, they are freed from the district’s list of nonnegotiables. They have total freedom and flexibility to make decisions concerning the school. Ultimately, it means tight supervision from the central office is less of a problem. Site-based leadership and decision making is the norm. The principal is given three years to transform the school.

The principal in this school dismissed 30 teachers as part of his freedom and flexibility transformation process. These teachers received poor performance evaluations and were perceived as not having the best interests of children in mind. Performance learning communities (PLCs) were also developed. Each grade level was mandated to collaborate 4 days a week. Team time consisted of lesson planning, data analysis, and products from the meetings were submitted to the administration. Math and literacy facilitators also met with teachers during planning days to help guide the curriculum, create assessments, and determine pacing. At the time of this research, all factors were still being implemented.

In North Carolina, students in Grades 3–5 are administered an end-of-grade test (EOG). According to the school’s spring 2011 EOG results, 76% of students scored at or
above grade level in mathematics and but 54% scored at or above grade level in reading (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Percentage of Students (Grades 3–5) at or Above Grade Level Spring 2009–2011 in Reading at the Research School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of this data, reading was a major focus for the 2011–2012 academic year. Progress monitoring is required throughout the year. In reading, teachers monitor students using DIBELS and Reading 3-D, as the main reading assessments. Students are placed into three categories: (a) intensive, (b) strategic, and (c) benchmark. The severity of the need determines the amount of monitoring data a teacher might collect on the student. Students who are in need of the most intensive support receive more monitoring assessments in order to determine progress toward reaching benchmarks. The data are also useful when presenting a child to the academic support team or when writing individual student goals in a personalized educational plan as well as when conducting parent conferences.

Progress monitoring occurs monthly so teachers have data points to inform instruction and are able to track student progress. Reading benchmark assessments in
DIBELS and Reading 3-D are given three times a year—one in the fall, another in the winter, and one in the spring. Teachers use both formative and summative data sources to guide instruction. They meet in their PLC to plan lessons and analyze data 4 days a week. Individualized instructional supports and interventions are put into place for certain students as needed. The school’s instructional focus is reading, specifically targeting small-group lessons and guided reading instruction during the literacy block schedule.

Interventionists (who teach children who are not proficient in reading) collaborate with regular education teachers weekly; some are sought out daily if their schedule permits. The interventionists also communicate through e-mail with regular education teachers and they attend grade-level planning sessions a few times per month. In both the regular education settings and intervention settings, reading classes include but are not limited to (a) small group work, (b) the use of leveled reading texts including fiction and nonfiction, (c) word work for example Making Words activities, (d) journaling, (e) conferencing, and (f) the sharing of student work so teachers and students can provide children with constructive feedback.

**Participant Selection Procedures**

Student participants in this research study were selected because they were receiving reading intervention services. Their participation in the program was determined by achievement scores from previous reading assessments, checklists, and reading inventories. These research participants have shown academic deficits in reading
and are not currently performing on grade level. All participants in Grades K–2 who are receiving intervention reading services were served in a pull-out instructional model designed by reading intervention teachers. This included approximately 80 students during the period of the research study. The classes were composed of both male and female students ranging in ages from 5–8 years of age. Intervention subgroups included 52 African American, 3 Asian, 12 Hispanic, 3 multiracial, 1 Native American Indian, and 6 Caucasian students. Teacher participants were selected because they are the only two reading intervention teachers in the school who serve students in grade kindergarten, first, and second.

Participants/Location of the Research

The effectiveness of two reading interventionists was analyzed during this study. Students in Grades K–2 who were not performing at grade level in reading and who were being served during an additional intervention block each day were monitored. Selection into the programs was determined by data from the district’s reading assessments. The researcher conducting the study had access to this data through employment in the school district.

Instrumentation

The researcher, with guidance from professors at Clark Atlanta University, developed an observation rubric to use while informally observing the two intervention specialist teachers. The researcher also used an interview protocol with the teachers using questions developed with assistance by Clark Atlanta University professors. These
interviews were transcribed. In addition, student assessment data was used to
determine program effectiveness.

**Data Collection and Procedures**

In this study, data were collected on both teachers and students. Creswell (1998) believed that observational research begins with the development of a well planned and understood connection between the participant and the researcher. First, teacher data were collected through informal observations as the two teachers implemented the specially designed reading models designed to address the needs of the targeted students working in the pull-out delivery model. The researcher used the observation rubric as one measure to determine program effectiveness. The observations included 6 hours of assessing small-group lessons, individual student interactions, and the use of methods employed by both teachers. The rubric to measure effectiveness was used to make certain that

1. There was equity in rating each of the two teachers observed over the same time duration.
2. The teachers were rated on effective teaching methodologies that can be validated by previous research.
3. The rubric allowed criteria to be rated without bias by the researcher.

The researcher collaborated with CAU professors to develop an interview protocol. Both reading intervention teachers were interviewed by the researcher in an individual setting. Creswell (2003) reported that the researcher relies on the views of
participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.

Student participants were evaluated using Reading 3-D and DIBELS data. These two reading benchmark assessments are given at the beginning of the year (September/October) and again during the middle of the year (January/February). Between benchmark periods, progress monitoring occurred based on school guidelines. Reading levels were analyzed to determine growth for each student. The teachers were observed by the researcher during reading instruction. Because the research included student data and teacher observations and interviews, all three components of the research were used in the triangulation of the research study (see Figure 3). This enhanced the research validity and reliability of the results.

Figure 3. Triangulation of Data Sources
Description of Data Analysis Methods

Informal teacher evaluation data were analyzed using the rubric designed by the researcher and CAU professors. The researcher used coding methods to categorize the data into units of meaning. It is essential to managing qualitative data (Merriam, 1998). Data from DIBELS/Reading 3-D were collected for the students taught by the two reading interventionists. Student data were examined for gains from the beginning of the year to the mid-year benchmark.

Summary

In order to conduct the research, the researcher used a case study approach. Students and teachers were observed during intervention reading pull-out class in kindergarten, first, and second grade. The selected teachers teach intensive reading to the neediest students on the grade level. These students are not performing on grade level according to reading assessments. The teachers were observed informally and their lesson plans were reviewed by the observer. Students were also observed informally during the pull-out sessions. Reading data were examined to show gains made by each student taught by the two reading interventionists.
CHAPTER V
RESULTS

A case study approach was used to investigate the effectiveness of the intervention reading models of two teachers in Grades K–2. The research focused on the following qualitative and quantitative research questions:

RQ1: How does the implementation of various teacher methodologies affect student achievement?
RQ2: How do the two reading interventionists describe their instructional practice?
RQ3: How do the reading interventionists incorporate the big five components (comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary) of reading into their planning and daily lessons?
RQ4: Which NCLB subgroups show growth between benchmark periods?

Description of the Sample

Reading scores were collected from 73 students who attended school from the beginning to the end of the academic year (August 2011-May 2012) and were taught by the two reading interventionists. Table 3 contains a description of the students. More males (55%) were taught by the reading teachers than were females (45%). The sample was predominantly African American (67%) and eligible for the free and reduced lunch program (84%).

48
Table 3

Description of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Entire sample (n = 73)</th>
<th>Teacher A (n = 35)</th>
<th>Teacher B (n = 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for free/reduced lunch program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students’ DIBELS/Reading 3-D reading levels at the beginning and the end of the academic year were converted using a scale ranging from 1 (Level <PC) to 20 (Level R). Gains were calculated by subtracting the reading level at the beginning of the academic year from the reading level at the end of the academic year.
Table 4 contains the students’ average gains by teacher and demographic characteristic. The 27 students in the first grade made greater gains ($M = 6.85$) than did the kindergarteners ($M = 4.95$) and second graders ($M = 4.85$). Females ($M = 5.79$) made slightly higher gains than males did ($M = 5.48$). On average, reading gains were the same regardless of the students’ free and reduced lunch eligibility. Asian ($M = 7.33$) and Hispanic ($M = 6.08$) students made the greatest gains than other ethnic groups.

Table 4

Average Reading Gains of Students from the Beginning to the End of the Year by Teacher and Demographic Characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Entire sample ($n = 73$)</th>
<th>Teacher A ($n = 35$)</th>
<th>Teacher B ($n = 38$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M$*</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Entire sample (n = 73)</th>
<th>Teacher A (n = 35)</th>
<th>Teacher B (n = 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for free/reduced lunch program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DIBELS reading levels were converted using a scale ranging from 1 (Level <PC) to 20 (Level R). Gains were calculated by subtracting the reading level at the beginning of the academic year from the reading level at the end of the academic year.

**Analysis of the Quantitative Research Questions**

RQ1: How does the implementation of various teacher methodologies affect student achievement?

RQ4: Which NCLB subgroups show growth between benchmark periods?

Analyses were conducted using independent samples t tests and one-way analyses of variance. Table 5 contains the results of the t tests comparing reading gains between males and females and student eligibility for the free and reduced lunch program. No statistically significant gains were found between males and females \([t_{(72)} = .67, p = .50]\) nor between students who were eligible and those who were not eligible for the free and reduced lunch program \([t_{(72)} = .10, p = .92]\).
Table 5

Results of t Tests Comparing Reading Gains Between Genders and Student Eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M*</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility free/reduced lunch program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DIBELS reading levels were converted using a scale ranging from 1 (Level <PC) to 20 (Level R). Gains were calculated by subtracting the reading level at the beginning of the academic year from the reading level at the end of the academic year.

Table 6 contains the results of the one-way analyses of variance conducted to compare the students' reading gains among the three grades and ethnicities. The ethnicity variable was collapsed into three groups (African American, Hispanic, and other) due to low sample size in some ethnic categories (Caucasian, Asian, Native American Indian, and Multiracial). A statistically significant difference was found between grades \( F(2,70) = 10.72, p < .01 \). A post hoc analysis of the means of the three grades found that the average reading gains made by the first graders \( M = 6.85 \) were significantly higher than average reading gains made by the kindergarteners \( M = 4.95 \) and second graders \( M = 4.85 \). No statistically significant gains were found between the ethnicities \( F(2,70) = .43, p = .65 \).
Table 6

Results of Analyses of Variance Comparing Reading Gains Among Grades and Ethnicities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M*</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>10.72</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Caucasian, Asian, Native American Indian, Multiracial)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DIBELS reading levels were converted using a scale ranging from 1 (Level < PC) to 20 (Level R). Gains were calculated by subtracting the reading level at the beginning of the academic year from the reading level at the end of the academic year.

Teacher Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to provide data to determine answers to the following research question:

RQ2: How do the reading interventionists incorporate the big five components (comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary) of reading into their planning and daily lessons?

Two veteran reading teachers were the center of this case study analysis. Both were reading interventionists who served students in kindergarten through second grade. Their focus was on primary grades and they taught students using various methodologies and materials. Both teachers were observed using the observation instrument created by
the researcher and approved by Clark Atlanta dissertation committee. The teachers were not exposed to the observation document prior to the observations.

The researcher used each teacher's daily reading schedule, to conduct small-group observations at each grade level, for six observations/three per teacher. Each teacher was observed for 1 hour at each grade level, for a total of 3 hours using the observation instrument. These two teachers were also observed formally and informally outside of the case study observation times, but those data were not used to support findings for this research project.

The classroom observation form was created by the researcher and Clark Atlanta University dissertation committee and was approved by the university and school system prior to the study. Ten questions focused on the instructional aspects of the classroom. Five additional questions focused on the management aspect of the classroom environment. The observation form was used to guide the researcher on items to target and observe during the 1-hour lessons.

This research was conducted at a Title 1 elementary school located in a metropolitan city in North Carolina. The school served approximately 920 students in Grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Approximately 66% of the students are African American and many come from single-family homes. Over 80% qualify for free and reduced lunch. Within the classrooms observed for this case study, both teachers worked with male and female students from all ethnicities. The small groups observed never exceeded six students because these two intervention teachers targeted students who were not reading proficiently on grade level. Small group instruction allowed them to connect
closely with students in order to provide differentiated support and scaffolding.

Scaffolding is support given to children during instruction and is unique to each child’s individual needs. The ultimate goal is to help each child feel successful at the task or concept being taught.

The two reading intervention teachers were both female. Teacher A (Caucasian) had been teaching for 27 years and worked for 4 years as a reading interventionist. Teacher B (African American) had been teaching for 8 years and worked for 2 years as a reading interventionist. Each observation question is listed and the researcher’s observations are described in the following section.

**Observation Evidence #1**

*The teacher’s plan reflects the Common Core Standards/Objectives for select grade level. Additionally, the use of data, differentiated instructional techniques, re-teaching strategies are all included in the development of the plans and are directed at active student engagement.*

**Teacher A.** The goal/objective was stated in such a manner that the students understood the skill to be taught; however, the teacher did not use Common Core specific language. The researcher was able to determine the intent of the lesson as the goal mentioned words such as *rhymes, readers use various strategies when reading, and vowel and consonant sounds.* Teacher A also listed notes about various students and ideas for re-teaching on two of her three lesson plans. Differentiation strategies and activities that promoted student engagement were evident on all three lesson plans. These included creating words using magnetic letters (lists varied for different students), identifying
rhyming words on index cards and making pairs, and taking picture walks of texts before reading to make predictions and wrapping students into the excitement of the text.

**Teacher B.** The focus for the lesson was listed and posted by task not using exact Common Core language standards. For example, each lesson had a focus or activity for phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and shared/guided reading. The goal is for the teacher to incorporate components from the “Big Five” areas of literacy, and this teacher was on track. Multiple examples of differentiation strategies were evident on all three plans. The activities planned, such as making words, free writing as an extension activity, and fluency rate timed activities, are all activities to promote student engagement. Teacher B did not have data or observational notes on her plans, but she had them available in a notebook for the observer indicating that she maintained them in her classroom.

**Observation Evidence #2**

*During the reading instruction, appropriate grade level instructional materials/and or strategies (focus on student Learning Styles) are used to motivate learners.*

**Teacher A.** During instruction, appropriate grade level interventions and materials were used in all three lessons. Guided reading used leveled texts, word pattern sorts, teacher modeling while reading, make connections to texts, and dry erase boards were incorporated during partner work. Student learners were motivated during all three observations. Observer noticed multiple ways students were engaged. These characteristics included: eye contact with teacher, eagerness to listen and pay attention to
instructions and teaching, and excitement was seen through the smiles on their faces throughout the instructional hour, but especially when the teacher gave them feedback or praise.

**Teacher B.** Appropriate grade level interventions and materials were observed. These included read-aloud texts, graphic organizers, words sorts, leveled texts for guided reading, phrases written on sentence strips to practice fluency and intonation, and partner pair share activities. Student learners were motivated during all three observations. Characteristics of engagement included: eagerness to listen and look at teacher as if they were hanging on to her every word or action during teaching. They also were encouraged by positive verbal praise and motivated when a student near them received a small treat. Student engagement was evident during partner work time as student pairs assisted each other with obvious excitement about the learning taking place. When the teacher read with expression and animation students were eagerly listening.

**Observation Evidence #3**

*The Objectives/Common Core Standards are posted in the classroom and the day's objective is introduced to students at the beginning of the lesson and/or reviewed at the conclusion of the lesson.*

**Teacher A.** The Common Core objective was not posted and it was not explicitly listed in the lesson plan. It was however referenced as a goal for the lesson. For example when students entered the room, the teacher began her instructional lesson by telling the students what the learning objective was for the day. At the end of the lesson, she asked students to summarize what they did during small group instructional time. During one
lesson she specifically stated, “Today and everyday in here or in your classroom, when you are reading and do not know a word, think of a word with a similar word pattern.” This message was an indication that the teacher was instructing students to utilize this reading skill in and out of class.

**Teacher B.** The Common Core objective was not posted and it was not explicitly listed in the lesson plan. It was, however, referenced by the teacher at the start of her lesson with students by telling them the activities planned for the day. She made a connection during her second observation with her second graders. She said, “In your regular classroom, you all are talking about dialogue in your writing. Today we are going to work on punctuation marks so you will know which one to use appropriately when writing independently.” It was clear she made a connection to the work they were doing in their general education classroom. All three observed lessons ended with a review/wrap-up.

**Observation Evidence #4**

The teacher models expected behavior for students, provides assistance when needed, and allows students time to practice designated skills.

**Teacher A.** The teacher modeled each activity during the observation. For example, if students were supposed to read with expression, she modeled it first by reading a few pages orally. She picked a rhyming word out of a sack of cards and wrote another rhyming word beside it. She did this so when they moved to independent work the students understood the expectations. She modeled two key strategies: first, how students should take a picture walk with a text and secondly, how they would chunk
words using a dry erase board. Independent work time was provided after each activity and the teacher observed and was available for individual support. Because the room was very small (it is a tutor room built between classrooms; smaller than an office) the teacher is always in close proximity and students are within reach of her.

**Teacher B.** The teacher modeled activities during the various lessons. These included word sorts with the introduction of the letters *sh*. She posted examples on the rolling cart white board to get them started. She modeled reading aloud a sentence strip with fluency and accuracy using voice intonation. Additionally, she modeled making connections to a text by sharing with the students her own experience. Independent work time was provided around the room; however, her classroom is very small as it is a tutor room situated between two classrooms. Because of the size of the room, the teacher is always in direct close supervision of the students.

**Observation Evidence #5**

_The teacher focused on both word recognition (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, etc.) and comprehension skills (knowledge, application, synthesis, evaluation, etc.)_

**Teacher A.** All three lessons focused on phonics and phonemic awareness. Activities included chunking sounds, separating syllables, sounding out words while tracking with finger, and noticing rhyming patterns. A direct lesson on comprehension was not observed; however, the teacher was observed asking students to go back and review the text to find answers to questions they had while reading. During the introduction to the lesson, she encouraged all students to make connections to the text.
Teacher B. Two of the three lessons focused on phonics and phonemic awareness. Students made use of the environmental print alphabet chart that was teacher created, and they practiced word chunks with \textit{ch} and \textit{sh}. In one lesson, they sang the AEIOU vowel song, which was highly engaging. Explicit comprehension skills were not seen; however, self-to-text connections were evident. Students were also asked how they would change the ending of a story and they orally shared their ideas with the class.

Observation Evidence #6

\textit{The teacher incorporates technology in the development of student learning.}

Teacher A. Technology was not evident due to the small size and space of the learning environment.

Teacher B. Technology was not evident. Again, this teacher was housed in a very small tutor room with no classroom computer access nor a Promethean system.

Observation Evidence #7

\textit{The teacher uses a variety of techniques to check for student understanding of skills taught. Examples include daily observation of students demonstrating understanding, assessments tools, records anecdotal notes, etc.}

Teacher A. Teacher observed students in her daily interaction with them in small groups. She asked clarifying questions when they were having difficulty with a concept. She took handwritten anecdotal notes. She also met with the classroom teachers to obtain benchmark scores at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Because her students needed intensive support, she also had access to multiple progress monitoring data points from the Reading 3D assessment.
Teacher B. Teacher observed students in her daily interaction with them in small groups. She made herself available to work one-on-one with students when necessary if they were having a difficult time understanding a skill. She took handwritten anecdotal notes and stored them in a notebook. She also met with the classroom teachers to obtain benchmark scores at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Because her students needed intensive support, she also had access to multiple progress monitoring data points from the Reading 3D assessment.

Observation Evidence #8

Students participate in read alouds, choral reading, guided reading, computer/technical based support, partner reading, or pair sharing.

Teacher A. Guided reading using level texts was seen in all three observations. Partner activities were noted in two of the three observations. Other methods observed included students reading aloud, one-on-one with the teacher, and whisper reading.

Teacher B. Guided reading using leveled texts and partners sharing ideas (pair/share) was seen in all three observations. Partner reading was observed in one lesson and a teacher read aloud was demonstrated twice. Choral reading was also seen as Teacher B introduced students to a nursery rhyme in one of the lessons.

Observation Evidence #9

Students demonstrate understanding of stories read. Teacher questions are at various levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Teacher A. Students understood the guided reading texts used. In one observation, Teacher A asked the students to look for words with vowels and to look at
the syllables in the words using text look back. In this instance, students went back to
the text and referenced a word, phrase, or idea in the text as directed by the teacher. In
another observation, she asked the students to recall (low level of Blooms/Literal
Comprehension) characters from the book. Additionally, she asked them about the
story’s sequence and main problem. She allowed them to discuss the outcome of the text
and she allowed them to discuss how they would change the ending of the story
(Synthesis). She questioned students about the difference between fiction and nonfiction
text and she asked them what the pictures might be teaching them about the story
(Evaluation). In the last observation, she asked students to point out and verbally discuss
what they noticed in the text. Each time, most of the lessons focused on teaching
students how to use appropriate reading strategies, such as stop and think and making
predictions and connections.

Teacher B. Students had a clear understanding of all of the guided reading texts
during each observation. During one observation, the teacher read the book, Danny and
the Dinosaur Go to Camp. She asked them who they would invite to camp and what
activities they would like to do with that person (Application). Students were able to
make text-to-self connections. In the second observation, students did a stop and jot. She
told the students that Jack had two things he loved in the book, Jack Plays the Violin.
She asked them to jot down what they enjoyed and make a prediction about the text.
During the third observation, she focused on visualization and had students discuss
mental images after they read the text. Next, they discussed the difference between real
and make-believe stories.
Observation Evidence #10

Students are actively engaged in the learning of focused objectives. They move to various learning stations, work in groups or pairs, work at computer learning centers, or interact with other hands on materials.

Teacher A. Student engagement was high in each lesson observed. It was evident that relationships have been built with each child. Students worked in pairs during two of the three lessons. Technology was not evident. During two of the three lessons, partners shared. The students stayed in their same seat location and shared with the person beside them. Again, space was limited. The table in the room takes up much of the space. All students interacted with hands-on materials in every lesson. The hands-on materials used were leveled texts, teacher-created games, flashcards, book markets, pointers to point to words as they read, and alphabet print charts created by each teacher.

Teacher B. Student engagement was high in all lessons observed. It was evident relationships have been built with each child. Students worked in pairs during two of the three lessons. Technology was not evident. During two of three of the lessons, partners shared. During two of the three lessons, the small group moved from the floor to the table depending on the activity. Whole-group learning was introduced in the carpet meeting area and independent/partner work was conducted at the one table in the classroom. Again, the teacher had space limitations.

Observation Evidence #11

Classroom is neat and orderly and prepared learning materials are easily accessible for both teacher and students.
**Teacher A.** The tutor room was neat and orderly. Materials were sitting by the teacher chair for each lesson. Books were located on a bookshelf display. All materials were within a hands' reach for both teacher and students. Students were familiar with how to pass out and collect supplies when they were empowered as leaders in the classroom.

**Teacher B.** The room was clean and organized. All materials were prepared and sitting by the teacher for each lesson. When partner activities were used, the materials were pre-organized into Ziploc bags. Sentence strips were created earlier for the fluency lesson and read-aloud books were always sitting in the carpet area prepared for whole group instruction. Students took part in distributing and collecting materials.

**Observation Evidence #12**

*Teacher has established routines and uses both verbal and nonverbal communications to manage the class.*

**Teacher A.** Routines were clearly established. These included how to enter the room, sit at the table, take a pencil out of the basket, and share. Students talked in a respectable manner to one another. It was clear the teacher had taught them character lessons as well as instructing them in reading. Nonverbal cues were not seen.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B used the nonverbal cue of giving a look with her eyes. She picked her students up from each homeroom teacher so they came in quietly and sat on the carpet for whole-group time. In her group, they sit in a semicircle so she is close to them and they can see each other. Transitions to the table occurred smoothly and it was confirmed that well-developed routines had been established as students moved
quickly to assigned seats and materials were distributed without any disagreement. Her materials were always bagged and prepped prior to the lesson. All students displayed respectable behaviors.

**Observation Evidence #13**

There is an environment of mutual respect and students demonstrate they are comfortable sharing ideas.

**Teacher A.** It was observed that students felt highly confident and shared throughout the lessons at all grade levels. There was a sense of mutual respect among the teacher and students. It was clear personal relationships had been established. Her classroom moved at a slower pace than the other interventionist. Her students’ behaviors seemed to be positive about learning; however, she did have one reluctant learner in her second-grade group. For that student, she kept the pace of the class going and gave him positive praise when he was doing well. She also used small skittle treats as incentives.

**Teacher B.** The researcher observed that students felt highly confident and shared throughout the lessons in all grade levels. There was a sense of respect amongst the teacher and students. It was clear personal relationships had been built. Students smiled and showed a genuine happiness about learning. The mood in all of her lessons was positive and upbeat. There was no instructional downtime. She used treats as small rewards at the end of her lessons.

**Observation Evidence #14**

The class is organized in such a manner that student movement and engagement is not restricted.
Teacher A. The class was a tutor room; very small with a rolling white board, book shelf display, and one kidney table. The room was neatly arranged. Maximum classroom space was used.

Teacher B. The class was a tutor room; very small with a rolling white board, book shelf display, and one kidney table. The room was neatly arranged. Maximum classroom space was used.

Observation Evidence #15

The teacher knows all students by name and uses many effective learning strategies to engage them in the learning process.

Teacher A. The teacher knew every child by name. Her demeanor had a positive effect on the students. Students were motivated to learn and interact with the variety of resources available. They especially seem to enjoy partner work and hands-on work with dry erase boards and markers. Positive verbal praise was noted.

Teacher B. The teacher knew every child by name. Her demeanor had a positive effect on the students. The pace of her classroom was very quick; therefore, students have no time to become bored limiting any time for off-task behaviors. Students felt comfortable sharing opinions and beliefs and making connections to their own lives. They enjoyed partner activities, such as making words with magnetic letters on metal cooking sheets. They also enjoyed partnering on games using index cards. Positive verbal praise was observed.
Summary of Observations

After observing both teachers in an intervention setting conducting pull-out instruction, the researcher noticed high levels of student engagement. Students did not have time to become bored or exhibit off-task behaviors. Additionally, the activities, many of which were hands on, were delivered on the students’ instructional level. They were well planned by both teachers and materials were prepared in advanced of students entering the classes. It was evident in both settings that the teachers had familiarized themselves with the lesson plan and instructional texts prior to each observed lesson. Students displayed confidence and learning was fun. These two teachers illustrated the ability to identify the instructional needs of their students due to the established personal relationship and understanding of data to strengthen skills listed on their academic profiles. They work closely with their students daily, and because of this, they are able to individualize their teaching. They are not limited to any one academic reading program. They plan eclectic instructional strategies according to individual student needs and prepare lessons that focus on the big five components of reading.

Comprehension of texts was seen, but not directly observed, as teachers asked oral questions to check for understanding using the various levels of Blooms Taxonomy. Fluency was taught, for example, through choral reading. Phonics and phonemic awareness were taught when teachers referred to the sounds and alphabet daily using teacher-developed charts with real life pictures. For example, the picture under the letter $M$ is the McDonald’s logo. Phonics and phonemic awareness are also taught through
leveled text reading and hands on sorting activities. Vocabulary was taught through leveled texts, and referenced and discussed orally during guided reading.

**Teacher Interviews**

The two reading interventionists were interviewed using a structured list of questions to answer the following research question.

**RQ3:** How do the two reading interventionists describe their instructional practice?

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The transcripts were read, reread, and coded for similarities. From these similarities, five themes were discovered—collaboration between interventionists and classroom teachers, flexibility, instructional strategies and methods, the limited skills parents and students bring to the learning process, and components of an effective teacher of early learners.

**Theme 1: Collaboration Between Interventionists and Classroom Teachers**

Both teachers stressed that the success of the reading intervention program was dependent on the collaboration between the students' two reading teachers. Teacher A reported that the success of the program relied on the codependency between her as the interventionist and the classroom teacher:

The optimal success of students in the reading intervention program is dependent upon the relationship that you have with the person you're working with....the coedependency between two effective and self-reflective teachers who capitalize on each other's strengths and cover for each other's weaknesses...A successful
reading intervention requires a partnership between the classroom teacher and
the reading teacher. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012)

Teacher B recognized that collaboration between her and the classroom teachers
is important because, “Plans include skills being covered in their classes so students are
receiving instruction on the same scale, just in a different way” (personal communication,
July 24, 2012). Teacher B also stated that the collaboration between the two teachers
must be equal for the student to be successful:

The classroom teachers and intervention teachers have to work closely together to
best meet the needs of our struggling readers. I do feel this is one of the most
challenging aspects with the demands of the position and the load can be—it must
be evenly distributed. The necessary skills cannot be met through small amounts
of intensive time and learning must transfer back to the classroom all day and
every day. (Personal communication, July 24, 2012)

Theme 2. Flexibility

Both of the interventionists believed that flexibility is one key to success for their
students. They must be able to find and use a number of different techniques to teach and
re-teach skills the children have not mastered. Teacher A reported,

I feel the intervention program should be flexible. No one prescribed program
can meet the needs of all the students but parts of those programs are important in
teaching, and I enjoy the flexibility in being able to use the parts, the things that
have been most effective for me in all the different programs that I’ve seen.
(Personal communication, July 30, 2012)
Teacher B relished the flexibility but knowledge the hard work needed to make the students successful, "I really enjoy the freedom and the flexibility in my teaching. However, it can be extremely challenging. I spend hours and hours planning and deciding what can come next" (personal communication, July 24, 2012).

**Theme 3. Instructional Strategies and Methods**

The two teachers reported using a number of teaching strategies to teach their students. Both cited many of the same strategies. In addition to a number of strategies, a number of common methods were found between the two teachers. Teacher A reiterated her philosophy that what she does in her classroom must mirror what her students are learning in the regular education classroom. She reported:

> Obviously, I firmly believe in a balanced literacy program that involves your reading, shared interactive writing, guided reading, and read aloud. I prefer for my intervention program [to be a] reading and writing workshop that's helping in the classroom of the cooperating teacher. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012)

Teacher A also described some of what she described as teaching styles,

I kind of have different teaching styles. Sometimes I'll have a systematic structured lessons and then there are times when I have a more relaxed approach. The systematic structured lessons include phonics, learning how words work, letter knowledge and formation, phonological awareness, word structure, spelling pattern, high frequency words, etc. The more relaxed approach includes shared
and guided reading, shared and interactive writing. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012)

Teacher B highlighted a number of strategies she uses, “Collaborative learning, turn and talk, echo reading, shared reading, story response, independent reading, hands-on things like making words or using counters to count your sounds, syllables, and letters and words” (personal communication, July 24, 2012).

Several methods used to teach the children were reported by each teacher. Below are examples.

Repetition. The struggling readers require many repetitions to retain the skills. I think classes in the same skill and various ways can support their learning. I’m constantly looking for additional ways to support and re-teach skills that we’ve already covered. (Teacher A)

Observation. I think observation is my biggest [way to collect data]. I’ve been teaching for so long. (Teacher A)

I’m always writing down observations and teaching points in the lesson so I can refer back to it. (Teacher B)

Adapting. Many of the resources can be tweaked and used successfully with various populations. (Teacher B)

I have collected and bought many of my own things or been exposed to an abundance of resources throughout my career. (Teacher A)
Engaging students. I think shared reading and shared writing are two great methods. They are beneficial to all students and they can easily be differentiated based on their needs. All students are also actively engaged in working together. (Teacher B)

Theme 4. The Skills Parents and Children Bring to the Learning Process

Both teachers recognized the limited skills both the children and parents bring to the learning process. However, their wish list for things to be different included several things. Teacher A reported:

In an ideal world, I would love for children to arrive at school with the belief that reading is both enjoyable and important. This would include lots of experiences with books. Experiences with books allow a better understanding of concept without print, and children who don’t understand how print works may be lost in instructional situations. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012)

Teacher B reported on how the parents could help with their students' learning,

Parents are very vital. It’s important for parents to know that their students are building a foundation that can last them for a lifetime. The students must have constant exposure...the parents must be willing to support the child’s learning by doing some form of learning at home as well. (Personal communication, July 24, 2012)

Teacher A highlighted the role parents can play in modeling behaviors that children need to be good readers:

I think parents play an integral role in the reading success of their children.

What’s important to parents is ultimately important to their children. So, if
children see their parents enjoying books, they’ll have a strong desire to read themselves and they’ll recognize the importance of reading. If parents help students practice the skills they’re learning at school, they’re more apt to become efficient readers. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012)

Theme 5. Components of an Effective Teacher of Early Learners

Both teachers emphasized the importance of being passionate about teaching, about believing in their students, and expecting great things from them. Both believe children can overcome their limitations and become effective readers.

I think the most important thing is the teachers are passionate about what they do, but also that the teachers keep students engaged, they’re consistently self-reflective in their approach to teaching. They are constantly searching for answers to roadblocks and have high expectations, and most important they believe in the children they teach. Children will reach the expectations set for them. They are who you believe them to be. (Teacher A, personal communication, July 30, 2012)

An effective teacher is one who believes that all students have the potential. A student will do what they feel the teacher thinks that they can do. Teachers are powerful and they help to set the tone. I also think an effective teacher sets expectations for their students no matter what kind of learner. All students are held accountable for their learning. Effective teachers know how to make sure their students feel successful. If the student feels successful, then they are more likely to try other things and they can take risks, they might take on some
challenges of learning to read hopefully. Effective teachers are able to build upon the students strengths and they go above and beyond what is necessary. Teaching just doesn’t stop when you walk out the school doors. The teachers are always learning and we’re planning, strategizing, thinking and looking for ways so we can reach our students, and all of these qualities are necessary while teaching our beginning readers and helping build their foundation for what is to come. (Teacher B, personal communication, July 24, 2012)

Summary

Based on observations of students and their engagement during classroom instructional time, both teachers are highly skilled at their practice. Students are eager to participate in learning activities and the two teachers participating in this research made learning fun by addressing multiple learning styles and using a variety of materials. During the interviews several themes emerged. These included: collaboration, flexibility, instructional strategies, parental involvement, and teacher effectiveness.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of the intervention reading models of two teachers in Grades K-2. The chapter begins with a discussion of the findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, and implications for practice. Recommendations for practice and future research are made in the final section.

Discussion of the Findings

This research focused on a case study of two veteran reading intervention teachers in a Title 1 elementary school in a city in North Carolina. For the purpose of this research, both reading intervention teachers were observed for three classroom observations totaling 3 hours each using an observation instrument created by the observer and under the supervision of Clark Atlanta University professors. The teachers' lesson plans were reviewed and interviews were conducted with both teachers. Student reading data were collected on 73 intervention students in Grades K–2. The assessment instrument used to measure reading level growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year as DIBELS Reading 3D.

RQ1: How does the implementation of various teacher methodologies affect student achievement?
RQ4: Which NCLB subgroups show growth between benchmark periods?

Reading scores were collected on 73 students in the primary grades from the beginning to the end of the school year. Student reading gains were measured using the DIBELS Reading 3D assessment. Sixty-seven percent of the students were African American and 84% were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. There were no significant differences in the achievement between males and females, between students who received free and reduced lunch and those who did not, or among ethnicities. However, first graders made statistically significantly higher average gains in reading than either of the other two grade levels participating in this study.

RQ2: How do the two reading interventionists describe their instructional practice?

Both intervention teachers were interviewed in a one-on-one private setting. Both teachers believed highly in the relationship built between themselves and the students they served. Teacher A also mentioned there should be a strong codependency between the classroom teacher and the interventionists. Teacher B similarly mentioned her belief that collaboration between the two teachers was important and must be equal.

Additionally, the two participating teachers reported that flexibility is essential for success. They stressed the use of various techniques to teach and re-teach skills that under-performing students have difficulty mastering. Both teachers reported they like the autonomy they are given to self-select the materials they use on a daily basis.

Both teachers reported using various instructional strategies to serve their learners. These included: guided reading, interactive writing, read alouds, phonics
activities, and a focus on spelling patterns and high frequency words. Methods of repetition, observation, adapting, and engaging students were also reported.

Parental involvement was a theme that emerged. Both teachers stressed the importance of parents being role models for reading at home. They discussed the need for students to be exposed to a variety of books in the home setting and parents taking time to read with their child.

Effective teaching was another theme that emerged in the research. The teachers emphasized the importance of having a passion for the work they do as teachers. Additionally, they talked about believing in all children regardless of where they come from and holding them to high expectations.

RQ3: How do the reading interventionists incorporate the big five components (comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary) of reading into their planning and daily lessons?

Differentiated activities were noted during classroom observations and explicitly written in lesson planning documents. Activities included the use of magnetic letters, rhyming word index card, use of texts at different instructional levels, free writing, timed fluency exercises, and making word activities. Graphic organizers and word sorts were also observed. Because both teachers focused on the primary grades, the majority of their lesson focused on word recognition skills, including the use of phonics, as students are just learning to recognize letter sounds and beginning to read. In the second grade groups observed, students were making connections to the text and looking back in the text to discuss how they would change the ending to the story.
Several key findings emerged in this research. The intervention teacher’s race nor age had an effect on instructional ability and all students in the study showed growth. Demographics and ethnicity did not have an impact on academic achievement. Teachers built strong relationships with the students. These students have little access to books and limited experiences in their home environment. This research also showed that given full autonomy teachers are happier and more effective in their instructional delivery. Additionally, first graders showed higher growth than kindergartners.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that both intervention teachers, regardless of their race, age, or experience, demonstrated they were effective at teaching reading to students who perform below grade level. All students served by both teachers showed growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year according to the DIBELS 3D reading assessments. Various teaching styles and methodologies were used in both settings, but a focus on small group, differentiation, and the big 5 components of reading were successful. The teachers demonstrated that effective teaching is a result of knowing and understanding students’ strengths and weaknesses as well as their individual skill needs. When teachers build connections with students, academic achievement can increase. All students have the ability to be successful given the proper environment. This includes exposing children to various texts and copious amounts of oral dialogue within the four walls of a classroom.
Another key point to note is that neither teacher used a specific reading program. They pulled materials and created lessons from various sources. Again, they did not follow a one-size-fits all scripted program such as *Success for All* or basal readers created by various publishers. Given the autonomy to plan their own lessons, both teachers were able to increase student achievement.

Both teachers perceived themselves as effective teachers of reading with the student population served. The researcher concluded that the teachers’ perceptions of their work and the researcher’s perceptions closely align. Both teachers demonstrated their instructional leadership skills were successful in their respective classrooms with students in the targeted primary grades.

Several key themes emerged in the research study. Both interventionists strongly encouraged collaboration and support between themselves and classroom teachers. It is evident however, that stronger relationships with interventionists have been built with the first grade teachers. Both interventionists used the flexibility to plan for their own instructional methods. Additionally, both teachers used various methodologies like repetition, observations, adaptability, and high student engagement. It must be noted that Common Core State Standards will be rolled out completely during the 2012-2013 school year.

Both teachers stressed the role of the parents was to play a part in the teaching process of their children. They suggested parents should do this by modeling reading at home and buying books to build home libraries and reading with their children daily.
Lastly, both teachers recognized that high expectations should be set for all learners. They strongly stressed that effective teachers believe that all students can and will learn.

The only noticeable difference between the two teachers was that one was a year away from retirement and the other was less than 10 years into the teaching profession. Because of the difference in age, the younger teacher’s classroom moved at a very quick pace and she was highly energetic. Both teachers believed in their students and knew they could all learn if given the proper support through differentiated activities. Because of their success as reading interventionists, it was apparent to the researcher that the two teachers observed in this research study were both successful with the primary grade students. Their teaching positions in the school were highly valued by other staff members.

**Implications**

The results of this study can be used to inspire school leaders to place the most effective teachers in reading intervention positions. This is especially important when working with less than proficient readers in Title 1 schools. The finding should also encourage future leaders to trust teachers and give them autonomy in selecting materials and resources to teach students. When schools and districts are given money, leaders should be able to leverage with the school system so that the money can be spent on more people and not more programs. People (like the two intervention teachers in this study) are more valuable than a new program that typically goes away after a few years. School should invest in great teachers who are effective in raising student achievement.
Additionally, monies should be used to develop and train teachers through professional development opportunities.

School leaders must become familiar with high-yield effective instructional teaching practices. The demand for leaders to be instructional leaders is greater than ever before. In school systems across the nation, we see school leaders who are being demoted or moved out of their principal positions because they are not raising student achievement. Gains in student achievement can only be achieved if principals place a large percentage of their time focused strategically on increasing instruction in classrooms.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of this study would be size of the sample. The study was conducted in a Title 1 elementary school located in a city in North Carolina. Only two teachers served students who were not reading proficiently in Grades K–2. Therefore, the research sample was two teachers at the same school. The sample size limits the scope of the study. In addition, data from only 73 students were used to determine achievement gains.

Another limitation was the Reading 3D assessment instrument used to measure student growth. Because the assessment was given by a random teacher who has been trained on the instrument, validity could come into question. Teachers at the school meet periodically to discuss interrelated reliability. They tested children and compared student responses from the assessment to ensure that all assessors have the same expectations.
An additional limitation of this study might be the openness of both teachers. The teachers were employees at the school where the research was conducted and the researcher was their immediate supervisor. Because the researcher supervised both teachers in the traditional school setting, an observation instrument was created to objectively rate each teacher during classroom observations. Interviews were used as well. After interviews were conducted, both participants had the opportunity to review transcribed responses.

Lastly, the intervention initiative is not a program designed and certified by an outside agency. This case study was conducted with two teachers who were given full autonomy to select their materials and plan lessons according to their own professional judgment.

Recommendations

The local district is encouraged to continue to hire teachers based on a wide range of diversity, age range, and experience level. At the local school level the two reading interventionists in this study should be used to lead onsite professional development in the area of reading instruction. They could also lead sessions on how to build personal relationships with students in order to increase academic achievement. Additionally, the first grade team could model how they plan with interventionists during PLC team meetings for other grade levels to watch. At the classroom level, teachers could send books home by participating in a “Bag Book” program where students are allowed to take books home on a rotating basis. The building level administrator needs to continue to
diversify homeroom student rosters making sure that various races, ability levels, and
genders are compiled into classrooms. Additionally, administration needs to consider
giving autonomy to more staff members.

In sum, the intervention initiative needs to be expanded to higher grade levels to
serve as a bridge as the students gain competence. The two reading interventionists in the
study could be used as models for best practices.

**Summary**

The findings of this study indicate that the reading teachers examined are
effective with the population they serve when teachers are given the autonomy to self-
select materials and resources to provide appropriate reading instruction. They also
agreed that the reading intervention teacher cannot be the sole person responsible in the
school for supporting students who are not reading on grade level. Classroom teachers in
the regular education setting must take some accountability and provide supports when
the student is with them for the majority of their instructional day. Both teachers agreed
that support must come from students' home environments. Both teachers were
proponents of building highly effective classrooms by attending ongoing professional
development and staying abreast of current reading research.
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Personal
1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. Have you taught at more than one grade level? If so, which ones?
3. How long have you been teaching reading intervention classes?
4. What are your areas of certification and degrees?

Instructional Skills
1. Currently you are teaching at the early primary level, what skills/concepts do you think students need to come to school knowing in order to be successful in reading?
2. Is there any particular method you have found successful to teach reading to these early learners? If so, describe it and how you use it to support your intervention program.
3. When you develop your reading plans, what elements do you take into consideration to ensure that the needs of all learners are met?
4. What type of data, other than formal assessment data, do you use to analyze the needs of your learners?
5. What instructional strategies do you use to engage your students?
6. What skills do your students have the most difficulty grasping? Which strategies do you use most often to re-teach these skills?
7. In that this is the early primary level, what role do parents play in supporting the reading skills of your learners?
8. Do you receive any instructional support from the administrative team or district office staff in teaching reading intervention classes?
Appendix A (continued)

Other

1. What is the biggest challenge you face with the student population you serve?

2. Describe the elements of an effective teacher and how they play a role in teaching children to read at an early stage.

3. Are there any additional resources, that if you had, would enable you to teach a certain student population, i.e. materials designed especially for males or ESL students? If so, what are they?

4. Do you feel intervention reading should be a prescribed curriculum or do you enjoy the freedom and flexibility using what you self-select?

5. Do you have any additional comments about the current reading intervention program?
APPENDIX B

Classroom Observation Form

Teacher __________________ Grade Level__________ # of Students__________

INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS:

1. The teacher's plan reflects the Common Core Standards/Objectives for grade level. Additionally, the use of data, differentiated instructional techniques, re-teaching strategies are all included in the development of the plans and are directed at active student engagement.

2. During the reading instruction, appropriate grade level instructional materials/and or strategies (focus on Student Learning Styles) are used to motivate learners. Examples of materials and instructional strategies:

3. The Objectives/Common Core Standards are posted in the classroom and the day's objective is introduced to students at the beginning of the lesson and/ or reviewed at the conclusion of the lesson.

   Posted: Yes____ No____

   Introduced at Beginning of Class/ or Reviewed at conclusion of lesson: Yes____ No____

4. The teacher models expected behavior for students, provides assistance when needed, and allows students time to practice designated skills.

   Provided student/s assistance: Yes____ No____

   Students practiced skills: Yes____ No____

5. The teacher focused on both word recognition (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, etc.) and comprehension skills (knowledge, application, synthesis, evaluation, etc.)

   Yes____ No____
Appendix B (continued)

Examples of the Skills taught or reinforced

6. The teacher incorporates technology in the development of student learning.
   Yes _____   No _____
   Examples

7. The teacher uses a variety of techniques to check for student understanding of skills taught. Examples: Daily observation of students demonstrating understanding, assessments tools, records anecdotal notes, etc.
   Yes _____   No _____
   Examples observed

8. Students participate in read alouds, choral reading, guided reading, computer/technical-based support, partner reading, or pair sharing.
   Yes _____   No _____
   Examples observed

9. Students demonstrate understanding of stories read. Teacher questions are at various levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
   Yes _____   No _____
   Levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy observed
Appendix B (continued)

10. Students are actively engaged in the learning of focused objective/s. They move to various learning stations, work in groups or pairs, work at computer learning centers or interact with other hands on materials.

   Yes _____  No _____

   Examples of activities observed

   __________________________________________________________

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOCUS

Classroom is neat and orderly and prepared learning materials are easily accessible for both teacher and students.

   Yes____  No_____  

   Comments____________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   Teacher has established routines and utilizes both verbal and non-verbal communications to manage the class.

   Yes____  No_____  

   Comments____________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   There is an environment of mutual respect and students demonstrate they are comfortable sharing ideas.

   Yes____  No_____  

   Comments____________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   The class is organized in such a manner that student movement and engagement is not restricted.

   Yes____  No_____  

   Comments____________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________
Appendix B (continued)

The teacher knows all students by name and uses many affective learning strategies to engage them in the learning process.

Yes _____  No _____

Comments: _________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


reading programs (pp. 281-308). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.


