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SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: LITERACY INTERVENTIONISTS
PERCEPTIONS OF THE BEST PRACTICES AND BARRIERS
THAT EFFECT STUDENT GROWTH
IN READING

by

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SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: LITERACY INTERVENTIONISTS

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my love, Bryan. My dearest son, you have been with me throughout this journey as a constant source of inspiration, motivation, and pure joy. Reflecting on the years of this work, I am reminded of the early mornings I dropped you off at day care and the late nights daddy put you to bed alone while I immersed myself in class and research. As you grow and discover your own path, I pray you always remember how much your daddy and I love you, the importance of perseverance, curiosity, and fun. May God put the right people in your life to guide you the right direction and help you reach your goals. This dissertation is dedicated to you, my precious boy, with all my heart. With all my love, Mama

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ABSTRACT

SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: LITERACY INTERVENTIONISTS

PERCEPTIONS OF THE BEST PRACTICES AND BARRIERS

THAT EFFECT STUDENT GROWTH

IN READING

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2024

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This exploratory narrative inquiry investigated the perceptions and experiences of 11 elementary literacy interventionists, focusing on their interactions with students with reading difficulties and support for classroom teachers. The study took place in one large suburban school district in the Texas Gulf Coast that served over 80,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. This inquiry aimed to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of literacy interventionists by looking at how they supported students, teachers, and the systems that were in place to support them in their job roles. Analysis of the data collected uncovered six themes that accentuated the intricate landscape of literacy interventionists: school and home collaboration, teacher coaching, administrator support, intervention fidelity and preparation, data informed decision making, and setting the foundation of early literacy skills. Overall, the literacy

interventionists' experiences highlighted the dedication, challenges, and aspirations to improve their students' reading abilities. They called for flexibility, stronger Tier 1 connections, and continued support for literacy intervention programs. The collective experiences of these interventionists offer valuable insights into literacy education and the evolving landscape of their roles within the educational system.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Monday morning, walking early into campus excited to start a new week. “This week I am going to see all of my students,” I quietly and positively think to myself. I walk to my room to prepare for my seven intervention groups. I review the running record I recorded over two weeks ago trying to pull out the specific teaching point my students need to excel them to the next reading level. With the materials ready and a plan in place, I head to pick up my first group of intervention students. As I pass by the front office, I hear a familiar voice, “Oh Mrs. Marshall I need to meet with you for a few minutes to prepare for my meeting coming up with the area superintendent.” At that moment I knew I would not be seeing my students again that day.

This recalled moment was a repeated scene during the five years I worked with struggling readers classified as Tier 3, which was my primary job role as a literacy interventionist. Tier 3 students are students who need individualized support to meet their needs beyond what is provided in a general education classroom (Kuo, 2014). Many interruptions such as last-minute meetings, student testing, and campus programs often interfered with the fidelity of working with students. This was in contrast with my experience, which had taught me when I regularly met with students, they made more growth in reading.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) only 35% of American fourth-grade students performed at or above grade level in 2019 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019). This means that 65% of students in the United States are considered below grade level by the time they finish the fourth grade. The NAEP also assessed students’ self-efficacy in 2019, reporting that only about one-

third of students in fourth grade feel that they can “definitely explain” something they had just read (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019).

The 2022 National Report Card ranked Texas as 33rd in the country in fourth grade reading proficiency, ranking the state in the same position as the report released in 2015 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022). Historically and currently, there are state and nationally mandated programs that are intended to support students’ literacy skills and academic success.

In 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was issued ensuring “a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation” and regulated how states and schools supply early intervention and special education services to these students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). In response to the mandate from IDEA many school districts have implemented the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Response to intervention is a multi-tier approach of services in which schools provide different levels of intervention that increase in time and intensity depending on how the student responds to the support (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). With this method, students can receive appropriate intervention with the hope of making gains and filling any gaps in learning they may have. “In general, most students with reading difficulties make progress when provided with (a) more instruction, (b) more intensive and efficient instruction, and (c) extended opportunities to practice with and without teacher support” (Vaughn et al., 2010). To provide intentional and differentiated instruction both in Tier 1 and in interventions, “teachers need specific and explicit linguistic knowledge to address the needs of all children on the continuum of reading and language proficiency” (Moats & Foorman, 2003, p. 24). RTI has significantly impacted how reading/ literacy specialists (also referred to as interventionists) aid struggling

readers and writers (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). These specialists play a crucial role, primarily assisting students facing challenges in reading and writing. Their role is pivotal in preventing unnecessary referrals and improper placements of children with reading difficulties into special education programs (Bean et al., 2018). These professionals actively engage in assessing students' literacy progress, conducting ongoing monitoring, analyzing data, interpreting results, and contributing to decisions regarding student grouping and movement across learning Tiers (Bean et al., 2018).

The present chapter will state the research problem for this study, the significance of the study, the research purpose and questions, and define key terms.

Research Problem

Literacy interventionists have been shown to contribute to the creation and maintenance of initiatives that lead to improved reading success (Bean et al., 2018). A professional, such as a literacy interventionist, trained in working with at-risk students in fundamental strategies and techniques should be the one working with the students who need the most support and providing Tier 3 instruction (Wanzek et al., 2017). Having a trained professional whose main purpose is to work with struggling readers allows the highest quality instruction for at-risk students. Students who received intervention when they first showed reading difficulties in kindergarten benefited from the intervention and continued to perform in the average range until at least seventh grade (Partanen & Siegal, 2013; Al Otaiba et al., 2014). Even with a call for reform from state and federal governments with legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) low performance in reading is a critical issue in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020). Literacy interventionists work with Tier 3 students allowing them to have a direct view of what supports work for students

and what may hinder student learning. In their study of reading specialists/interventionists within exemplary schools, Bean et al. (2003) discovered that beyond delivering direct instruction to students, these professionals dedicate a significant amount of time serving as valuable resources for classroom teachers. Similarly, a more recent study by Bean et al. highlighted the responsibilities related to these professionals being divided into both supporting students and supporting teachers (2015). This results in interventionists needing a fundamental understanding of adult learning and leadership skills to effectively support teachers on their campus (Bean et al., 2015). The experiences of these instructional leaders may reveal some of the barriers they face in their job role and support the research on best practices in reading.

Significance of the Study

To serve all students' literacy needs, grapple with the challenges posed by rigorous standards, and fulfill the accountability mandates imposed by districts and states, many campuses turn to the assistance of their literacy interventionists who use the RTI model (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020; Dagen & Bean, 2020). These interventionists often juggle the dual roles of engaging directly with students and collaborating with teachers to enhance literacy education across their campus. The present study is designed to explore the experiences and perceptions of elementary literacy interventionists to identify key practices that can promote reading growth in students and barriers that may prevent success in Tier 3 interventions. Literacy interventionists, as a part of school leadership, are a key component in improving educational systems and school achievement and should have a say in the decisions made around literacy on their campus (Dagen & Bean, 2020). "All literacy leaders can influence the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of those with whom they work if they listen and learn from all those in their schools" (Dagen & Bean, 2020, p. 17). This

information can be added to research on literacy interventionists, instructional practices, and curriculum development in schools, as well as to guide district systems to support these instructional leaders. The findings of this study can help to improve reading outcomes for students who struggle with literacy and support their academic success.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this exploratory narrative inquiry is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary literacy interventionists, focusing on their interactions with struggling readers and support for classroom teachers. This inquiry aims to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals by looking at how they support students, teachers, and the systems that are in place to support them in their job roles. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading.

Definition of Key Terms

Fidelity: Interventions provided align with the pre-established standards involving the time, lesson and activities, and materials allowing for the best opportunity for anticipated effects on student achievement (King-Sears et al., 2018).

Interventionist: A trained professional who provides responsive, individualized, quality intervention to a student (Wanzek et al., 2017).

Reading Achievement: The expectations of student performance on multiple genres and difficulty of the text and the production of appropriate reading behaviors (NAEP, 2019).

Response to Intervention (RTI): A multi-tier approach of services in which schools provide different levels of intervention that increase in time and intensity depending on how the student responds to the support (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009).

Tier 1: High-quality classroom instruction provided by a qualified classroom teacher that all students receive daily (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011).

Tier 2: Extra support provided in a small group setting to intervene before students develop dramatic learning gaps (Gilbert et al., 2013; Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011).

Tier 3: Individualized, intensive intervention delivered in a small group, or one-to-one setting designed to provide foundational support for struggling students (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011).

Conclusion

The United States is in dire need of effective support for students in reading (Dean et al., 2016; Firmender et al., 2013; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020). Literacy interventionists play a crucial role in addressing the literacy challenges faced by students (Bean et al., 2018). Their involvement in assessing progress, conducting ongoing monitoring, and contributing to decisions on student grouping is essential in preventing unnecessary referrals to special education programs and contribute significantly to the success of the RTI framework (Wanzek et al., 2017). The current study strives to contribute to the literature by analyzing the perceptions of campus literacy interventionists on what leads to student growth in reading in a large school district in Southeast Texas. The focus of the next chapter is a review of the academic literature regarding literacy interventionists, reading interventions, and the role of Response to Intervention (RTI) in schools.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understanding the complex landscape of reading interventions within educational settings involves a comprehensive exploration of various approaches, frameworks, and the pivotal role of literacy interventionists. This chapter will explore past research surrounding reading interventions, Response to Intervention, the effect of Response to Intervention, Educators' knowledge of Response to Intervention, and literacy interventionists providing insight into enhancing literacy outcomes for learners.

Reading Interventions: fidelity, group size, and duration

There is some debate when it comes to best practices in reading intervention. Wanzek et al. (2018) analyzed 25 different reading intervention studies to see the effect of early reading intervention. When reviewing the data of students in kindergarten through third grade, intervening early had positive results on student achievement. When attempting to find similarities among cases to provide a list of items that correlate to effective intervention, Wanzek et al. (2018) were unable to find anything that was the same across all 25 studies.

Even with the lack of consistency, one practice that continuously is brought into question is intervention fidelity. King-Sears et al. (2018) developed a five-step process to ensure the fidelity of intervention services provided to students. The five-step process includes modeling the intervention, sharing the intervention's fidelity protocol, coaching the teacher before implementation, observing for fidelity, and reviewing the fidelity data. They began by sending teachers the intervention steps and had teachers practice intervention during professional development before providing services to students. As the interventions began, teachers did well but soon began to waiver from the set protocols until they received feedback during their next RTI meeting. Results indicated that the

students who received intervention from teachers with a high-fidelity rate showed more academic growth. King-Sears et al. (2018) even warned against making decisions on students when intervention fidelity is low and found that teachers who used the five-step process had better fidelity rates.

Capin et al. (2017) discovered that intervention fidelity rates often were not reported or analyzed. They set out to investigate how intervention fidelity was “supported, measured, and reported in reading intervention studies conducted with students at risk or with reading difficulties in grades K–3 from 1995 through 2015” (Capin et al., 2017, p. 885). Studies with personnel who reported fidelity rates also seemed to follow the program requirements more thoroughly resulting in greater success at the end of the intervention (Capin et al., 2017).

Other recurring themes for best intervention practices include group size and duration. A study conducted by Ross et al. (2015) explored how the size of an intervention group and different intervention times affected student achievement when using an evidence-based reading fluency intervention. The study found that all students receiving intervention made growth in reading, but that longer intervention time led to larger growth. However, group size had no statistically significant impact on student achievement. Vaughn et al. (2010) found that limiting the number of students in a group and increasing the allotted minutes per session allowed for increased intensity of intervention resulting in increased reading achievement. With their review of literature, they found there was no statistically significant difference between the outcomes of students in a one-on-one setting and a one-to-three setting but students were able to make a more accelerated amount of growth compared to a group of one to ten. By having smaller group sizes teachers can be more responsive in their instruction and better meet the needs of all students within the group (Vaughn et al., 2010).

Contrarily a study conducted by Denton et al. (2011) analyzed the impacts of small group reading intervention given for three different durations and ended up having different results. Participants included 192 first-grade students who were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups; “extended (4 sessions per week, 16 weeks; n = 66), concentrated (4 sessions per week, 8 weeks; n = 64), or distributed (two sessions per week, 16 weeks; n = 62)” (Denton et al., 2011, p. 208). Findings revealed no statistically significant differences between the intervention groups.

Another best practice for quality intervention is early intervention for students (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2010). Al Otaiba et al. (2014) evaluated two types of RTI practices: typical and dynamic. Typical RTI requires students to spend time in Tier 1 instruction before progressing to the second or third Tier if intervention is required. Alternatively, dynamic RTI has students immediately receive Tiered intervention if screened results indicate the student is struggling. The study sought to discover whether students achieved higher growth by allowing them to receive a set time of Tier 1 instruction before entering intervention or by immediately starting intervention based on pretest results. Participants were selected from 10 schools and included 34 first-grade classrooms equaling 522 students. The study found that students who began intervention immediately showed more growth than students who waited eight weeks.

Gersten et al. (2020) also found small group reading interventions had a positive effect on student reading achievement, but discovered the amount varied across the skill being assessed. Gersten et al. (2020) analyzed 33 experimental and quasi-experimental studies that were performed between 2002 and 2017. The interventions utilized also contained similarities, covering many foundational reading skills such as phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, spelling, comprehension, and sometimes writing.

Wanzek & Vaughn (2010) found that reading interventions that were the most successful were able to provide students with both phonics instruction and leveled texts. Austin et al. (2017) suggests best practices in intervention align with the report released by the National Reading Panel in 2020 which includes phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Baker et al. (2015) also emphasized that students should not be removed from Tier 1 instruction to receive additional support, but instead, intervention should be a supplement to core instruction.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to reading intervention for elementary students. However, this research suggests that early intervention, intervention fidelity, small group instruction, and incorporating a variety of foundational reading skills can lead to positive outcomes. Educators need to ensure the fidelity of intervention services provided to students, as these studies have shown that students who receive intervention from teachers or interventionists with high-fidelity rates show more academic growth. The experiences of literacy interventionists can shed light on the resources, support, and training needed to implement interventions successfully. By addressing these needs, educators can ensure that interventions are implemented with fidelity and that students can be provided with the necessary assistance to excel in their reading performance.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

According to Vaughn & Fuchs (2003), the Response to Intervention model was developed in 1982 by the National Research Council after concern was raised about the number of students qualifying for special education services with a learning disability (LD) label. Many students were originally identified using a wait-to-fail Model. This meant educators would wait to see if students eventually made improvements before offering any specialized educational services (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010).

The 1982 National Research Council suggested students should be classified as needing special education if they meet three conditions: (1) the quality of instruction received by the student, (2) the probability of the special education program providing necessary support for the student, (3) the validity and reliability of the identification testing for the student (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). This method meant educators would not only be looking at the outcome of the child but also looking at the instructional setting to see if the quality of instruction were adequate and the student's response to this setting. "The model of using response to instruction as a means of identifying students with LD has the highly desirable benefit of early identification and early instruction" (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Using this model removes the question of whether or not the instruction was the reason the student was struggling and allows for a more accurate diagnosis of an LD. RTI also brings with it the expectation that all students be screened to identify students who do not have a disability who are still in danger of not meeting grade level expectations (Austin et al., 2017).

Often the implementation of RTI is looked at from a campus level, but O'Connor & Freeman (2012) investigated the level of support that should be considered from the district level to support campuses. Even though many schools have implemented the RTI model, not all schools are seeing the results typically seen in the RTI model (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). They suggest that direction from the district and the expectations of procedures in place have a significant impact on the overall achievement of the schools. Without this support, some campuses may lose the motivation to keep the work moving forward. O'Connor & Freeman (2012) found that 50% of the 700 schools they surveyed do not feel as though district and school leaders provide support when analyzing data and other issues that arise. They suggest for a viable RTI model in a school there are three

things district-level support needs to have in place: “leaders’ knowledge of RTI principles and practices, leadership structures, and organizational frameworks” (p. 299).

Tier 1 Instruction

In the RTI framework, all students receive Tier 1 instruction from a certified teacher (RTI Action Network, n.d.). This everyday instruction gives students access to high-quality reading instruction and periodic assessments to determine if the student requires further assistance (RTI Action Network, n.d.; Swanson et al., 2017). Swanson et al. (2017) used a meta-analysis to explore how Tier 1 reading instruction affects student achievement in reading in fourth through twelfth-grade students. Results synthesized from 37 publications indicated a positive impact of Tier 1 instruction on student reading achievement. Furthermore, students considered to be struggling in reading showed consistent or enhanced reading comprehension compared to students who did not receive Tier 1 instruction.

Tier II Instruction

Students who continue to struggle despite differentiated instruction may benefit from Tier II instruction to quickly increase student achievement (Baker et al., 2015). Tier II students are often seen between 20 to 40 minutes a day in a small group setting three to five times a week outside of Tier 1 instruction (Baker et al., 2015). Baker et al. (2015) claim effective Tier II instruction includes explicit instruction. Explicit instruction, according to Baker et al. (2015), comprises the gradual release model of instruction (the teacher shows how to do it, the teacher and students do it together with teachers giving feedback, and then students practice the skill independently).

Baker et al. (2015) conducted a study involving 22 Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) schools. The study was designed to examine the impact of Tier II reading instruction on students who barely missed an identified cut-off score. Participants

included 1,509 first-grade students. Students were assigned instruction based on their results on the SAT10 assessment. Of these students, 819 scored in the 30th or above percentile and only received Tier 1 instruction, 392 scored at or above the 10th percentile and received both Tier 1 and Tier II intervention, and 298 students scored below the 10th percentile and received a more intensely developed intervention. To maintain the fidelity of the intervention, the schools hired and trained 67 interventionists to provide the Tier II intervention. This intervention was a supplement to Tier 1 instruction and included an additional 30 minutes of small-group instruction. During this time students reviewed Tier 1 content and were exposed to content that would be coming up in Tier 1. All students were given the SAT10 assessment again as a posttest to compare scores. Baker et al. (2015) discovered that students who received Tier II intervention made greater growth as indicated by the SAT 10 assessment than students who fell just above the cut-off score from the pretest and only received Tier 1 instruction.

Tier III Instruction

Students who require more intense intervention may require the support given in Tier 3 instruction. Tier 3 instruction usually includes a smaller group size (typically 1-1), more sessions weekly, increased session times, increased total time in the intervention, and is delivered by a more experienced or trained teacher (Vaughn et al., 2010). In a conceptual overview, Wanzek & Vaughn (2010) explained that the majority of students who receive quality Tier 1 and Tier 2 support will not need Tier 3 intervention. According to Wanzek & Vaughn (2010), the main differences among the Tiers in RTI are the duration of the intervention, the group size, the adaptation of materials to meet individual student needs, and the professional who is providing the intervention. They emphasized the importance of these professionals delivering Tier 3 instruction to be able to “demonstrate very high levels of expertise and knowledge” (p. 306). To avoid another

version of the wait-to-fail model, Wanzek & Vaughn (2010) highly suggest educators should intervene with students early and not force students to struggle with interventions that will not meet their needs. Austin et al. (2017) also reported that intervening early reduces the learning gap for students and helps them catch up to students performing at a higher level.

Denton et al. (2013) set out to find the impact of personalized Tier 3 reading intervention on second-grade students who did not improve after receiving both Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. Participants included 72 students who were randomly placed into research intervention groups or school-provided intervention groups. Students in the research intervention group received 45-minute small group instruction sessions daily for 24-26 weeks outside of their regular classroom. This intervention included explicit instruction, guided practice, and a chance for them to apply what they learned independently. The intervention consisted of the components of word study, fluency practice, progress monitoring, oral reading and reading comprehension, and writing support. Students in the school-provided intervention group received support from their classroom teacher which included scheduled small group sessions and a few tutorials using a wide variety of materials. After analyzing the results from a pre and post assessment the researchers found that the research intervention group showed more growth in the areas of word identification, decoding, and fluency on a short passage.

Austin et al. (2017) also found that students who receive Tier 3 interventions can make significant growth in reading but caution that even with accelerated learning, often do not make enough growth to catch up to students who did not need additional support. Using a systematic search, Austin et al. (2017) analyzed 12 studies that involved students who did not meet the expectations required to exit Tier 2 reading interventions and needed more intense Tier 3 intervention. They concluded that Tier 3 intervention can

significantly impact the lives of students both inside and outside of the school setting and make exceptional growth in the area of reading.

RTI is a model that focuses on early identification and intervention of students with learning difficulties and aims to improve the quality of instruction and support for all students. By studying the perceptions of literacy interventionists' valuable insight into the implementation and effectiveness of the RTI model can be used to improve the RTI model and support the educational outcomes of all students, especially those with learning difficulties.

Effects of Response to Intervention (RTI) on Student Reading Performance

Grapin et al. (2019) researched the long-term effects of RTI on students' reading comprehension. Their longitudinal study consisted of 489 Kindergarten through Fifth-grade students in Florida. State test scores were reviewed when students who received RTI in Second grade completed the assessments in Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade. These scores were compared to students who did not receive RTI services in Second Grade. The results indicated significantly higher gains in reading comprehension for students who were part of the RTI process when taking the assessment in Fourth and Fifth grade than the students who did not receive RTI support.

Nilvius & Svensson (2022) were also determined to discover the effectiveness of the RTI process in improving decoding and reading comprehension skills and were able to see the effects of RTI intervention in students years later. This quasi-experimental study included second-grade students who were monitored longitudinally for over two and a half years which consisted of an experimental group and a comparison group. All students within the experimental group with learning disabilities were identified and were able to receive differentiated instruction to meet their needs. After the intervention time concluded, students in the experimental group were able to return to exit the intervention

and return strictly to Tier 1 instruction and the results from progress monitoring were sustained for at least a year and a half after the intervention was concluded.

After a literature review of 31 articles published between 2010 and 2020, Arias-Gundin & Llamazares (2021) agreed with the findings from these other studies. They determined that schools that employ RTI support the early identification and intervention of students with reading difficulties. The RTI model allowed for individualized instruction and support before waiting to see if they might qualify for support under Special Education labels, many students received the help they needed and returned to Tier 1 instruction without the need to evaluate for a disability.

Educators' Knowledge of RTI

Building upon the insights gained from various studies on educators' perceptions of RTI, it is evident that there are still challenges in understanding and implementing this framework effectively. Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman (2011) surveyed 142 elementary school teachers using both a questionnaire and a multiple-choice knowledge survey about components in reading. The questionnaire collected information about the teachers' background in reading, their knowledge of particular assessments, best practices and models, and the interventions that they used for RTI. The study found that participants scored the greatest in the areas of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, but the lowest in RTI methods. The results indicated teachers were familiar with the Tiered system in RTI, but not how to use research-based practices and interventions in their classroom to effectively implement RTI.

Similar to Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman, Castro-Villarreal et al. (2014) wanted to find out more about the perceptions of teachers but more specifically about the RTI model in their school. This qualitative study found that the majority of teachers they surveyed received a low score on the definition of RTI and were unable to thoroughly

answer questions about the components of the RTI model. After using a constant comparison analysis four themes emerged concerning teacher perception of RTI: (1) general understanding of RTI, (2) barriers to RTI in their schools, (3) ideas to enhance the RTI model, and (4) ideas to make paperwork more efficient (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). The theme of barriers to RTI in their schools can be broken down even more into training, time and resources, and systems practices. To have an effective RTI model in a school this study suggested that not only teachers, but specialists (including interventionists), and administrators need to have adequate training. This training should consist of a deep understanding and overview of the RTI model, implementation, data-based decision-making, and research-based quality instructional practices and interventions (Castro-Villareal et al., 2014). The teachers in this study indicated a lack of clarity on the time needed for interventions before moving to a different Tier and how to effectively prepare interventions for students with fidelity. The participants suggested that the reason for this possible misunderstanding is the absence of support from specialists and administrators.

A study conducted by Bester & Conway (2021) wanted to investigate the perceptions of foundation phase teachers on the viability of RTI in their schools. This qualitative exploratory case study involved nine teachers who taught in a primary school. All teachers at this school were invited to participate in a focus group. The focus group interview consisted of six open-ended questions and was semi-structured to allow the researchers flexibility to ask additional questions for participants to expand their answers. Researchers used inductive thematic analysis to gain insight into themes that emerged from this data. They found that the participants were new to the idea of RTI but already implementing progress monitoring of all students. The teachers indicated that they were not familiar with differentiated instruction and would refer students for special education

services without looking at other factors that might be impeding their reading performance. Similar to Castro-Villareal et al.'s study in 2014, a lack of resources, time, and deep understanding of the model became a trend among participants when thinking about challenges they foresee if they implemented RTI. The teachers did indicate that they were encouraged by the possibilities the RTI model could have on student achievement for all learners.

Another study on teachers' perceptions of RTI was conducted by Greenfield et al. (2010). Using a consensual qualitative methodology, the researchers were wanting to investigate the views of teachers and ancillary staff during the first year of implementation of the RTI model in their district. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to obtain data on eight female teachers and analyzed through a consensus method to identify themes and trends amongst the participants. A total of five themes emerged from this data: assessment and progress monitoring, intervention and instruction, impact on teacher practice, the culture of reform, and the special education referral process for emergent bilingual students. From these themes, a few challenges occurred that a similar to Castro- Villareal et al.'s study in 2014 and Bester & Conway's study in 2021. Teachers lacked the knowledge to pick out valid progress monitoring assessments that would give them the information they need to make intentional instructional decisions about students. Teachers began positively and with a plan of action but were limited in their awareness of research-based interventions to use to adjust instruction as needed. Teachers appreciated being able to discuss as a team about referring a student for special education services, but there was still confusion on when to refer emergent bilingual students and when to stop interventions if they suspect a student will be referred (Greenfield et al., 2010).

Hoover & Love (2011) analyzed a case study of a school that implemented RTI on their own. They found that staff who are involved in the RTI process on the campus

need clarity on the framework, ongoing support in to attend to specific issues and needs of the school, knowledge of the similarities and differences of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction, and who is providing this service, ongoing training, and professional development for those delivering services (Hoover & Love, 2011).

In agreement with Hoover & Love, Raagas (2021) found that many school administrators, teachers, and other staff did not have a strong understanding of the RTI framework causing issues with implementation. School Administrators in particular had trouble identifying universal screeners and evidence-based interventions (Raagas, 2021). Raagas also found that administrators have a strong impact on the implementation of RTI and their actions can support or hinder RTI on a campus, especially if they do not support teachers and the staff that are providing intervention (2021).

Literacy interventionists can play a critical role in supporting teachers in implementing RTI effectively. Analyzing the experiences of literacy interventionists may add additional research to the barriers to RTI implementation, suggestions for effective implementation of the model, and ensuring all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Literacy Interventionists

Literacy interventionists play a critical role in supporting Tier 3 students (Bean et al., 2018). Bean et al. (2015) conducted a study utilizing a national survey of professionals in the area of reading that asked questions about their background that prepared them for their current roles. Over 2,500 professionals completed questionnaires revealing their struggles to effectively complete their job roles due to the multiple responsibilities required by their campus administrators. Many of the participants battled with balancing time spent on intervention with struggling readers and assisting classroom teachers. The

study discovered the need for specific job descriptions and clear definitions of their roles and responsibilities.

Recognizing the pivotal role of literacy interventionists, Porter et al. (2022) understands the necessity for literacy interventionists to have a depth of knowledge in content, literacy practices, and researched based interventions to provide explicit and intentional differentiated instruction to the students who are in the most need of support. In their study, Porter et al. (2022) were determined to find out whether literacy interventionists, special educators, and classroom teachers' mastery of the content was necessary to effectively work with primary students. Participants included 1369 K-2 classroom teachers, 74 reading interventionists, and 131 special education teachers. The participants were asked to partake in a knowledge test that assessed phonological sensitivity, phonemic awareness, decoding, encoding, and morphology. The results supported Porter et al.'s hypothesis that literacy interventionists demonstrated the highest level of understanding. With this high level of understanding, they can offer key insight into what supports help students to make growth in reading.

Both Bean et al. (2015) and Porter et al. (2022) highlight the importance of having clear job descriptions and a depth of knowledge in literacy practices and interventions for literacy interventionists and other professionals working with struggling readers. The perceptions of literacy interventionists can provide insight into their experiences and challenges, as well as their understanding of effective practices and interventions for improving reading outcomes.

Summary

Response to Intervention (RTI) is one approach to support students who struggle with reading (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). Through the rigorous and appropriate implementation of this model, students have been shown to make growth in reading

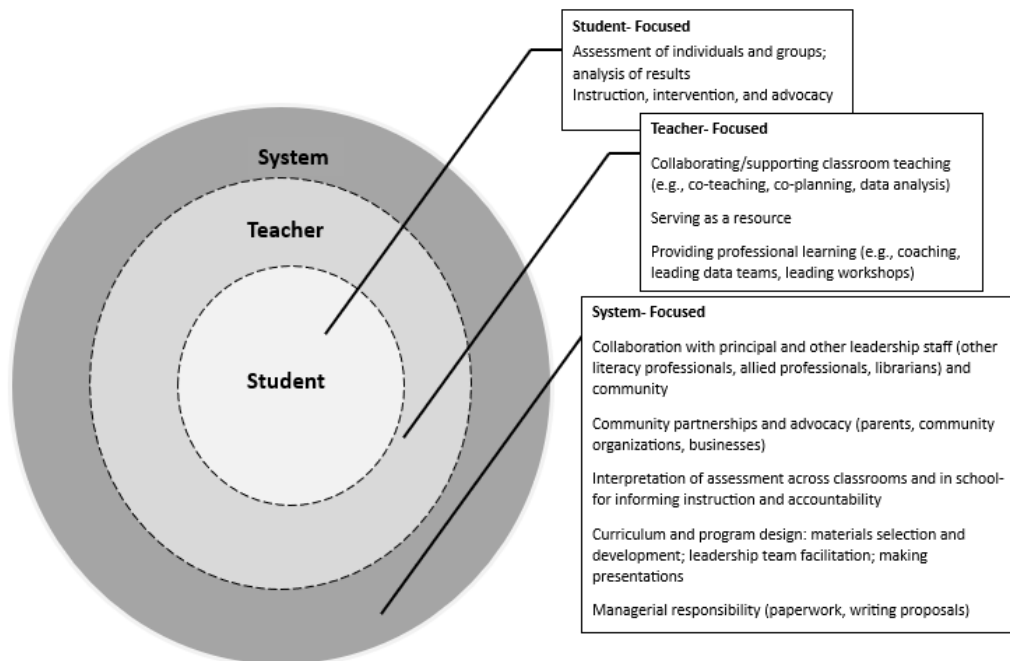
compared to struggling readers who did not receive an intervention (Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman, 2011). Many factors come into play when defining what quality intervention looks like, but researchers have not been able to agree on the exact list of qualifications (Wanzek et al., 2018). A few of the factors that are recurring and still debated are fidelity, group size, duration of intervention, and early intervention (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Denton et al., 2011; King-Sears et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2015). Even with the research conducted on what best practices for reading intervention look like, it has been a struggle for both reading interventionists and teachers to adequately perform their roles and duties without clear guidelines and support (Bean et al., 2015; Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman, 2011). Findings indicated that high fidelity rates, adequate time in a small group intervention setting, and highly trained and knowledgeable professionals using research-based interventions will lead to academic growth for students in reading (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Denton et al., 2011; King-Sears et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2015; Puzio et al., 2020; Condie & Pomerantz, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study was designed using Dagen & Bean's framework for specialized literacy professionals as literacy leaders: Areas of focus. Dagen & Bean's framework serves as an insight into those tasked with leading and promoting literacy in schools (Dagen & Bean, 2020). This framework encompasses a range of key areas literacy professionals typically encounter in their pursuit of fostering literacy development. Specialized literacy professionals, such as literacy interventionists, play a crucial role in guiding and facilitating transformative changes within schools (Bean, 2015). Often these individuals are asked to work beyond their job role to support in a diverse range of tasks, including writing curriculum, providing resources for teachers, writing grants, supporting teachers and other staff members, partnering with parents, and collaborating with

administrators (Bean, 2015; International Reading Association, 2000). Dagen & Bean’s framework breaks down three major areas of focus a literacy specialist on campus, such as a literacy interventionist, may encounter: the students, the teacher, and the system (Dagen and Bean, 2020). These areas often overlap and the support in one area may drastically affect another. Dagen & Bean’s framework provides specialized literacy professionals with a guide to navigate their roles as literacy leaders. By focusing on key areas, these professionals can contribute significantly to the improvement of literacy outcomes on their campuses (Dagen & Bean, 2020).

Figure 1:
Dagen & Bean’s Framework for Specialized Literacy Professionals as Literacy Leaders:



Areas of Focus

Conclusion

The literature review provides information on the background and components of Response to Intervention and its effects on student reading performance, reading intervention, educators' knowledge of RTI, and literacy interventionists. The following chapter will explain the methodology utilized by the researcher during the current study. This chapter will contain an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy, and ethical considerations, and limitations for this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Literacy interventionists play an essential role in addressing achievement gaps of students reading below grade level. This narrative inquiry aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of literacy interventionists, shedding light on their insights into effective reading intervention. The study explored the supporting roles these professionals undertake for both teachers and students, delving into their perceptions of best practices and the factors that either hinder or facilitate literacy growth in their students. This chapter encompasses an overview of the research problem, the research question, methodological tradition, research setting, subject participation and enrollment criteria, research sample/ data source, data collection methods, data analysis, triangulation, researcher role and positionality, privacy and ethical considerations, and the study's limitations.

Overview of the Research Problem

Literacy interventionists play a vital role in fostering improved reading success, as evidenced by their contribution to initiatives in studies such as Bean et al. (2018). Specifically trained to work with at-risk students, these professionals, including literacy interventionists, are instrumental in providing Tier 3 instruction, ensuring that students in need of the most support receive high-quality, targeted assistance (Wanzek et al., 2017). Literacy interventionists offer a firsthand perspective on effective support and potential obstacles to student learning. Studies, such as the one conducted by Bean et al. (2003) on reading specialists/interventionists in exemplary schools, reveal that these professionals not only provide direct instruction but also serve as valuable resources for classroom teachers. Research by Bean et al. (2015) describes the dual role of these interventionists in supporting both students and teachers, necessitating a fundamental understanding of

adult learning and leadership skills. Exploring the experiences of these instructional leaders can uncover barriers they face in their roles and contribute insights to the ongoing research on best practices in reading.

Research Question

The purpose of this exploratory narrative inquiry was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary literacy interventionists, focusing on their interactions with struggling readers and support for classroom teachers. This inquiry aimed to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals by looking at how they support students, teachers, and the systems that are in place to support them in their job roles. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading.

Methodological Tradition

The researcher implemented a narrative inquiry approach to investigate the experiences of literacy interventionists. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach that focuses on exploring and understanding individuals' experiences through the lens of storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This methodology provides an in-depth exploration of the experiences, challenges, successes, and perceptions of literacy interventionists, capturing the nuances that quantitative methods may overlook. Literacy interventionists, as individuals, have unique backgrounds, motivations, and ways of understanding their work. Narrative inquiry honors and values these personal perspectives, fostering a more authentic representation of their experiences. Since literacy interventionists do not operate in isolation, this methodology allows the researcher to explore the interconnectedness of their experiences with various factors, such as administrative support and collaboration with other professionals. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the role. Involving literacy interventionists empowers

them to share their voices and actively participate in the research process. This methodology allows the researcher to investigate a participant's experience in their role as a literacy interventionist and how it relates to student growth, teacher support, and overall literacy knowledge.

Research Context

This study took place in one large suburban school district in the Texas Gulf Coast. The school district served more than 80,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. At the time of the study, the district employed 92 literacy interventionists at the elementary level. The elementary literacy interventionists in this district have the duty of providing targeted and intensive literacy interventions to specific Tier 3 students in a small group setting. These interventionists also offer guidance and coaching to teachers on effective English Language Arts and Reading instruction, as well as assist them in implementing effective reading practices in their classrooms. The Interventionists are expected to assess and evaluate student achievement, adapt instruction as necessary, and maintain good communication with classroom teachers, parents, and administrators. Additionally, they may be required to provide professional development and instructional modeling for classroom teachers and campus staff.

District Background

The literacy interventionist role has been in this district for seven years. At this time the role of reading specialist changed to only deliver dyslexia services, and the Reading Recovery program was ended to create the literacy interventionist position. Employees interested in this role have to apply and interview to be put into a pool. If a campus has an opening for this position, principals can select any candidate from this pool to interview to fill their vacancy. At the beginning of this new job role, there was a lot of confusion among the people hired. Many who came from the reading specialist side

were under the impression that this role was going to allow them to do more coaching assistance on their campus, while those who came from the Reading Recovery side understood the role to be more intervention-based. The coordinators over the program explained that the key roles and responsibilities of literacy interventionists were Tier 3 intervention, Tier 2 intervention supporting teachers and students, and assessment assistance. The interventionists were told fidelity for this program meant serving a small group of students (3-4) for 30 minutes per lesson and having weekly records/progress monitoring of the groups to assess student progress. As far as teacher support was concerned, literacy interventionists were to facilitate or attend collaborative planning meetings with teachers and school leadership, provide resources as needed, and provide professional development for individuals, teams, or campus based on identified needs or district initiatives. District curriculum coordinators added to the expectation of the role by asking them to ensure data fidelity by making sure all teachers know how to report data, and that all data has been entered on the campus. It was communicated that these professionals should not be used to substitute and cover classes, attend special education meetings, provide help for lunch and recess duties, provide official observation documentation, or serve as teacher of record for a group of students. A sample of what an appropriate schedule may look like for this job role is shown in Appendix B.

A few years later, data showed that the fidelity rates of literacy interventionists were extremely low, and they were being utilized in many ways other than intervention on campus. The district decided to do a reset with people in this job role and with administrators to make sure expectations were clear. Literacy interventionists were to pull small groups (three to four students in kindergarten through 2nd grade, and four students in third through fifth grade), delivering supplementary literacy instruction for the lowest

achieving students in reading in their grade level. This intervention should be provided for 30 minutes, at least four times a week (120 minutes per week).

The year in which the study took place, the job role was redefined again. Stakeholders were reminded that Tier 3 intervention was to be a supplemental intervention that does not take the place of Tier 1 classroom instruction including guided reading. Literacy interventionists use a pullout model to administer a 45-minute intervention, which takes place four to five days a week during the time identified by the campus for intervention and enrichment. Classroom teachers should ensure that any instruction that is missed due to intervention is delivered at a later time. Fidelity for the program during this time meant pulling a small group (three to four) of Tier 3 students for 45 minutes at a time four to five days a week during their campus-scheduled intervention/enrichment block. Interventionists should not provide coverage for classes, do clerical duties for staff members, or cover lunch and recess duties. Due to having an instructional coach, Title 1 campus literacy interventionists also should not attend grade level PLCs or coach teachers. Example schedules of the 11 participants can be found in Appendix E.

Researcher's Role and Positionality

The researcher has previously worked as an elementary literacy interventionist and is aware of many of the roles and responsibilities required of a person in this position. Having only recently left this position she has experienced the development of the role from its first year of implementation, as well as the re-defining of district expectations for the role as the years developed and participated in many professional development opportunities designed for this job role. The researcher felt her previous experience as a literacy interventionist allowed for a deeper understanding of terms and situations explained by the participants. Also, she had only worked in this position at one

campus and understands that her experience may not be shared among other interventionists.

The researcher currently works at the district level as a curriculum coordinator in the same school district as the participants. This current job role includes delivering professional development, monthly communication, and participating in classroom observations on campuses to which the participants are assigned. Though she does not have direct contact with the participants daily, the work in which she does affects teachers and students directly on the campuses in which the participants work. The researcher feels this does not create a conflict of interest but instead allows for the participants to feel safe and open to answer freely without penalty for their answers. With the relationship the researcher holds with the participants and experiences with this job role, there is no way for the researcher to fully separate herself from the study. Due to this, the researcher was used as an instrument (conduct interviews, journal observations, and transcribe and story interviews) but also included references to her own lived experience.

Participants

There was a potential of 92 participants ranging from being in their first year to seven years of experience in this job role. Appendix A shows the job title, years of experience in this job role, and the highest level of education of the potential participants in the study. To qualify for this position in this district, candidates had to hold a bachelor's degree, possess a valid Texas Teacher Certificate for elementary education and an English as a Second Language certification, have at least five years of teaching experience in reading at the elementary level, and have excellent oral and written communication skills. Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of the literacy interventionists interviewed in this study.

An interest email was sent to all literacy interventionists in the district. The email was sent from an outside of the district email to allow for a separation of the researcher's job role and the intentions of the study. Potential participants were asked to respond to the email if they were interested in participating. The researcher sent a confirmation email to those who responded with additional information. This information included an explicit explanation of the research study, details of protection provided by the researcher, and a consent form. The researcher provided an opportunity for concerns to be addressed during the initial selection email, before the interview session, and at any time throughout the study. The researcher was also upfront and transparent to the potential participants to build a safe and trusting atmosphere and to foster honesty from the participants.

Research Sample/Data Source

This study ended up having a total of 11 participants. The participants had between one and seven years of experience as a literacy interventionist in the district and between eight and 28 years of experience in education. All participants had a master's degree and all, but one participant was female. Out of the 11 participants three of them worked on a Title 1 campus.

Data Collection Methods

Before beginning the study, the researcher acquired approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the participating school district's Office of Research and Program Evaluation. Once permission was granted, selected participants had an opportunity through email to sign up for specific time slots for interviews. The participants chose an in-person location in which they felt comfortable with the one-on-one interview. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. The researcher prepared pre-written

questions for the participant to answer, and follow-up prompts to support participants in expanding their answers if needed. Interviews were recorded using a handheld audio recording device. After each interview, the researcher journaled additional notes and observations they had about the interview. After the researcher finished their final notes, recordings were collected and stored in a file on the researcher's password-protected laptop before leaving the interview site.

Data Analysis

All recorded interview sessions were transcribed verbatim using transcription software. The transcripts were checked for accuracy and completeness against the original audio file twice and saved in a file on the researcher's password-protected computer under a coded name to not identify the specific participant. The researcher noted any change in nonverbal cues (e.g., smiles, nods, etc.) and reflected on the participant's tone and mood.

The data analysis included a re-storying process that consisted of several steps. "Restorying is a process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the story to place it within a chronological sequence" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p, 332). This process included transcription, chronological plotting, member checking, and interpretation. The researcher familiarized herself with the data by reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings several times in order to become fully immersed in the participants' experiences and the inquiry process. Once familiar with the data, the researcher rendered findings based on the participant's responses. The action of sequencing stories based on transcripts is a crucial aspect of storytelling since it exposes important occurrences, pivotal moments, and the storyteller's perspective (Nasheeda et al., 2019).

After rewriting the story, the researcher followed up with the participant to member check the story. This allowed an opportunity to fill in any gaps, expand on topics, and ensure the researcher captured the true experience and perception of the participant.

The final step in the data analysis in this study was interpretation. The researcher analyzed the language of the participant to develop a concrete story of the participant and identified any emerging themes (Saldana, 2018). Once the stories of all participants were completed the researcher reviewed them and the transcripts to identify words phrases and events that were similar. The researcher read the data several times to identify recurring patterns and themes that emerged and created a list of potential themes and sub-themes and reviewed them with two critical friends to ensure inter-rater reliability. The researcher then examined the relationship between themes, drawing on existing theories and literature to contextualize and interpret the data. The researcher was also on the lookout for any contradictions or inconsistencies in the data and examined these in detail by using triangulation.

Triangulation

Investigator Triangulation was also utilized to verify the trends seen in the data from multiple people. The researcher enlisted two professionals, critical friends, not connected to the study who analyzed and coded the data to ensure common themes and trends were derived from the data. After analysis of the data, the researcher sent the results to participants for member checking for analysis of the findings and allowed them to affirm the results or express concerns on items that did not align with their experience. The researcher is hopeful that the findings collected in this study will aid district and campus leaders in creating appropriate support for teachers and literacy interventionists

to continuously build their pedagogical content knowledge and remove barriers that prevent intervention fidelity.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained permission to conduct this study from the UHCL's CPHS and the participating school district's IRB before collecting data. The study did not include any identifying information including the name of the district, the name of the campuses, or the names of the participants or their students. Potential participants received information about the study including its purpose, a statement, and promise of confidentiality, and a reminder that participation is optional. Each participant was assigned a letter of the alphabet to help ensure confidentiality and all names of participants and anyone they may discuss in their interviews were changed. All data received was immediately assigned a letter, and identifying information was removed. All data was kept in a password-encrypted file on a password-protected computer. The researcher was upfront about her role in the study and how that related to her current job role throughout the study.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher understood that there were several limitations to the present study.

The first limitation was the relationship the researcher had with the participants in the study. The researcher was in a position that may seem administrative to the participants of the study, possibly hindering the quality and accuracy of answers to the questions asked during interviews.

The second limitation was having a small sample size, and the uniqueness of each participant's campus and experience, the data collected during this study may not be transferable to a larger population.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of literacy interventionists in what they judge as leading to growth in reading for students. This chapter explained the components and methodology of this qualitative study. The results and findings of the study will be outlined in chapter four.

CHAPTER IV:

FINDINGS

The purpose of this exploratory narrative inquiry was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary literacy interventionists working with students who struggle in reading and support classroom teachers. This chapter will report the qualitative data collected from interviews.

Participant Demographics

This study consisted of 11 participants, comprising of one male and 10 females. All of the participants had a master's degree involving education and had between eight and 28 years in education. Out of all the participants, three of them worked on a Title 1 campus, also indicating that there was a literacy instructional coach on their campus. Table 2.1 shows the pseudonyms used, the participant's gender, whether or not they had a master's degree, their years in education, and if they worked on a Title 1 campus.

Table 2.1
Participant Descriptors

Participant	Gender	Master's Degree	Years in Education	Title 1 Campus
Amanda	Female	Yes	9	Yes
Brandon	Male	Yes	8	Yes
Cynthia	Female	Yes	18	No
Dianne	Female	Yes	28	No
Emily	Female	Yes	26	Yes
Francis	Female	Yes	8	No
Grace	Female	Yes	10	No
Hannah	Female	Yes	12	No
Ida	Female	Yes	25	No
Jane	Female	Yes	14	No
Kendall	Female	Yes	25	No
Total: 11 participants				

Amanda

Amanda's educational journey began nine years ago with a position in Head Start, where she volunteered and her interest in teaching began to take root. The experience of nurturing young minds and witnessing their growth left a mark on her heart. She told the researcher that she had "the passion to help kids, to see them read and write".

After earning her teaching certification and a degree in education she wanted to continue to grow professionally, so she attained a master's degree in curriculum and

instruction. But Amanda's commitment to her students did not stop there. She furthered her educational knowledge by becoming trained by Neuhaus to provide dyslexia services and equipping herself with tools to help students facing reading challenges. Amanda relayed that she continued to work on herself "because I really want to help kids that have problems with reading, so the strategies I learned during my master's degree and when I was in school give me the passion to help kids".

Amanda was a firm believer in continuous professional development. She told the researcher that one "expectation I have for myself is to get myself ready". She actively sought out webinars and training opportunities in and outside of the district to expand her knowledge and enhance her ability to help students.

Her own son's reading journey is what led to her interest in becoming a literacy interventionist. His struggle fueled her determination to help more struggling readers than just those inside of her classroom. Amanda said this experience "just gave me the passion to help kids, to see them read and write". She knew that in the role she was not only helping the students who needed intervention the most, but she was also assisting other teachers in their journey of working with readers. She told the researcher, "Everything is all about the kids, just to make them successful. That is the reason why I decided to be a literacy interventionist and to move forward to work with teachers too". In this role, Amanda was able to collaborate with teachers and share effective strategies that would create a lasting impact on students' reading abilities. Her principal also recognized her effectiveness and encouraged her to work with classroom teachers. She said, "I have to model, go to the classrooms and work with the teachers". Amanda saw this as a chance to spread successful strategies and strengthen their entire school's approach to literacy education, going as far as to express to the researcher "I never say no [to her principal] because I really don't want to, because I love what I'm doing". She played a pivotal role

in helping classroom teachers by providing resources and sharing research-based best practices. Amanda felt she had “a lot of experience like this is what you’re supposed to do. A lot of the teachers know that I will go to the classroom to work with them. We collaborate because we learn from each other”.

Through her years in education, Amanda has helped many students. One student, Paul, specifically stood out in her mind. Paul was an Emergent Bilingual (EB) student who struggled with reading. Amanda was able to see beyond his language barrier and recognized his hidden potential. She made time to pull him for one-on-one intervention, dedicating her time and expertise to help him overcome his reading challenges. Paul’s transformation into a confident reader was a testament to Amanda’s unwavering dedication and the impact a caring, qualified interventionist can have on a student’s life.

Amanda’s dedication to reading comprehension was evident in her go-to strategy, which involved the use of an anchor chart with specific questions and prompts related to the book’s topic, facts, vocabulary, and other key elements. She understood that reinforcing these strategies with students and teachers was crucial for long-term success. She also knew that aligning assessments with instructional goals and having clear learning intentions and success criteria would help students make growth in reading.

Despite her successes, Amanda was aware of the challenges educators face when transitioning students back to their regular classrooms after intervention. Many students experienced regression despite the progress they made during their time in intervention. Amanda felt this was a persistent issue that needed to be addressed. Amanda passionately told the researcher that teachers need “to continue to monitor the kids, work with them on strategies that work, pull them in small group”. Through these barriers, she remained resolute in her commitment. She stressed the need for teachers to maintain the strategies and methods introduced during the intervention to prevent regression. Amanda’s journey

was a testament to the profound impact that a passionate interventionist can have on the lives of students, ensuring they have the tools and skills to read and succeed academically. Amanda wanted the literacy world to know that in order to be effective, literacy coaches must go inside the classroom in order to work with and model for teachers.

Teacher Focus

Amanda supported teachers by actively working with them, providing guidance, and sharing effective strategies. Amanda told the researcher that “those strategies that I’m using in my classroom that work with me with intervention, I need to give that to the teacher.” She explained, “We work, and we give advice... I work with them. Say, this is good, this is not good. Or how do you, what do you think? How do you think that we’re going to do this?” Amanda does not mind assisting teachers because she’s:

got a lot of experience, this is what you're supposed to do. And as a mentor, I mentor a lot of teachers, I know what I will go to the classroom to work with them. We collaborate because we learn from each other. There’s something that they know that you don’t know.

Administrator Support

Amanda was put in a tough position when she returned from a personal leave of absence to find the reading instructional coach resigned from her position. Amanda’s principal “asked me whenever I have time to work with teachers with strategies. Whenever I’m doing that, I have to go to the classroom to help the teachers.” When the researcher asked for clarity, Amanda agreed that “the principal will see some of the things you’re doing that are working and wants her to take it and expand it.” Amanda’s principal met with her about twice a month to look over her data. The principal also

“come[s] to the class to see what is going on.” Amanda pointed out that “even if the principal pulls us, we still have to work the principal and the campus.”

Fidelity and Preparation

Amanda talked about how often she worked with her students and explained that if she is pulled to do something during the time she is scheduled to meet with an intervention group, “I will still make time to make up with that kid. Even during my planning time, I will still make it up. I already prepared what I have to teach for those kids.” Amanda also spoke on being prepared, saying “The preparation is key. When we prepare and get all those manipulatives that kids will use in small group ready, it’ll be easy.”

Data

In order to make informed instructional decisions for her students, Amanda “takes anecdotal notes, taking notes about what the kids know and don’t know, and you have to use that to plan your lesson.”

Setting the Foundation

Amanda also spoke about the students who have come to her lacking foundational reading skills, saying, “I need a lot of things to differentiate their reading. I need to know the needs of my students, okay this kid needs to know how to blend. Segment letters.”

Brandon

In Brandon’s eight years in education, he has had the opportunity to teach a wide range of grade levels from pre-K to fifth grade. Brandon transitioned into the role of literacy interventionist. His interest in this role came from the desire to address a crucial issue that he noticed as a trend in his years in the classroom. Brandon noticed that “a lot of kids in the upper grades were not receiving what I was teaching as foundational skills in Kindergarten and Pre-K”. The gap between their reading abilities and where they

should be was concerning. Brandon, being the dedicated educator he was, was determined to bridge this gap and make a meaningful impact.

Armed with a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in education, Brandon acknowledged that his knowledge was still significantly enriched through the wisdom and experiences of his colleagues. But his quest for knowledge didn't stop there; during the time of this study, he was pursuing a doctoral degree, immersing himself in the world of research-based best practices to enhance his skills further. He told the researcher that he would "wander off and read articles that talk about how to teach kids how to read".

Brandon's primary goal as a literacy interventionist was "for my kids to progress their reading, and if they're not progressing, figuring out why they're not progressing". He was passionate about measuring success in growth, not just for his students but also for himself. He strived to be a strong support in the professional growth of teachers and wishes he could be utilized more in their professional learning communities (PLCs).

As a literacy interventionist, Brandon was pulled in many different directions. He brought a wealth of knowledge to the table, providing professional development to teachers on topics such as guided reading and creating small groups, leading the way in RTI meetings, and contributing to the student referral process for special education.

When thinking about what hinders growth for his students in reading, Brandon felt the district-required Tier 3 program is:

going a little bit too fast, they need more time with the books. I know we expose them to a lot of books and every day they get a new book and sometimes they tell me that they didn't get to read that one.

He feared that the program moved too swiftly for some students, leaving them without sufficient time to master essential skills. If he were able to make changes to his job role,

he would allow flexibility in the program to allow more time with some materials, with close progress monitoring to ensure no student gets left behind.

When it came to alignment with his role and district expectations, Brandon offered a thoughtful perspective. While he acknowledged that his campus generally adhered to district guidelines, he knew some actions were just to appear in compliance with the district. He did not feel all of the campus practices aligned with the district's overarching goals. He emphasized a need to shift their focus away from a performance trying to appear a certain way to intentional data-informed decisions and best practices. He told the researcher "I think for them it's just another check that they can just be like, OK, we have a literacy interventionist and he's doing it, check, and move on to the next thing".

Brandon was able to convince his administration to align more with district expectations, by putting his head down and consistently working with his students, and pulling his Tier 3 groups. The data spoke for itself when he was able to showcase the positive outcomes of his efforts. Brandon explained:

We showed them [administration] the percentages, like our percentages when we were able to see kids and not and what the district wanted or what was the expectation and then versus ours, so that helped her [the principal] see things in a different light.

Brandon's commitment to his students showed the impact a passionate, dedicated, and qualified literacy interventionist can have on student growth in reading. Brandon wanted teachers to know that they should "be responsive and purposeful with their instruction and to see who's not understanding".

Student Home Life

Brandon touched on home life and how parental support to get students to school is important. When analyzing data if a student didn't master a concept, "I go back and look to see if a student was absent that day" in order to see if this is a factor in the student's progress. He also told the researcher that "many students tell me; I didn't get to read that one." When speaking on the program's structure of sending certain books home to be read before the next day. Brandon knows that a parent can give insight into patterns and behaviors of students so he informs his teachers that "the best practice would be kind of gather information from the parent just to see where they are at... I would definitely seek more information from the parent to see what does he do at home."

Teacher Focus

Brandon valued connecting with teachers and being involved in their professional growth. Brandon told the researcher that if he was able to be used in any capacity, he "wants more time with teachers... be included in their PLCs cause right now we are not included." He wanted "more exposure to the teachers just so I can see them and interact with them and figure out what they're dealing with in their classroom so that I can support them."

Administrator Support

Brandon felt that the assistance that comes from his administrators "is more performative, just making sure I'm doing it [intervention]. I don't think they're really looking at my data... As long as teachers are not complaining and parents are not complaining, they're not looking at my data at all." He didn't think they value what his role brings to the campus, saying, "I think for them it's just another check that they can just be like, OK, we have a literacy interventionist and he's doing it, check and move on to the next."

Fidelity and Preparation

Brandon valued fidelity in his work with students. Brandon mentioned that he “did have an issue with the first year [with fidelity], but this past year they [administration] did a whole lot better and so I was able to pull my kids.” When asked what changed, Brandon replied:

We showed them the percentages like our percentages when we were able to see kids and not and what the district wanted or what was the expectation and then versus ours. So that helped her [the principal] see things in a different light. Brandon noticed a difference in his students when he began to see his groups consistently, saying, “I mean, there definitely was growth the more I see them, but you could see the dip like where they regressed when I don't get to see them.”

Data

Brandon used data in many different ways on campus. As the one who facilitated RTI meetings on his campus, Brandon “pulls data and I tell them some interventions they [teachers] can do in their classroom with the kids.” He also used data to aid teachers in making the decision to refer students for testing. With his own students, Brandon said he “likes to look at the data, like progress monitoring, and see how they’re growing and seeing if I’m being effective in my instruction and if they’re responding to it.”

Setting the Foundation

One of the reasons why Brandon wanted to become a literacy interventionist was because of the lack of foundational skills he witnessed in older students. Brandon said, “I noticed that a lot of kids in the upper grades were not receiving what I was teaching as foundational in kindergarten and pre-k, so I didn’t understand that.”

Cynthia

In Cynthia's role as a literacy interventionist, she juggled two different positions in one. Daily, Cynthia provided high-quality Tier 3 intervention to students in kindergarten through fifth grade while balancing the responsibilities typically covered by a literacy coach. Cynthia told the researcher:

I was excited [about this role] because I got to work with students. I got to intervene, do small groups K through five, so I could see the growth and I really still wasn't taken away from the curriculum. I could embed the curriculum and use the curriculum, but also coach teachers in the same process.

During Cynthia's back-to-back small group sessions, she provided intentional, explicit instruction designed to meet the unique needs of each group. During this time, she also tracked the progress of each of these students to communicate with the teacher. Cynthia commented that:

During that intervention time, we're not wasting those 45 minutes, that within that 45 minutes, I am seeing them the whole time, instruction is from bell to bell. And that I'm following that instructional model of our intervention where it's very explicit. I'm giving feedback and I'm following that process but making sure that we are sticking to that intervention time and that we're doing it four to five times a week using these research-based strategies in this text that we've been provided.

Cynthia had a strong commitment to upholding fidelity to the intervention program, ensuring that the strategies and methods employed align with best practices in literacy education. Cynthia loyally adhered to her schedule, unwavering in her commitment to intervention time. Cynthia told the researcher "If we're seeing Tier 3 kids, and it's not consistent, it really bothers me". One way she ensured that she was consistently pulling her groups was by not interrupting groups in order to provide coaching assistance. During

her planning time for the day, typically dedicated to planning for her intervention groups, Cynthia shared the time with also providing coaching sessions to teachers, modeling lessons, and helping during planning.

At the end of the school day, Cynthia collaborated with teachers during their assigned time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), fostering a culture of shared expertise and data-driven decision-making among grade level teams. During this time, she actively facilitated while also sharing resources, assisted in unit and concept planning, and enhanced the collective capabilities of her colleagues. She saw the impact of all of this over the years by “seeing them open to and confident to run their own PLCs and being able to talk to their needs of their students in more of a way than just a surface level”.

Her day did not end there, after school Cynthia extended her assistance by mentoring one or two teachers on campus, guiding them in planning and addressing students’ needs. She also ensured that she collaborated with her students’ teachers and parents to improve literacy outcomes. Cynthia relayed to the researcher that she “could just see the growth with my students being a big difference between the at-home connection and the teacher connection of what they’re doing in their Tier 1 instruction”.

Cynthia’s principal played a pivotal role in her accomplishments as a literacy interventionist. The principal’s active engagement, alignment with the district’s expectations, and steadfast support for Cynthia’s work was instrumental in the success of the intervention program. Together, they created an environment where literacy expertise thrives. Cynthia described the relationship and expectations from her principal (who she had worked with for a long time) like:

common knowledge. Now we don’t have to sit there and have a partnership agreement, but she knows intervention comes first. And luckily, we share the

same vision. So, she never takes me out of my group time. She knows if I say I can't meet because I have a group she knows why. She doesn't ever question it. If given the chance to change her role and schedule, Cynthia would remain focused on providing small group interventions, and ensuring that students receive the help they need to excel in reading. Cynthia wanted everyone to know how hard English Language Arts is to teach and teachers don't get enough time to teach it.

Teachers want to do all these things, and then sometimes they don't feel like they have the time, or they know what's the best practice, but they have to rush through certain things because of the timing of the curriculum and the timing and pacing of everything they're doing". She also wants teachers to know, even upper grade teachers are that "small group is still something that those kids need. And phonics is still something that those kids need because I feel that grows your readers the most".

Student Home Life

Cynthia believed that a student's home life greatly impacts student performance. Cynthia told the researcher that "if they [students] haven't gotten the home support and they come back [to intervention the next day], I could tell they haven't read that book at all." She further talked about home engagement particularly as it impacts students' confidence by stating, "The kid that is reading with their teacher or reading at home, which is a big part too, makes a big difference." Cynthia was able to "see that growth with my students being a big, you know, a big difference between the at-home connection and the teacher connection of what they're doing in their tier one instruction."

Teacher Focus

Cynthia placed a high value on helping teachers in many different capacities. She told the researcher that "the first nine weeks looks like a push-in [for kindergarten

teachers] where I'm supporting teachers through assessments or supporting teachers as they're gathering their small group information." She explained how coaching fit into her workday, stating that she has, "45 minutes of planning and then coaching time. So, if I need to push into a classroom, if I need to model a lesson, or if I need to prepare for a coaching experience, that's my time right there." Cynthia also assisted teachers during PLCs, "that's when I bring in resources. We plan." She also said, "If I can't meet with them [teachers] during their planning time, other than PLC, I meet with them after school." Additionally, she mentioned mentoring teachers after school and participating in professional development days, where she presents, reviews curriculum, and helps with assessments and instruction.

Administrator Support

Cynthia spoke highly of the respect she received from her administration, especially their shared commitment to intervention and fidelity to district goals. She stated, "It's almost like a common knowledge... she knows intervention comes first." Cynthia appreciated her principal's understanding of her role and expectations, highlighting their alignment in prioritizing data-driven instruction and progress monitoring.

She felt fortunate to have a principal who understood the district's vision and communicated it effectively, ensuring consistency and fidelity in instructional practices. Cynthia acknowledged her principal's involvement in monitoring her progress and goals, noting their collaboration in analyzing student data and ensuring alignment with district objectives. She told the researcher:

They expect outta me is to take these readers and grow their strengths, understand their weaknesses, and grow 'em. So that's pretty much ultimately our job description. But as an admin, she knows that I'm taking the lowest of the grade

level and she knows that I'm gonna be very purposeful and intentional, and that's what she expects of me, looking at the data, just like all of our teachers, if I'm gonna say it or if we're gonna talk about it, we're gonna do the same thing. Overall, Cynthia felt backed by her administration, citing her principal's commitment to intervention and recognition of its effectiveness. She believed that her principal's understanding of the impact of intervention on student growth motivates her to maintain fidelity and continue making a difference in students' lives.

Fidelity and Preparation

Cynthia placed significant emphasis on organization and preparation in her instructional approach, stating:

I'm always organized. I always have my lessons planned...I hold myself to all the time and the fidelity of my lesson." She recognizes the value of consistency and fidelity in interventions, acknowledging the challenge of maintaining it amidst day-to-day pressures but prioritizing it nonetheless., “

She reinforced the value of providing continuous feedback during lessons, noting its impact on student learning. By preparing beforehand when Cynthia with her group her: attention is on them [the students]. So, I am constantly adjusting and reflecting throughout my lesson. Feedback is a big thing that I've learned as a teacher... so when I'm in the lesson that I'm in the moment and I'm giving them feedback as I'm going because I feel like that is one of the biggest impacts when I'm with my students.

Cynthia believed that inconsistency in instruction hinders student progress, particularly when students receive varying levels of small group instruction from classroom teachers. She observed that students who receive frequent small group instruction demonstrate

greater fluency and progress in reading compared to those who do not, talking about consistent and targeted interventions for student success.

Data

Cynthia utilized various forms of data to inform her instructional planning and decision-making. She relied on the BAS (Benchmark Assessment System) to determine students' starting points and reading behaviors, stating, "To start for planning for our students, we always use our BAS...it gives us lots of information of where we can see. Start and it helps us meet with teachers, organize their thinking." Additionally, she spoke about reading records for progress monitoring, as they provide insight into students' comprehension and thinking within the text, allowing her to set appropriate goals for each group.

Furthermore, Cynthia paid close attention to students' reading behaviors during their actual reading sessions, noting how they handled challenging words and their pacing. She values the insights gained from running records, describing them as "reading in the moment and that performance assessment." Additionally, she considered students' written responses, particularly in lower grades, to assess their phonetic spelling, grammar, and comprehension level. By synthesizing information from running records, performance assessments, and written responses, Cynthia is able to effectively plan for the instructional needs of her students.

Setting the Foundation

Cynthia told the researcher that:

I want them [the students to understand the basic foundation, those basic phonological awareness skills to start building those reading foundations. Of course, in first grade, build that capacity for reading, not just looking at words, but

building it into the text. And then of course, my two through five, that end goal is not only reading accuracy but to read and comprehend what they are reading.

Dianne

With twenty-five years of experience in education, Dianne has had the opportunity to teach many different students from kindergarten to fourth grade. As a literacy interventionist, Dianne was able to work with students from kindergarten through fifth grade daily in a small group setting. She also had a master's degree in mid-management and a range of certifications that include K-8, ESL, and GT which helped prepare her for her current role.

Dianne had a passion for laying a strong literacy foundation for young learners as well as empowering and helping her campus teachers. Dianne told the researcher:

I've always enjoyed the process of teaching kids to read. I think that's part of why I started in fourth grade and slowly felt like I wanted to move down to more of the primary, to have more of a hand in getting them going with their reading skills and building that love of reading. Also, in watching the person that did the job before me, saw how what kind of hand they had in the professional development of the campus and that's something I was interested in supporting.

She had an active role in planning learning for her campus teachers. She understood the impact that intentional and effective professional development could have on Tier 1 instruction. Dianne explained:

I feel like personally, as a teacher, as a classroom teacher, there were times that we got PD and I would just be like, ugh, this is not what everybody needs, you know? And, and I get that, you know, as a district and a campus, everybody's needs. But I just felt like some changes needed to be made to it. And so I actually talked to a former principal one year during my end of year evaluation and was

like is there any way that we can do more of, not really an independent study, but like more offerings and then they choose what they wanna do and she made that my goal for the next year. So, I got to be in charge of that whole thing. I can't say that I love presenting for PD, but I like thinking it through and thinking about like, okay, I've seen these teachers doing X and so I really feel like they're ready to move on to Y or, you know, our first-grade team really needs to just go back to the basics.

One of Dianne's core expectations for herself was consistency in pulling her students. So much so that she had been recognized by district personnel as one of the highest achievers in the district for meeting with students consistently. Dianne said:

one of my expectations going into this year was to see them as often as I possibly could and being pretty firm on this is my time, not being pulled to do other things. because I felt like that consistency was going to be important.

She met this expectation due to the trust and respect she had from her principal. Dianne proved herself time and time again with her principal so there was no need for accountability measures to ensure she was not only meeting her own expectations but also those communicated by the campus and district.

Dianne's day consisted of working with small groups of Tier 3 intervention students and assisting teachers during professional learning communities (PLC). She also had the flexibility to help teachers during their planning time, which allowed for collaboration on specific grade level needs and assessments. Dianne said:

My planning time could also be used to check in with teachers to, there were times where I might help with assessment... I could also go to a planning meeting, go in and model a lesson for a teacher, or talk to a team about some concerns that they had.

If she could set her schedule to reflect whatever she wanted, Dianne would focus on coaching, particularly in kindergarten, first, and second grades. This would allow for building the foundation for the youngest learners, reducing their struggles years later.

One of the strategies Dianne used with her students was the “inside quotes voice” from Jennifer Serravallo. Using visual aids to distinguish character and narrator voices was transformative for her struggling readers, helping them grasp the concept of fluency. The strategy’s effectiveness was undeniable as her students began to “internalize it” and apply it independently.

When intentionally planning for her groups, Dianne used reading records to gain insight into her students’ reading abilities. This tool allowed her to analyze why students made errors as well as where their breakdown was in their comprehension.

Through all her success, Dianne still had a few concerns. She worried about students who lacked reading assistance outside of school and understood the pivotal role of home reading in developing strong literacy skills. To Dianne, reading at home was not just a task but a journey that allowed parents to actively engage in their child’s learning.

Dianne thought:

The kids are not reading enough at home and especially before they even get to school, you can always tell and kinder those babies that, have been read to and read to, and read to, and those that just haven't. I feel like that is definitely something that, that hinders that beginning reading.

Dianne was also concerned about older students, especially those in second or third grade, who may silently struggle with reading. She recognized that some students might develop coping mechanisms instead of seeking help due to the fear of admitting their struggles. Dianne explained:

I feel like once kids get to like second or third and they're struggling, and they figure out I'm struggling like I'm not reading as well as other kids in the class, they kind of find a crutch to get themselves through and don't really want to ask for that help that they're going to need. And so, they just kind of start figuring out ways to just get through what needs to happen.

As far as teachers are concerned, Dianne empathized with the hurdles faced by teachers during Tier 2 sessions. She knew the demands on educators' time and energy and the struggle to provide tailored instruction. It's a challenge she hoped to address, knowing that differentiation is crucial for student success. Dianne said:

I feel that teachers need more planning time. There's just not enough time in the day, you know, 45 minutes. To plan for, you know, whatever subjects you teach and the small groups that go along with it, answering parent emails. There's just never enough time.

Dianne's story embodied the essence of what it means to be an educator- a journey filled with challenges, triumphs, and an unyielding dedication to building a brighter future through literacy.

Student Home Life

Dianne believed that "one thing I think that definitely hinders kids is not reading enough at home, not having that support." She highlighted parents being involved in teaching reading, noting that "teaching a kid to read... feels like it just doesn't come naturally for parents that aren't in education." Dianne stressed the significance of providing children with books to take home, expressing frustration with pushback against sending guided reading books home because "they've read it here. They need to practice it at home." She saw this practice as valuable not only for reinforcing skills but also for giving parents "a great opportunity to see what they're reading." Dianne observed that

"the kids not reading enough at home" is evident even before they start school, particularly noting the difference in readiness for reading among kindergarten students based on their exposure to reading at home. Overall, she concludes that insufficient reading at home "is definitely something that hinders that beginning reading."

Teacher Focus

Dianne helped the teachers on her campus in various capacities, aiming to "build relationships" beyond just seeing her as a grade-level teacher. She expressed her desire for teachers to view her as an "expert in literacy that they could come to no matter what grade level they taught." Dianne mentioned her willingness to assist teachers in "planning lessons or help model a lesson, and just provide guidance for them." Dianne told the researcher "I personally feel like the coaching piece I would want to do more of." She spoke about her interest in conducting professional development sessions on topics such as small group formation, guided reading, and writing workshops. Overall, she felt she assists teachers in "several ways", including through professional development, coaching, and practical assistance in lesson planning and assessment.

Administrator Support

When asked about the support from her administration, Dianne said:

She [the principal] basically just said, Dianne, I trust you. I know you're going to do the job. I'm not going to be looking over your shoulder to make sure that you're doing it because I know, because I've worked with you so long, I know you're going to do it. You know, she didn't require like, Me to turn in lesson plans or anything. It was just, I know you're gonna do it. And so, which was nice, you know, to know that she trusted me to just take the job and do it.

Dianne did have the opportunity to "meet once a month just to check in and we would voice concerns if we had them." Dianne acknowledged that her administrator's trust in

her to "do the job the way we were supposed to" was a significant aspect of their working relationship.

Fidelity and Preparation

Dianne had "expectations going into this past year...to see them [students] as often as I possibly could." She knew that "consistency was going to be important."

Data

Dianne used reading records both as a classroom teacher and as an interventionist saying this assessment:

truly gives me a wealth of knowledge about the kids, first starting by just analyzing their actual reading of the text...what kind of miscues did they have, are they not making meaning of a word, are they not looking at the letter that it begins with, but also analyzing their understanding of the text.

Dianne feels "using a reading record can help you plan."

Setting the Foundation

Dianne expressed to the researcher that she enjoyed working with primary students because she is able to "have more of a hand in getting them going in their reading skills and building that love of reading... getting kids on that path of being a good reader and enjoying reading." Dianne conveyed a concern that she has observed that "once kids get to like second or third and they're struggling," they "find a crutch to get themselves through and don't really wanna ask for that help that they're going to need." This reluctance to seek assistance leads them to "just kind of start figuring out ways to like, just get through what needs to happen."

Emily

Emily was in the world of education for 26 years. During this time, she had the opportunity to work in many different roles and capacities from teaching various grade levels and serving as a specialist. She had been the literacy interventionist on her campus for seven years at the time of the study.

In this position, Emily focused on fidelity, following the district's curriculum, and consistently meeting the unique needs of her students. Emily told the researcher:

My expectations is to see the students with Fidelity. For the amount of time that their allotted for intervention specifically for ELA and my expectations is for being consistent in seeing them and make sure that I try my best to help them succeed because most of the students are struggling readers and I want him to help. I want to help them improve and be successful". When asked about fidelity, Emily said "To me, fidelity is making sure that I first follow the curriculum, the district curriculum, and ensuring that I'm meeting the student's needs. And I'm making sure that I am seeing them the amount of time that I'm supposed to see them and follow my schedule.

She strove for students to not only understand the learning but also for them to think deeper into the world of literacy. These goals had not always been easy for Emily as she was often pulled in multiple directions from subbing classrooms one moment, to attending meetings the next. This ultimately impeded her precious intervention time and affected the fidelity and growth of her students. Emily said:

the difference has been that they're [the administrators] trying their best to help us do what we're supposed to be doing, but because of different things that happen on the campus and the school setting sometimes it, it doesn't turn out the way.

If she could define her role in whatever way she wanted, she would have uninterrupted sessions with her students, allowing them to explore literacy without disruptions. Emily explained:

I would have no interruptions. I would not have to be a substitute teacher. I would not have to go to meetings and I would be able to see my students for 45 minutes every day of the week and when we do that because I notice that when we do that, we do see a difference in student growth in their reading.

Emily strongly felt that in order for her students to make progress, they needed consistency. By seeing her groups reliably, she witnesses a remarkable transformation in her students. Emily said when she was able to see her students consistently:

I see the students progressing. I see the students I actually in learning and internalizing the strategies that we teach them and applying them, and I see improvement in like I said in their reading. So they advance in their reading levels a lot better and a lot faster when we're seeing them consistently.

The strategies she explicitly taught her students became second nature to them, as they practiced and internalized them in every session. Over time, the repetition and modeling helped her students respond to questions with greater precision and relevance in and out of her classroom. Inconsistent student attendance and a lack of strategy application also acted as roadblocks to her student's reading growth.

When planning intentional intervention for her students, Emily used running records and comprehension questions. These assessments allowed her to see how her students apply strategies, and if/ when their comprehension broke down.

If her schedule would allow, Emily would also have loved to coach her fellow educators. Despite the limited time she had to assist her campus teachers through

tutorials, modeling, brief training sessions, and sharing her wealth of knowledge whenever she could.

Emily desired more flexible approaches to literacy programs. She firmly believed that educators should have the autonomy to adapt these programs to meet individual needs. Emily told the researcher:

I know our program that we use is an accelerated program, but sometimes I find that with the kids that we work with that, the pacing is a little too fast, especially with my bilingual students. I'm gonna admit I do slow down for them, and when I do, I see that it helps a lot. Not everything works for everybody. So sometimes we have to make the program work for the students and not the other way around, so I like flexibility when the district or anybody says you need to use this program and you gotta follow it exactly the way it's laid out. Well, yes, but sometimes you have to just kind of we get a little bit in order for it to work for the students because we need to remember that not all the students learn the same. And they don't learn at the same pace.

She understood that not all students follow the same learning pace and that a one size fits all approach may not be the best route to success.

Overall, Emily wanted to do what is best for her students. Emily wanted the world to know that:

it doesn't matter the program or intervention you have to be consistent, see kids on a regular basis, there's gotta be a lot of repetition for the kids in order for them to get it and master it [the skills].

Teacher Focus

Emily described her approach to helping teachers by stating, "It's been different for different years." She told the researcher, "In the past, we were expected to do a little

bit of coaching... with the teachers." However, she noted that this expectation has changed, and they no longer have to provide coaching. Instead, they assisted teachers by conducting tutorials for students, which indirectly assists teachers in helping their students.

Additionally, she stated, "Other than that, we model sometimes lessons for them. We also do some trainings, little, short trainings during our PD days and model on how to do guided reading, how to do small group and things like that."

Administrator Support

Emily spoke about her administrators, stating:

Their expectation is, of course, for me to follow my schedule, see the students that I'm supposed to, and see them [students] consistently, and make sure that I am following their progress and evaluating and meeting with the teachers to see their students are progressing and being successful.

However, Emily acknowledged that despite the administration's efforts to support them, challenges arose due to various factors within the campus and school setting. She explained:

The difference has been them [administration] trying their best to help us do what we're supposed to be doing, but because of different things that happen in the campus and the school setting, sometimes it doesn't turn out the way it's supposed to turn out.

Emily further elaborated on the challenges of aligning the district's expectations with the realities of managing a large campus. She notes:

On paper, they [expectations] align, but sometimes I think the challenge is trying to meet the needs of such a large campus that we have and trying to meet other

needs and other things that need to be taken care of versus what the district wants us to do. Sometimes those two things don't align.

Fidelity and Preparation

Emily articulated her perspective on fidelity and preparation in her job role, stating, "My expectation is to see the students with fidelity, for the amount of time that their allotted for intervention specifically for ELA." She spoke on:

being consistent in seeing them and making sure that I try my best to help them succeed because most of the students I work with, of course, are struggling readers and I want to help, I want to help them improve and be successful.

She defined fidelity as "making sure that I, first of all, follow the curriculum, the district curriculum, and ensuring that I'm meeting the students' needs".

Emily highlighted the critical factors that impact student progress, stating, "If they don't read, they don't come to intervention consistently. That will hinder [their growth], and if they [students] don't apply the strategies that we teach them... then it's like not getting any support." She also talked about student engagement and the application of taught strategies in order to facilitate effective learning and progress.

Data

Emily understood data in her role, expressing, "Well, as you know, we do a lot of running records and I think those are very helpful to help, especially all the comprehension questions." She believed that running records are instrumental in assessing whether students are utilizing the strategies taught to them effectively. This process helps her gauge if students are applying these strategies correctly, or at all.

Emily also valued comprehension questions as they provide insight into whether students truly understand what they are reading. She elaborated, "I like the comprehension questions because that gives me an idea as to if the students are

understanding what they're reading." These questions enabled her to assess if students could think critically beyond the text, which was essential for deeper comprehension.

Francis

With eight years of experience in education, Francis became a literacy interventionist to help struggling readers. Francis told the researcher "I just think that the growth that you see in kids, specifically in reading, it's so much more powerful than I ever got to experience in math". As a first-grade teacher, Francis was able to witness firsthand the challenges that many of her students face with learning to read. This ignited a desire in her to figure out the secret behind transforming struggling readers into proficient ones resulting in her pursuing her current role as a literacy interventionist.

Her entire educational career has taken place on one campus, which allows her to have an advantage as she navigates the school's dynamics and when making connections with teachers and students.

In the role of a literacy interventionist, Francis had a few core principles that affect how she prioritizes her work. Transparency was extremely important to her. She ensured that she had open lines of communication with teachers and staff, striving to build bridges between her specialist role and her background as a former teacher. She told the researcher "I'm the only specialist on my campus who has also taught on my campus, so I try every single day to remember myself as a teacher and that I just happened to be filling this role". Her goal was not only for the staff to seek her out for assistance but also to understand the rationale behind her strategies. Integrity was a second principle that Francis embodied when working with her students and the staff. When asked about her expectations for herself she said:

I think integrity is a huge one. I think that they should be able to trust that I'm doing my job. I know when I was a teacher, I had no idea what a specialist

schedule was. I assumed they were busy all the time. They didn't have time for us. All this stuff and then I got into the role and realized like, wow, we have a lot more flexibility than I ever thought they were just like, not unapproachable by any means, but just the assumption is always that they're doing something else or doing something more important.

She understood the effect of building trust with teachers, ensuring they could rely on her to fulfill her role effectively. She shared her schedule and commitments transparently to foster mutual trust. Dependability was crucial to Francis as well. Teachers knew they could count on her to consistently deliver interventions when scheduled, and she valued keeping her promises. She also talked about having a high level of attendance, preparation, and fidelity in her interventions understanding that her absence affected students' progress. She said:

being dependable is a huge one because when I was a teacher, I wanted to know why you weren't getting my kid four days a week and how do you always have an ARD meeting during this block, and you just didn't show up? Or I didn't know that you had an interventionist meeting because I'm very scheduled, so I wanted to know if I was gonna have my kids that day.

Francis went beyond the expectations of a literacy interventionist not only by helping teachers on her campus but also by actively engaging with parents. She reached out to parents to build relationships and ensure they were informed about her role and its impact on their child's education. She knew that parental involvement and collaboration had an impact on outcomes for students. Francis explained to the researcher:

I'm just as invested in these parents. I'm calling them, I'm emailing them. I'm sending home reports. I'm sending home books to read. I'm putting things to sign

so that I know that you're engaged with me and my lessons and just letting making sure the parents know.

Francis also helped teachers by providing valuable resources, serving as a sounding board in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), co-teaching lessons, helping during team plannings, and collaborating with first year teachers.

Despite her busy schedule, Francis was fortunate to work in a supportive environment where her specialized role was highly regarded. Her administration prioritized her role, ensuring that she didn't get pulled into non-intervention tasks, which allowed her to focus on her primary responsibilities. Francis said, "Our admins are very respectful our kids are number one. That's my job. That's my priority. And then they work around everything else".

If Francis could change her schedule to focus where she believed she would have the greatest impact, she would concentrate on students in kindergarten, first, and second grade. She firmly believed that early intervention laid the foundation for future success. Francis said:

I see the value in that foundation, especially having gone to 3rd grade and like I was saying earlier seeing all the same kids struggling that if we had caught more of them, if more than four kids could have attended Tier 3, if that's what they needed that maybe we wouldn't still be having these same frequent Flyers, all these other grade levels.

She had also encountered some limitations in her time as a literacy interventionist. Francis thought "that one thing that hinders growth [in students] is the sometimes not connectedness of the different lesson parts that we're trying to teach them". She recognized the need for more connectedness in lesson components and aligning phonics instruction with reading materials. Certain assessments, particularly in the context of

guided reading using the intervention program had restricted the progress she felt her students could have achieved. Additionally, she understood that students with a strong support system at home often demonstrated more significant growth. She mentioned, “If they [students] just don't have a lot of structure, they don't have a parent who is available to be with them every night for homework I would say that hinders [student growth]”.

Dedicated and passionate about her teachers and students, Francis was committed to bridging the gap between struggling readers and academic success. Francis wanted everyone to know that “most teachers are doing the best they can, they have the best intentions at heart, and they want student success as much as parents.”

Student Home Life

Francis spoke about parent relationships in helping student reading achievement, stating, "I'm calling them, I'm emailing them. I'm sending home reports. I'm sending home books to read. I'm putting things to sign so that I know that you're engaged with me and my lessons." She also acknowledged the impact of home support on student success, noting, "there's definitely a link between who has support at home, who doesn't?"

Teacher Focus

Francis provided extensive assistance to teachers on her campus, stating:
I co-taught with our first year teachers. I went through the entire balance literacy model with them, so from start to finish showing them how to time it, how to have your resources ready, how to tie them all together, how to monopolize on your time, to be able to hit everything you know, like teaching your mini lesson through your interactive read aloud.

She also mentioned further help stating, "I did PLCs. I attended team planning meetings if they needed me." Francis also reviewed teachers' lesson plans and pacing, ensuring alignment with the curriculum standards and scope and sequence. She mentioned:

I also oversaw pretty much everything they put in their online learning folder, so week by week, lesson plans, ensuring that they were following the week set of glands and the scope and sequence. And just pacing them is what I guess I would say is how I would support them.

Additionally, Francis participated in assessment camps and assists with testing when needed. She mentioned:

I participated in the assessment camps this year, so 3rd, 4th and 5th grade all did like a week-long intensive reading assessment camp, so I did a session in each of those whatever they need me to do so again and PLCs. we plan those, so I'm like, what do you want me to do? You want me phonics comprehension and then created a presentation or an interactive thing for the kids for that.

Fidelity and Preparation

Francis spoke on attendance, stating, "My expectation for myself for those definitely at my attendance has to stay up."

Regarding preparation, Francis stressed the significance of being well-prepared for each session:

So I think that it's important that the fidelity of the teachers trusting me, that I'm utilizing and maximizing that 45 minutes as best as I can while I have those students so that we can both see optimal growth.

Francis further discussed adhering to district expectations and maintaining good systems for administrative tasks: "Making sure that I am always putting in attendance when I'm supposed to on whatever platform that those things are not something that the district should have to worry about."**Data**

Francis reflected on her evolving approach to using data in her role, stating, "I would treat things a lot less like checkmarks and do them a lot more intentionally now

that I actually see where the data goes and see how the data influences decisions on my campus."

Regarding her experience with intervention, Francis shared her struggles and the need for flexibility in assessment and instruction. She explained, "I felt very restricted by this intervention... I felt like I was teaching 3-15 minute lessons a day that weren't really connected." She also talked about using assessments that provide a better understanding of students' needs and driving instruction based on those needs.

Setting the Foundation

Francis expressed a deep commitment to setting a strong foundation for students in literacy, saying, "I felt like once I had that foundation of teaching kids truly how to read... to see how the seeds that I planted blossomed 2 years later... the growth that they made... it was just so eye-opening and interesting." This experience inspired Francis to focus on vertical alignment in reading instruction, tracking the progress of students over time. Reflecting on her role as a literacy interventionist, Francis discussed the challenges of meeting the diverse needs of students in different grade levels, stating:

I think it would primarily be in K, 1, and 2... having taught the upper grades, I was more stressed when my kids left the classroom... I just felt like assessment season... I always felt like I was catching those kids up later, even when I was stopping instruction.

Grace

Grace had been in education for 10 years focusing mainly on the primary grade levels where she was able to set the literacy foundation for her students. Grace told the researcher:

It was really neat to see them [the students] coming to you, reading level c, d, e and they leave to you almost in chapter books. That was just inspiring to me. So that naturally led to my love for reading and the development of reading.

She pursued her master's degree in education administration where she was able to widen her understanding of the inner workings of a campus beyond just a classroom. Grace explained:

learning how the decisions that administrator can make, can impact education and student achievement in a variety of ways, right? How different ways of thinking, different philosophies, their passion, and their beliefs can really impact. Student, you know, development and growth. And so that was really eye-opening for me.

This learning, along with her experience teaching ESL students helped impact the way she catered to the unique needs of students.

As a literacy interventionist for the second year, Grace had high expectations for herself. Grace felt:

I have such an important job and my expectation for myself is to move kids...

Move kids in a sense as help them grow and develop as readers...I value the students where they are, and I really just try and develop their confidence and their sense of just their own value in reading, their own love for, for reading.

Instill that love for learning because we could sit here all day long and do all these strategies and I can teach my heart out or teach like my hair's on fire, but at the end of the day, they need to develop that love for literacy themselves and they

need to see the value and they need to feel worthy of that value and confident in their skills as well.

To ensure consistency and effectiveness, Grace remained loyal to the district's literacy program and recognized the value of consistent attendance. She was able to meet not only her own but the district's expectations for fidelity, by having trust and support from her campus administration. Grace felt that:

if I'm not here and I'm not following the program, I can't expect, we can't expect that growth, right? The basis of intervention is that frequent systematic instruction. So, if I'm absent, they're not getting that frequent repetition, that systematic instruction.

Grace stayed busy in this role. Her days consisted of pulling students for interventions, participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLC), contributing to Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings, and conducting "five by fives"- informal classroom visits to provide valuable feedback to teachers. Grace also assisted teachers through delivering professional development, or simply being a thought partner.

If she was able to build a schedule in the way she would like, Grace said:
it's kind of hard because I see the value in coaching, and I see the value in an interventionist. The limitation of my role is I don't touch as many kids as I wish I did because of just how it's set up.

Grace would strike a balance between conducting small-group interventions and coaching teachers through formal coaching cycles. She understood that maintaining a manageable group size is key to ensuring effective interventions, allowing for personalized attention each student needs. Grace said:

That's what makes intervention effective is that smaller group setting. So, I like the small group, but knowing the limitations of me adding more kids makes that

group less effective. I like still like having a coaching piece because I feel like that's a way to impact more kids via coaching and growing teachers.

Even with all the success and support Grace and her students received, they still encountered barriers. Grace knew that student success reached beyond the classroom. Parent involvement- or its absence- played a pivotal role in a student's reading journey. She empathized with students facing challenging home environments, understanding that their external factors can significantly impact their progress. Another hurdle was inconsistent guided reading instruction in classrooms which could hinder the growth of her students.

Above all, Grace felt a deep conviction regarding the role of literacy leaders in schools. She believed that it was imperative to recognize the critical importance of dedicated support for both teachers and students to improve literacy outcomes. This role should not only be valued, but respected. Grace wanted the world to know:

Literacy interventionists do serve a role, a very important role and reading is an area that is in dire need of support, teachers are overwhelmed and overworked. It needs to be valued it needs to be respected, it does no good if you have a literacy leader and they're doing everything but supporting literacy.

Student Home Life

Grace acknowledged the impact of student home life on their academic success, stating, "parental involvement. Or lack, lack thereof. Um, and a lot of the kids that I see in intervention, home life's not so great. Parental involvement is low." She recognized the significance of parental involvement in students' education and highlighted the challenges faced by students who lack adequate help at home. Grace explained the limited time she spends with students compared to their time at home and in their general education classrooms, stating, "At the end of the day, they are only with me for 45 minutes out of

the day, and I can't control what happens in their gen ed classroom... and I can't control what happens at home."

Teacher Focus

Grace helped teachers on her campus through various methods, as she explained, "I like still having a coaching piece because I feel like that's a way to impact more kids via coaching and growing teachers." Grace further elaborated on her support by engaging in PLCs and presenting professional development sessions. She described herself as a "thought partner", indicating her role in collaborating with teachers to enhance their instructional practices. Grace told the researcher, "I've developed relationships with teachers over those years and I think my strong relationship with them has helped kind of open those doors as I transitioned into this role." She stressed the value of sharing knowledge and experiences with teachers, promoting a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. Grace encouraged teachers to try new strategies and remains open to informal help, stating, "Maybe you can try or even...this is something I just learned last month."

Administrator Support

Hannah reflected on her administration, stating, "Their definition of fidelity is what the district's expectation of fidelity is." She mentioned a shift in administration and described it as a learning experience for everyone involved, saying, "he is very, um, cognizant of like honoring the district expectations." Hannah spoke on how her administration affects her role as a literacy leader, stating, "My administration really does respect and value my role, because it does no good if you have a literacy leader and they're doing everything but supporting literacy." She spoke on the necessity for alignment between administrative backing and the goals of her position, advocating for the administration to prioritize supporting literacy initiatives.

Fidelity and Preparation

Grace spoke of fidelity and preparation in her job role, stating, "So if I'm not here and I'm not following the program, I can't expect, we can't expect that growth right?" She explained the significance of consistent and systematic instruction, emphasizing the necessity of frequent repetition and adherence to the instructional program for student progress. She told the researcher, "I feel a sense of responsibility to the district to follow the program with fidelity that they deemed worthy enough to put into their schools." Grace also acknowledged the need to balance fidelity with meeting students' individual needs, saying, "Now, does that mean that I am strict only, or I stick only to what's written on the paper? No, I think you have to meet your kids where you are."

Data

Grace discussed her approach to data in her job role, focusing specifically on reading records. She described how reading records are "basically analysis of their decoding strategies...then there was a comprehension section where you really can determine, okay, are they fluent in their thinking about the text, within the text, and beyond the text?" She also reflected on her experience of taking notes during assessments and acknowledged the challenge of effectively recording observations. Grace explained, "We feel like we're just writing everything... it's nothing really that helped guide you in the direction." She suggested that reading records can provide a structured framework that helps more focused note-taking and guides teachers toward specific instructional goals. Grace saw reading records as offering a "roadmap" for teachers to follow once they have identified goals for their students.

Setting the Foundation

Grace viewed reading as an essential aspect of education, stating, "I kind of see reading as such a fundamental, I mean, it is a fundamental piece." She talked about developing students' confidence and their sense of self-worth in relation to reading, saying, "I really just try and develop their confidence and their sense of just their own value in reading."

Hannah

Hannah was in education for 12 years at the time of the study, previously graduating with a degree in communications and then eventually receiving a master's in curriculum and instruction. She obtained her alternative certification and was a substitute teacher, before ever being responsible for her classroom. Once the opportunity arose, Hannah taught second and third grade before pursuing the literacy interventionist role.

Hannah decided to transition out of the classroom because she was passionate about literacy; "helping kids to learn how to read and write, and all things literacy." This translated to her goal of helping all of the students she works with. Hannah told the researcher, "I think a lot of our struggles is that we just need to figure out the why behind why our students are struggling to read and why they're struggling in literacy. She knew that consistency was key to growth for students. "If you're not consistent with anything you do, it's just not gonna hold up then they're not gonna make the progress that we hope they make". This high standard also aligned with the expectations her campus administration holds for her. She was expected to not only provide services to her identified students but to also assist teachers in Tier 1 instruction.

This expectation made it difficult for her to balance because the district had expectations of pulling students all day long so she had to find time to meet with teachers and to plan about what she would meet with the teachers about. "There is just not enough

time in the day to get it all done”. When everything was going smoothly then she was able to follow the expectations of the district, but sometimes the pressure came, and she was asked by her assistant principal to switch gears and help teachers “right now”.

If she was able to create a schedule however she liked, Hannah would use the first half of the day to provide intervention to identified students meeting with each group for less than 45 minutes which is currently the expectation. She would use the second half of the day to review data, push into classrooms, and assist with Tier 1 instruction.

Hannah used reading records to collect evidence in order to “figure out more about what’s going on with those reading behaviors and why it might be happening”. She also used other optional assessments from resources such as Fountas and Pinnell, Texas Reading Academies, Texas Gateway, and Targeting the 2% in order to gather data on her students to plan for intentional intervention.

Hannah was passionate about educators and parents in a community “instilling a love for literacy within students”. She felt this would help students in finding the value of reading instead of just another task. After speaking with the school nurse, they figured out that many students tended not to feel well when it was time for reading and writing. Another reason for this was the control teachers feel they need to hold in the classroom. Letting go and letting students have a choice in the books they read and allowing them to discuss books in class was one step in the right direction.

Hannah wanted the world to know how big of an impact literacy interventionists can have on students. “When students find that they can learn, they know how to learn, and they know what to do to learn they can be successful with their academics.” This will change a child to “becoming a better reader, a better writer, a better listener, and a better speaker.”

Student Home Life

Hannah reflected on the importance of student home life, stating:

I think that if we as educators and, you know, parents in a community could instill a love of literacy within our students overall I think that would make things easier instead of making It [reading] feel like it's a mundane task that they have to do when they go to school.

Teacher Focus

Hannah primarily helped teachers on her campus through preparation, stating, "I'm mostly with planning." She explained that she assisted with unit planning and helped teachers monitor and adjust their lessons throughout the week, especially when they felt they were struggling with a specific concept or as a grade level. She talked about using assessments and meetings as a basis for this assistance.

Hannah described other ways she helped teachers saying, "I like to do data reviews with them." She clarified that while she has led data reviews in the past, "but more recently it's been just asking guiding questions that goes with that [data review]" because "they know their students better than I do" aiming to empower teachers by encouraging them to share their insights and perspectives on the data.

Administrator Support

Hannah told the researcher that her administration expects her to "service [her] students to the best of [her] ability" and ensure their growth as readers and writers. She acknowledged, "I think that another big piece that they expect for me is to help support other teachers on campus too," recognizing the challenge this can pose.

She felt "that's a big expectation for me on my campus is to help support those teachers just to make sure that we are very strong with that Tier 1." This highlighted the

administration's focus on ensuring strong foundational instruction to minimize the need for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

Hannah noted that the level of support from her administration can vary based on progress and pressures, saying, "I think it depends... if we're making good progress and we're making good gains on campus... then it's fine." However, she acknowledged that at times there may be either too much pressure or not enough backing, leading to challenges.

She particularly mentioned her assistant principal's reliance on her for literacy knowledge, saying, "I feel like she comes to me a lot for support at my campus," and describing instances where she was asked to immediately assist multiple teachers. This indicated a significant demand for her help and expertise in literacy instruction from both teachers and administration. This dual role made it hard for her to balance the expectations from both campus administration and the district.

Fidelity and Preparation

Hannah stressed fidelity and preparation in her job role, stating, "I think just consistency is key. If you're not consistent with anything that you do, it's just it's not gonna hold up when we're not gonna make the progress that you hope to make." She reflected on her own high expectations, saying, "I have high expectations for myself personally. I'm pretty hard on myself and I want the best for our students." Hannah also discussed the challenges of balancing her time between planning for her intervention groups and assisting teachers who may be struggling. She explained:

Lots of my planning time goes into planning for my students that I have in my intervention groups. But if I am expected to meet up with... teachers who might be struggling... it's important to also plan for that conversation and to plan for them.

Despite time constraints, she recognized the importance of giving her full effort in helping teachers and students alike.

Data

Hannah valued data as a crucial tool in her instructional practice, stating, "I think our reading records that we do are helpful, especially if I take the time to analyze them obviously." She spoke on the difference between analysis rather than superficial review, noting that simply looking at surface-level metrics like accuracy or words correct per minute is insufficient. Instead, she stressed the need to "dig a lot deeper" into the data, which requires time and thoughtful reflection.

Hannah described her approach to data analysis, explaining, "As an interventionist, I think that if I notice certain things, behaviors, reading behaviors with students, and I need to figure out more about what's going on with those reading behaviors and why it might be happening." She utilized various assessments, including those from resources like Fountas and Pinnell, the Texas Reading Academies program, and the Texas Gateway, to gain insights into students' specific struggles.

Additionally, Hannah talked about collaboration and leveraging the expertise of dyslexia teachers, stating, "I also lean on my dyslexia teachers; they are a great resource as well." She valued collaboration as a means of gaining different perspectives and receiving advice on how to help struggling students effectively.

Setting the Foundation

Hannah talked about setting a strong foundation for students in literacy, stating, "Helping kids learn how to read and write and all things literacy." She believed that focusing on phonics, especially for kindergarten through second-grade students, is essential for building this foundation. She mentioned the significance of using research-driven methods, saying, "What we've been doing for the past few years is, you know, the

psychologists have been figuring out the science of teaching reading." She advocated for utilizing this knowledge to inform instructional practices, particularly for emergent readers in the early grades. Hannah indicated her prioritization of phonics instruction, noting that she would dedicate a significant portion of her time to it, particularly in the front half of the day. This describes her commitment to ensuring that students receive the foundational skills necessary for literacy development, aligning with the principles of the science of teaching reading.

Ida

Ida brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role of literacy interventionist. Having been in education for 25 years she has had the opportunity to teach many different grade levels, support as a reading specialist and dyslexia teacher, and even teach at a trilingual school overseas. She brought with her a degree in human development, a minor in psychology, and then a master's in education.

As a literacy interventionist at the same school for seven years, Ida was able to see the role go through different definitions and transformations. When the role of literacy interventionist was created, Ida had the opportunity to stay as a dyslexia teacher where she would strictly focus on intervening with students diagnosed with dyslexia or transition into this new position which was originally presented as a role where you would coach and provide intervention with about a 50-50 split. At the time Ida had a large role in writing curriculum and presenting for the district so she didn't want to lose that connection and decided to pursue the role of literacy interventionist. She wanted to see the connection between what she was doing during her small group and how students were applying it back into their classroom. Ida told the researcher:

When this role came about I was able to still have my hand on the curriculum and know where they [students] should be, it made it easier to kind of build that

bridge of I can still work with my struggling readers, but then I can also be able to help them apply those skills better because I know where they should be in the curriculum.

After a few years, the district changed the job role to more of a 60-40 split with 60% focused on intervention and 40% coaching. The district had recently begun to stress the importance of fidelity causing Ida to feel like there was no time for coaching help during the school day and priority should be 100% on intervention. At times Ida felt overwhelmed with the pressure from the district to be “more like you are purely an interventionist” but with the expectation of her campus administration to assist teachers. Ida understood some of the reasoning behind this decision but also questioned “If we can have stronger Tier one and have stronger support on that side, do we need this much intervention?”

It was hard for Ida to not go above and beyond and research and attend training to better help her teachers. One expectation she held for herself in this role was to always be learning and growing. Ida told the researcher, “I like to look for patterns and trends with the data to see what to do next, it’s always about, what else am I going to do or what am I going to maintain because this is working.” Her administrator also had high expectations of her on the coaching side of the role. It was assumed by her principal that Ida would pull her groups and that her students would show growth, so the administration didn’t check in on the intervention side of her job role.

The balance became difficult when she was expected to hold the fidelity requirements of the district yet be there to support teachers with coaching “and there’s not enough time.” Ida expressed “That’s where the personal struggle comes through when she [the principal] is like, I need you to take care of this, this, and this. Supporting the teachers.” Ida started her day by waking up at 4:30 AM to be on campus by 6:30 AM

in order to prepare for her day. Her planning time was used to prepare for PLCs or teacher assistance, so she was unable to enter student data or plan for her intervention groups. After school she continued to help teachers who were open and willing to plan so she typically didn't leave campus until almost two hours after her contract time ended. If Ida was able to schedule her day to be used in any capacity she wished, she would focus on the primary grades and either pull students for half the day and then coach the teachers for the other half or she would pull double intervention groups in the primary grades.

In order to intentionally plan for her groups, Ida used reading records to gather information “just by listening to them read for a little bit for the fluency part, and then ask comprehension questions”. She also had students write to ensure students had mastered a certain concept. Ida also saw more growth when grade level teachers consistently did guided reading and pulled small groups in the classroom. But none of this work mattered if students were not present to be a part of the learning, “attendance plays a role in it [student growth].”

Ultimately Ida just wanted to be there to help both her students and her campus teachers but was torn between meeting the needs of the campus and following district expectations. Ida wanted educators to know that not all kids are into reading and it's our job to help them and build relationships with these students. Ida told the researcher “No matter the obstacles, no matter the lack of passion or desire, it's finding a way to still connect to people, to those kids in front of us, build those relationships to find an interest.”

Teacher Focus

Ida told the researcher that she had been in this role since the district created it. The expectations for teacher support versus time in intervention have changed over the years. Ida said, “Now I don't have as much time as I used to have, where if teachers

needed me to go in and actually model or co-teach, I used to do a lot more of that.” At this time Ida helped her teachers on campus primarily through “PLC of just the planning and prepping and understanding what that is.”

Administrator Support

Ida told the researcher that she felt that her administrator's support on campus was “more on the coaching side and the teacher support. So, a lot of times the intervention side gets overlooked a little bit.” She believed that her administrator's expectations were more centered around helping teachers facilitate student growth rather than directly overseeing her intervention work. As long as Ida was “pulling my groups and pulling my kids and seeing growth” her administrator was relatively hands-off regarding intervention matters. While Ida wished for more administrative backing in her intervention role, she acknowledged that her administrator trusts her to manage it effectively. However, she also expressed challenges in balancing intervention work with coaching responsibilities due to time constraints. “She [the principal] wants me to meet the fidelity and the growth and all that. But the reality is she still wants me to do the other side with the coaching and there's not enough time.” Overall, Ida perceived her administrator's support as aligned with the goal of student growth but wished for more backing specifically in her intervention role.

Fidelity and Preparation

Ida spoke on fidelity and preparation in ensuring consistent and effective instruction for students. She believed that fidelity involved following the prescribed components of instruction diligently without skipping or improvising. Fidelity to Ida was:

following what they have written out for their different components...you're following all of those components and not just kind of skipping them or playing

around, but that we're being a little bit more regimented about incorporating all of those things in your 45 minutes.

She also mentioned the necessity of maintaining consistency in delivering the intended service to students every day to achieve desired results. Additionally, Ida stressed the accountability aspect of fidelity, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the students who truly need the intervention are receiving it. She expressed her preference for following a structured approach, relying on data analysis to identify patterns and trends that inform her instructional decisions. Ultimately, she viewed fidelity and preparation as crucial elements in achieving the desired outcomes for students.

Data

When asked about data, Ida told the researcher:

Because we're meeting individual kid's needs, you've gotta figure out what do these individual kids need... I like organization. I like data, I like results. I like to see the growth...I like to look for patterns and trends with the data to see what to do next."

Ida used reading records when planning for instruction because "you get so much information just with listening to them [the students] read for a little bit."

Jane

Jane had been involved in the world of education for 14 years. She taught fourth and fifth grade, as well as had the roles of assistant principal, instructional coach, a certification officer for an alternative certification program, and was at the time a literacy interventionist. As a literacy interventionist, Jane had high expectations for herself and her students. Jane "meets kids where they are and just accelerating their improvement and their progress while helping them love reading, building their confidence and helping to bring things together in a way they maybe they didn't see before."

Jane knew she needed to work with her students consistently in order to reach these goals, but she also believed in having “continuity between what I’m doing with a child and what they are seeing in their classroom” in order for their “brains to make connections from short term to long term memory”. To assist the teachers with this, Jane worked with teachers during their planning in order to calibrate and align the concepts that students are learning.

Her administration was “fairly hands off” but wanted to ensure she was following the district’s expectations. When it came to helping teachers, they were open to hearing her ideas, especially when it was something that aligned with the campus goals and their campus improvement plans. Two ways she impacted her campus were through intentional and purposeful PD sessions and PLCs. Though she would have loved to have partnered with them more on how to improve her intervention, the content knowledge of these campus administrators was not strong enough to hold this type of conversation. She told the researcher “An ideal situation is if you have a knowledgeable and skilled admin, I would love to be able to partner with them on way to improve intervention.”

With such a large number of students, it was hard for her to make a major impact on the RTI numbers for her campus. She desired the district to revisit its allocation of literacy interventionists and provide larger campuses with more personnel in order to meet the instructional demands.

Jane was able to unofficially coach teachers throughout the day by “squeezing every second out of every minute the whole day, from 7:50 to well after school”. She felt that the district’s expectation of having 80% of a literacy interventionist’s day be pulling intervention groups did not match what the needs of campuses actually were because “the stronger your Tier one is, the less kids you need in Tier 3”.

In order to plan for instruction, she “finds value in listening to kids read” but she didn’t stop there. She listened to their fluency, and patterns in the miscues, seeing if they were applying the strategies and knew the 6 syllable types. Jane got frustrated when “everything [data points] is telling me a student needs support with decoding and the books that we’re using don’t lend themselves to meeting that need”. She also felt

having more of a role in the students’ Tier 1 instruction would help accelerate their growth such as co-teaching or working on skills the students are working on in class but at their level.

Jane did her best daily to help her students and campus teachers however she could. This was a role she felt that districts should invest in more, and not cut back. Jane told the researcher:

We’re an important position because the data continues to say we need to actually dig in further, not pull out. We’re not miracle workers, but if you give us a couple of more people, we can do a lot on a campus.

Jane went above and beyond to meet the needs of her students, making sure no time was wasted. Jane wanted educators to “get out of our own way.” She felt like we “get stuck in doing things a certain way and stop responding to student needs.” She wanted educators to be trusted as professionals and to be allowed the “time and space to do what we know to do.” She also wanted administrators to know that not everything should fall on the literacy interventionist, “don't assume that because we exist, that absolves you as an administrator from doing your part; our presence doesn't equal your absence; we all need to work together, that's how we make a positive impact.”

Teacher Focus

Jane assisted teachers through various methods. One way she helped teachers was by “picking up different strategies or different words they [teachers] would use for how

to explain something” and incorporated this into her intervention groups. She would also provide suggestions, stating, “I would say well, this is something that I have found to be effective. Is this something you could incorporate in your class?” Jane wished she was able to “be reduced down to [supporting] like two or three grade levels, it would be push ins and pull out. Pushing in during their block to do a team teaching or co-teaching with that teacher.” Jane explained to the researcher that she mainly helped teachers through “planning, and then some co-planning and being a resource when they have questions.”

Administrator Support

During her interview, Ida spent some time speaking on the support of her campus administration. She noted the alignment with district goals and the autonomy granted in addressing needs within her role, stating, "It was kind of like whatever the district tells you to do. Make sure you do that." She talked about aligning interventions with school-wide goals, leveraging data to inform professional development decisions, and monitoring progress to ensure fidelity to instructional practices.

Ida mentioned that her administrators took a hands-off approach regarding student interventions but expressed a desire for more collaboration on improving Tier 1 instruction, especially in the absence of a dedicated coach. While she valued the feedback received from district personnel and colleagues, she believed that more support was needed to effectively address the diverse needs of students. When asked if she would have preferred more conversation around intervention she replied, “I think what would be an ideal situation is if you have a knowledgeable and skilled admin, I would love to be able to partner with them on ways to improve intervention.” As far as following the expectations for fidelity the expectations from her principal:

largely align, I mean my principal last wasn't gonna ask me to do anything that I know the district had said, I didn't cover classes. I didn't sub, I didn't do any of

that kind of stuff. I think where there was a disconnect is in the role of supporting Tier 1 instruction.

Fidelity and Preparation

Ida talked about the importance of fidelity in aligning her instructional practices with both research-based strategies and the curriculum used in her district, stating, "So fidelity in that way that there's a match there... making sure that those things match." She highlighted the significance of ensuring that her interventions complemented and reinforced the classroom instruction, aiming for a comprehensive approach that addresses the five components of literacy instruction.

While acknowledging fidelity to the district's chosen program, Ida described the broader goal of fostering connections between classroom learning and her interventions, saying, "What I'm doing with a child should match what the classroom teachers doing." She believed that consistency was essential for students to internalize and retain information effectively, emphasizing the brain's need for repeated practice and feedback to build lasting connections from short-term to long-term memory. Overall, Ida stressed fidelity and preparation in creating a coherent and effective learning experience for students, both within her interventions and in conjunction with classroom instruction.

Data

Ida utilized data by closely listening to students read and engaging in conversations about their understanding, stating, "I do find value in listening to kids read... we need to listen to kids read and have conversations with them about their understanding." While she acknowledged the value of reading records and the data they provide, she felt educators need to focus on miscue patterns rather than just the MSV (Meaning, Structure, Visual) analysis. She identified patterns in students' miscues to guide her instruction, particularly in phonics lessons.

Ida also utilized reading records to assess the types of questions students are able to answer, indicating their knowledge and comprehension levels. She saw a connection between question types and the skills taught in the classroom, such as text structure, and used this information to tailor her instruction accordingly. Additionally, she recognized how fluency and vocabulary contribute to comprehension and adjusted her teaching strategies based on these insights from reading records.

Kendall

For 25 years Kendall had been in education, teaching 4th, 5th, and 6th grade, working as a dyslexia teacher, and at the time working as a literacy interventionist. This role interested her because it gave her a way to help students build their confidence in reading and writing. She “noticed that the confidence of these kids are very low and they feel like they don’t have the skills to support them with reading”, but she feels “like [she] can support those kids with reading and confidence”. Even students who have since been identified as needing special education services are left with more confidence than when they started. With a bachelor's degree in education, a master's in curriculum and instruction with a focus on reading, and a principal certification, she was well prepared to work with the readers who struggle the most.

Kendall knew that consistency and honesty were things that could make an impact on students' success in intervention. She helped students “feel comfortable making mistakes” by being honest and open and admitting when she also made mistakes. She held high expectations of herself to “understand the program” and be “prepared for lessons”. Kendall ensured that she was consistent by “building on the previous day’s lessons” and using her notes to intentionally prepare for the next day.

One reason Kendall was able to be consistent was the support she receives from her campus principal. Kendall said, “I have a wonderful principal, Mrs. Briggs

(pseudonym) and her expectation is for me to pull students”. She may have also asked her to attend PLCs, assist new teachers, prepare for upcoming professional development days, and help teachers with district testing, but this all had to be done during a time that did not interfere with her intervention groups and “she [her principal] does not interrupt our tier 3 instruction]”. If she was able to do anything in her position, she would focus more time on coaching. She “really would love to see growth in teachers”.

Kendall used reading records to plan for her intervention groups. Through reading records, “we get so much information about the students, as far as their reading behaviors and how they respond orally [to comprehension questions],” but she also liked having her students complete written responses. This gave her insight into their spelling, letter formation, and grammar, and sees if phonetic skills that have been taught are being applied.

Through all of the success, Kendall had seen some barriers for students as well. One of the biggest ones was parent support. She had seen firsthand how parents who lacked the knowledge and understanding of reading difficulties could struggle with knowing how to assist their child or misinterpret the struggle as laziness. Kendall said “It has nothing to do with being lazy. It is a direct result of, you’ve gotten enough out of me now, so I’m tired but they [the students] don’t know how to verbalize that.”

Kendall was passionate about small group instruction. She advocated for smaller class sizes, so teachers are able to effectively plan and deliver small group instruction in order to meet the needs of all students. Kendall wanted the world to know that intervention is important; interventionists’ instruction is “very focused, purposeful, and intentional”. She also felt that teacher class sizes should have been revisited to allow teachers the opportunity to have small group sizes. She felt:

the students are not getting what they need, and we need to rethink how many students are in a class to one teacher, because the teachers are able to do more small group instruction if the class sizes were smaller.

Student Home Life

During her interview, Kendall spoke on the significant impact of a student's home environment on their academic, telling the researcher, "A parent's involvement... Parents not understanding how to help their child... they didn't know what else to do." She recounted experiences where parents initially resisted testing for their children, attributing struggles to laziness or behavioral issues. However, after testing, it was revealed that the students had dyslexia and dysgraphia, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing underlying challenges.

Teacher Focus

In supporting teachers on her campus, Kendall primarily focused on professional development and coaching, aiming to foster growth and responsibility among educators. She expressed her desire to see teachers take on more planning and assessment creation, stating, "I really would love to see teachers take on more responsibility and when I say responsibility, I mean, you know, planning more, creating those assessments." Kendall spoke on aligning with district expectations, such as backwards planning, "having things prepared ahead of time, looking at your data, digging through your data, looking at trends, things that this district expects us to do, I would really like to see teachers grow in that capacity."

She also described her involvement in professional development sessions, where she collaborated with the principal to deliver content to the campus and attended PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and RTI meetings to provide assistance. Kendall

offered teachers flexibility in scheduling meetings, accommodating their planning time to discuss instructional strategies or address concerns.

Additionally, Kendall implemented an open lab classroom last year, allowing teachers to observe her lessons and model small group instruction. This initiative aimed to provide hands-on assistance and enable teachers to apply new strategies in their own classrooms. Kendall acknowledged the limited help available to teachers and the need to prioritize either coaching or pulling students for intervention, highlighting the challenges in balancing these responsibilities.

Administrator Support

Kendall's administrator, Mrs. Briggs, offered her support by prioritizing Kendall's Tier 3 instruction and ensuring minimal interruptions. Kendall expressed her appreciation, stating:

I have a wonderful principal, Mrs. Briggs, and her expectation is for me to pull students, and if there's something else that she needs me to do, she makes sure that it is after I have met with my students, or she'll ask.

Mrs. Briggs also respected Kendall's time and workload by asking for assistance with tasks only after considering Kendall's schedule, saying, "Hey, do you have time to do this task for me?" Additionally, Mrs. Briggs provided professional development opportunities for Kendall to prepare for, ensuring alignment with district expectations and backing Kendall in her role with Kindergarten and Pre-K students, especially during testing periods. Kendall noted that Mrs. Briggs' support has evolved over time, becoming more defined and allowing Kendall to focus on consistent student intervention, particularly in pulling students for intervention four to five days a week.

Fidelity and Preparation

Kendall valued consistency and honesty in her approach to teaching, stating, “Consistency...I want to be consistent as well as honest when the students know that I’m making a mistake, they feel comfortable with making mistakes.” She also understood the importance of “being prepared with lessons, understanding the intervention program, and having high expectations for them [students].” Kendall made sure “I’m on time with pulling them [students], making sure my lessons are consistent. I’m building on previous lessons, so I make sure I’m reviewing lessons. Just having a system in place for them and not changing every day.”

Data

Kendall used data such as “reading records, we get so much information about the students from the reading record as far as they’re reading behaviors, how they respond orally.” Kendall also “loves doing written responses, I can see their spelling. I can see if they have reversals. If they can write in complete sentences if they can write a complete thought.”

Researcher

As I write the findings of this study, I couldn’t help but reflect on how these stories related to my experience as a literacy interventionist. Like many of the participants in this study, I became a literacy interventionist the first year this district created this position. Without clear expectations, campus administrators were able to use us in any capacity in which they seemed necessary to meet the needs of the campus. During this time our intervention groups were about 30 minutes long and without set intervention times, we were able to be flexible with our schedule. On paper, I would have up to eight groups of both Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, but there was little fidelity with these groups. I was often pulled for meetings, to co-teach classrooms for weeks on end, to

run test preparation campus, to pull test preparation groups, and to design and deliver assessments to our kindergarten through fifth grade students. A few years into this position there was a reset as new leadership arrived. We were told that 60% of our time needed to be spent with students, and the other 40% could be designated to campus needs. We were introduced to partnership agreements, where we met with our campus administrators to discuss our job roles and what was expected of us. We all signed that we agreed to abide by this agreement and not to be asked to deviate from what was agreed upon. This agreement didn't hold strong when data was reviewed, and the needs of the campus outweighed what was originally agreed upon. The concept of fidelity was also introduced to our group. Fidelity to the program; following the lessons in which they were designed, for the time that was suggested by the program, and with the program's recommended amount of students per group, and fidelity to pulling our groups; seeing students at least four times a week for 45 minutes. To help support interventionists with this new expectation, the district developed a master schedule that included intervention and enrichment blocks for every grade level, as well as time for grade level PLCs. This limited our time to pull students to only their intervention time but increased their time to 45 minutes. On paper this allowed me to see six groups. Again, this helped with fidelity at the beginning, but things changed once we became closer to the state assessment. The students I was able to pull on a consistent basis always made growth or soon qualified for special education services. Results seemed to accelerate at a quicker pace when teachers were also providing quality Tier 1 instruction and pulling my students in their classroom for additional help with small group. I always wondered if other literacy interventionists also had the same experiences as I did, which led to my interest in this study.

Emerging Themes

Analysis of the data collected in this study uncovered six crucial themes that accentuate the intricate landscape of literacy interventionists: student home life, teacher focus, administrator support, fidelity and preparation, data, and setting the foundation.

Theme #1: Student Home life

One of the emergent themes in this study was that the home life of students can play a role in student success in reading. Out of the eleven literacy interventionists interviewed for this study, seven of them felt that students reading at home, parental knowledge of how to assist their children, and the relationships between the school and parents will help students through their literacy journey. This finding is consistent with that of Dagen and Bean (2020) who say parent-community-school ties are critical for student success. According to Henderson & Mapp (2002), “when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (p. 7).”

Based on these findings, literacy interventionists must develop a partnership with the parents of their students. Through this partnership, interventionists have the opportunity to gain support from parents and also help assist parents in how they can help their children at home. One participant even thought:

If we as educators and parents in a community could instill a love of literacy within our students, it would make things easier instead of making it feel like it’s another mundane task that they have to do when they go to school.

The majority of participants shared how they felt help at home, or the lack of support played a big role in whether or not their students made growth in reading.

Theme #2: Teacher Focus

Another emergent theme was that all literacy interventionists helped teachers in some capacity. This again aligned with Dagen and Bean (2020) who found that one of the main factors that can lead to school improvement is instructional guidance. The participants brought up the disconnect between what they were teaching during their intervention groups and the application of these skills back in their Tier 1 classrooms. Dagen and Bean (2020) also found the same issues leading to minor results with an intervention program.

All participants in this study assisted teachers in different ways including facilitating or attending PLCs, providing resources, leading professional development, holding open labs for teachers to observe them, coaching in the form of modeling or co-teaching, and planning. Every participant wished to have more time to be able to work with and coach teachers even though many participants expressed a hard time doing both roles. The problem, according to one participant, is that “it’s always a fine balance, helping the teachers with their Tier 1 instruction, and helping them with their intervention kids.” Another agreed with this problem and how it can go against the expectations the principal has for them:

she wants me to pull my groups, see them every day, she wants me to meet the fidelity and growth and all that, but the reality is she still wants me to do the other side with the coaching and there’s not enough time.

A third even explained the struggle with preparing for this extra help.

It's hard to do because I'm expected to see students all day long for interventions. What's hard is to not only find time to meet with the teachers but to find time to plan how to meet with the teachers. So, lots of my planning time goes into planning for my students that I have in my intervention groups. But, if I am

expected to meet up with a couple of new teachers or teachers who might be struggling with certain things, I feel like it's important to also plan for that conversation and to plan for them. So, it's like you're planning for two different things. And so, I think obviously time is always something that is hard to get around and we don't have enough of it in the school day.

Part of the reason the interventionists struggled with this dual role is because they knew the importance of Tier 1 instruction and the necessity for students to receive high-quality reading instruction ((RTI Action Network, n.d.; Swanson et al., 2017). The experiences of the participants aligned with the research that found many teachers need help with differentiated instruction, how to effectively progress monitor, and how to use data to make informed decisions about students and instruction (Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman, 2011; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Bester & Conway, 2021; Greenfield et al., 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011; Raagas, 2021). This finding is also consistent with the results from Castro-Villareal et al. (2014) and Bester & Conway (2021) indicating the need for literacy interventionists to assist teachers with professional development on the overview of the RTI model, implementation, data-based decision-making, and research-based quality instructional practices and interventions including differentiation.

Theme #3: Administrator support

One other emergent theme in this study was administrator support. Dagen & Bean (2020) state that one “key task is that of working closely with the principal and other leadership staff to ensure that there is a coherent, comprehensive literacy program in the school” (p.51). Raagas also found that administrators have a strong impact on the implementation of RTI and their actions can strengthen or hinder RTI on a campus, especially if they do not support teachers and the staff that are providing intervention (2021). This aligned with the experiences of the participants. There was a mix between

supportive administrators and those who did not show interest in the intricacies of the interventionist's role. One participant who had a very supportive administrator said:

I have a wonderful principal and her expectation is for me to pull students, and if there's something else that she needs me to do, she makes sure it is after I have met with my students. She does not interrupt our Tier 3 instruction.

This was not the perception of all of the participants. One Participant wanted it to be known:

Don't assume that because we [literacy interventionists] exist, that absolves you as an administrator from doing your part. Just because I have the knowledge and I have the ability to facilitate certain conversations or do data analysis or run a [RTI] doesn't mean you don't need to do that. Because then I can't participate fully in my expertise because I'm doing somebody else's job. Our presence doesn't equal your absence. We all need to work together, that's how we make a positive impact.

Many participants felt that their administrators were “fairly hands off” until it came down to Tier 1 instruction. As one participant explained:

If we're making good progress and we're making good gains on campus, and if the teachers are aligned and to the curriculum and they're using everything and we're seeing the scores that we need to be seeing, I think then it's fine. But then, sometimes there's too much pressure, and then before you know it, I've got six teachers that I'm trying to support.

The consensus amongst the participants was that the more the principal backed them in their role, the more they were able to see their students with fidelity and not be pulled for other miscellaneous tasks. Administrator support is crucial for creating an environment for literacy interventionists to carry out their roles effectively and with fidelity. It

influences the consistency of literacy programs, the successful implementation of RTI, and the overall positive impact on student learning outcomes. Collaborative efforts between administrators and literacy professionals are essential for the success of literacy initiatives within a school.

Theme #4: Fidelity and Preparation

The fourth theme to emerge was fidelity and preparation. Most of the participants talked about the need for consistency when seeing their students and how planning and preparation can help them make the most of the time, they have with them in a group. All participants mentioned seeing growth in their students when they were able to see their students with fidelity. This aligned with the research conducted by King-Sears et al. (2018). King-Sears et al. (2018) developed a five-step process to ensure the fidelity of intervention services provided to students. The five-step process included modeling the intervention, sharing the intervention's fidelity protocol, coaching the teacher before implementation, observing for fidelity, and reviewing the fidelity data. Each of the participants in this study had a district support person assigned to them to provide monthly professional development, review intervention records, and coach them through modeling, observation, and feedback when needed. A few of the participants who had been with the district from the first year of implementation spoke on how their fidelity rate improved once the district revamped and clarified their expectations aligning with the findings of Capin et al. (2017) that intervention fidelity rates often were not reported or analyzed and personnel who reported fidelity rates seemed to follow the program requirements more thoroughly resulting in larger success at the end of the intervention.

Fidelity to these participants not only meant seeing their students at least four times a week for 45 minutes but also using data to plan and prepare intentional lessons for their students. One participant said:

As I walk in on Monday, I already know exactly what I'm doing, and that way it allows me to also preview the lessons, like tweak phonics lessons if I need to do any printouts that I need to. So that time that my kids are actually in my room is all work time.

Theme #5: Data

Another theme to emerge was data. All participants talked about data in their role, aligning with Dagen & Bean (2023) who spoke on the importance of collecting and analyzing data to ensure students “are receiving appropriate and effective instruction” (p. 50), Bean et al. (2018) also talked about how literacy interventionists actively engage in assessing students’ literacy progress, conducting ongoing monitoring, analyzing data, interpreting results, and contributing to decisions regarding student grouping and movement across learning Tiers. All the participants used running records, comprehension discussions, writing samples, and anecdotal notes to make instructional decisions. One participant said that running records “gives you kind of that framework and that roadmap to selecting goals for your readers. So, to me that's, that's a wonderful, wonderful tool.”

The participants also talked about helping their teachers and administrators with pulling data and developing formative assessments that will assist them in finding the information that they need to make the best instructional decisions. Bean et al. (2018) also talked about how literacy interventionists actively engage in assessing students’ literacy progress, conducting ongoing monitoring, analyzing data, interpreting results, and contributing to decisions regarding student grouping and movement across learning.

Theme #6: Setting the Foundation

The final theme that emerged was setting the foundation for readers. All the interventionists spoke about the importance of starting readers off with a strong

foundation in the primary grades which aligned with the thoughts of Morrow et al. (2023). This is what interested some in becoming a literacy interventionist, like one participant who explained “I noticed a lot of kids in the upper grades were not receiving what I was teaching as foundational in kindergarten and Pre-K, and I didn’t understand that.”

Many of the participants also stated that if they could change their job role, they would support both Tier 3 and teachers in the primary grades agreeing with the best practice of intervening early (Partanen & Siegal, 2013; Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2010).

Researcher’s Summary and Reflection

This study allowed insight into the diverse experiences and perspectives of literacy interventionists, bringing forth a better understanding of their roles and challenges. Each of the 11 participants in the study had a unique background, approach, and challenges that they faced on their campus. The recurring themes of student home life, teacher focus, administrator support, fidelity and preparation, data, and setting the foundation emerged. Overall, the literacy interventionists’ experiences highlight the dedication, challenges, and aspirations to improve their students' reading abilities. They call for flexibility, stronger Tier 1 connections, and continued support for literacy intervention programs. The collective experiences of these interventionists offer valuable insights into literacy education and the evolving landscape of their roles within the educational system.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the perceptions and experiences of literacy interventionists working with students who struggle in reading and support classroom teachers. The next chapter will focus on the emerging themes, discussions of the findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My objective for this study was to explore and address my research question through the lens of narrative inquiry, a method characterized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a means of comprehending lived experiences. By listening to the perceptions and experiences of these literacy interventionists, I aimed to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals by looking at how they supported students, teachers, and the systems that were in place to assist them in their job roles. The previous chapters presented an introduction to the study, a literature review, the methodology, and the findings that emerged from the narratives. This chapter will present an overview of the study, discussion, implications, and opportunities for future research.

Study Overview and Research Question

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary literacy interventionists working with students who struggle in reading and assist classroom teachers. This inquiry aimed to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals by looking at how they support students, teachers, and the systems that are in place to support them in their job roles. In this study, the researcher interviewed 11 literacy interventionists and retold their stories. The data gathered through this study were analyzed and coded for themes that emerged and compared with two critical friends. The discussion of those themes will follow.

Discussion

The interviews conducted with the 11 participants offered insight into the everyday lives of literacy interventionists. The findings of this qualitative inquiry study shed light on the intricate landscape of literacy interventionists and highlight several common themes that are crucial for understanding the challenges and dynamics of their

roles within the educational system. The discussion below synthesizes these themes and provides insights into their implications for literacy intervention practices, educator support, and student outcomes.

The theme of student home life highlights the significant impact of parental involvement and supportive home environments on student success in reading. This theme reinforces the need for literacy interventionists to develop partnerships with parents to enhance support both at home and in the classroom. Collaborative efforts involving educators, parents, and the broader community are essential for creating a supportive and enriching environment conducive to student success in literacy.

Most of the participants in this study shared a common emphasis on the significant impact of home life and parental involvement on students' reading achievement. Brandon talked about parental help in ensuring students attend school and complete assigned reading tasks. Cynthia similarly spoke on the influence of home engagement on students' confidence and growth in reading skills. Dianne, Francis, and Grace also recognized the crucial role of parental assistance in promoting student success, with Dianne specifically emphasizing the hindrance caused by insufficient reading at home. However, while Brandon, Cynthia, Dianne, and Francis focused on parental involvement in helping reading growth, Grace reflected on the challenges faced by students who lack adequate help at home. Furthermore, Hannah advocated for instilling a love of literacy within students to make reading more engaging, while Kendall discussed the impact of home environments on students' academic challenges, particularly in cases of dyslexia and dysgraphia. These participants collectively reinforced the complex interplay between home life, parental involvement, and student success in all tiers of the RTI process.

The second theme of teacher focus emphasized the indispensable assistance provided by literacy interventionists to educators in implementing effective instructional practices. The findings explored the challenges of balancing intervention duties with assisting teachers and the need for adequate time and resources to fulfill both roles effectively. Addressing these challenges is key to improving overall educational outcomes and requires recognition of the importance of educational guidance, professional development, and collaborative efforts to bridge the gap between intervention and regular classroom practices.

The findings from these participants uncovered a shared commitment to assisting teachers in various capacities to enhance instructional practices and ultimately improve student outcomes. The similarities among the findings from these participants lie in their dedication to helping teachers in various ways to enhance instructional practices and ultimately improve student outcomes. All the participants prioritized collaboration, professional development, and mentorship to empower teachers. They engaged in activities such as coaching, modeling lessons, providing resources, conducting professional development sessions, participating in PLCs, and offering practical assistance in lesson planning and assessment.

However, there are differences in the specific approaches and methods employed by each participant. For instance, Amanda discussed sharing effective strategies directly from her classroom experiences, while Brandon seeks more exposure to teachers through inclusion in PLCs. Cynthia helped through push-in sessions, coaching, mentoring, and professional development, while Dianne focused on building relationships and offering guidance in lesson planning and coaching. Emily adapted her help based on changing expectations, while Francis provided extensive assistance through co-teaching, overseeing lesson plans, and participating in assessment camps. Grace served as a

thought partner and promoted a culture of collaboration, while Hannah primarily supported teachers through preparation, data reviews, and targeted assistance. Ida's help focused on PLCs and understanding district expectations, while Jane assisted teachers through intervention strategies, co-planning, and resource provision. Lastly, Kendall emphasized alignment with district expectations, offered flexibility in scheduling meetings, and implemented hands-on support initiatives like open lab classrooms. This theme aligns with the findings of Greenfield et al. (2010) who found that teachers need help with research-based interventions, appropriate progress monitoring systems, and need a team to discuss students who possibly need more or different interventions and/ or assistance.

While the participants shared a common goal of supporting teachers, they demonstrated a range of approaches tailored to the specific needs and contexts of their schools and districts. Additionally, they recognized how adapting their help based on changing expectations and priorities within their school districts is vital to their campus success. These findings stress the vital role of literacy interventionists in fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement among educators.

The theme of administrator support stresses the critical role of administrative backing in facilitating the effectiveness of literacy interventionists' efforts. While some participants reported supportive administrative leadership, others noted a lack of engagement or understanding of the interventionist's role.

Amanda, Cynthia, Dianne, Hannah, Ida, and Kendall all provided insights into their interactions with administration regarding their roles in supporting literacy and intervention on campus. Amanda's experience described a close involvement with her principal, who actively monitored her work and provided feedback, indicating a collaborative approach to improving instructional strategies. In contrast, Brandon felt

undervalued by his administrators, perceiving their support as superficial and lacking genuine interest in his work. Cynthia and Dianne expressed appreciation for their administrators' trust in their abilities, allowing them autonomy in their roles without micromanagement, and fostering a sense of mutual respect and understanding. Emily acknowledged the efforts of her administration but identified challenges in aligning district expectations with the realities of managing a large campus. Hannah advocated for alignment between administrative backing and the goals of her position. Ida perceived her administrator's support as aligned with the goal of student growth but wished for more assistance specifically in her intervention role. Kendall's experience showed proactive support from her administrator, who prioritized Kendall's Tier 3 instruction and respected her workload, enabling Kendall to focus on consistent student intervention. Overall, while the participants' experiences vary in terms of the depth and nature of administrative support, they collectively showcased how collaboration, trust, and alignment between administrators and literacy interventionists are vital in facilitating student success.

The theme of fidelity and preparation emerged from the participant's discussion of the significance of structured approaches, district support, and alignment of expectations in ensuring intervention fidelity. Maintaining fidelity and being well-prepared are critical for ensuring positive outcomes for students and underscore the commitment to evidence-based practices in literacy intervention.

The findings from these participants demonstrated a shared commitment to fidelity, consistency, and preparation in their instructional roles. All participants prioritized consistency in seeing their students and ensuring that interventions were delivered with fidelity to achieve optimal student growth. They emphasized the need for preparation, organization, and adherence to instructional programs or curriculum.

Continuous feedback, student engagement, and application of taught strategies are also highlighted as critical factors for effective learning and progress. Despite their commonalities, there were some differences in emphasis and approach among the participants. Cynthia, Dianne, Emily, Francis, Grace, Hannah, Ida, and Kendall all stressed the importance of fidelity and preparation, while Brandon specifically discussed the impact of consistency on student growth and performance. Ida placed additional emphasis on aligning instructional practices with research-based strategies and the curriculum, fostering connections between classroom learning and interventions for a comprehensive learning experience. Similarly, Kendall valued consistency and honesty in her approach and spoke about building on previous lessons and maintaining a systematic instructional approach. Overall, while the participants shared similar values and priorities regarding fidelity and preparation, their individual perspectives and approaches contributed to a nuanced understanding of effective instructional practices in diverse educational settings.

The fifth theme of data reinforced the idea of the central role of data in informing instructional decisions, promoting personalized learning experiences, and fostering a data-driven culture within literacy interventions. Participants talked about collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to ensure students receive appropriate and effective instruction. Active engagement with various data sources contributes to personalized and effective instruction, assisting teachers and administrators, and ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

Most participants shared a common commitment to utilizing various forms of data to inform their instructional practices and support student learning. Amanda took anecdotal notes to inform lesson planning, while Brandon utilized data, including progress monitoring, to assess instructional effectiveness and assist teachers in making

data-driven decisions. Similarly, Cynthia, Dianne, Emily, Grace, Hannah, Ida, and Kendall discussed the value of reading records for assessing students' reading behaviors, comprehension levels, and progress over time. They stressed the need for thorough analysis of data to gain meaningful insights into students' needs and tailor instruction accordingly. Additionally, they discussed the importance of collaboration and leveraging expertise from colleagues to help struggling students effectively. Despite individual nuances in their approaches, all participants demonstrated a shared commitment to utilizing data-driven practices to promote student growth and success.

The final theme of setting the foundation emerged from participants speaking on the need to address foundational gaps and prevent reading challenges by intervening early and assisting both intervention and regular classroom practices in the primary grades. Early intervention plays a crucial role in shaping long-term literacy outcomes and reflects a commitment to proactive and comprehensive literacy support.

The participants, Amanda, Brandon, Cynthia, Dianne, Francis, Grace, and Hannah shared a common concern for addressing the lack of foundational reading skills among students. They all discussed establishing basic phonological awareness skills and building a strong foundation for reading comprehension. Amanda, Brandon, and Cynthia stressed the necessity of understanding students' individual needs and tailoring instruction accordingly to promote reading development. Dianne, Francis, Grace, and Hannah expressed a commitment to nurturing students' love of reading and building their confidence in literacy. However, they differed slightly in their approaches and areas of focus. While Francis and Hannah prioritized vertical alignment and research-driven methods to ensure consistent progress across grade levels, Dianne and Grace spoke on the importance of fostering a positive reading environment and instilling a sense of value and

confidence in students' reading abilities. Despite these differences, all participants shared a common goal of equipping students with the necessary skills for reading success.

Conclusion

This study employed narrative inquiry to delve into the perceptions and experiences of elementary literacy interventionists, aiming to uncover the challenges, successes, and insights these professionals face in supporting students, teachers, and the educational systems. Through interviews with 11 literacy interventionists, the study identified six emergent themes: Student home life, Teacher focus, Administrator support, Fidelity and preparation, Data, and Setting the foundation.

The findings describe the interconnected nature of literacy intervention, emphasizing the critical role of factors such as student home life, teacher focus, administrator support, fidelity, data, and early intervention in shaping successful literacy outcomes. The challenges expressed by the interventionists, such as balancing the dual role of assisting teachers and providing direct interventions, highlight the need for comprehensive and well-supported systems. These themes align with Dagen and Bean's framework for specialized literacy professionals as literacy leaders: Areas of focus, providing practical examples and experiences that resonate with the key areas of focus outlined in the framework. Both the themes and the framework emphasize the multifaceted role of literacy interventionists in working with students, assisting teachers, and collaborating with the educational system to improve literacy outcomes.

Implications and Recommendations

Literacy intervention plays a pivotal role in supporting students who face challenges in reading as well as providing assistance to teachers trying to perfect Tier 1 instruction, the effectiveness of these interventionists is influenced by various factors. This section delves into the implications and recommendations derived from key themes

that emerged in the context of literacy intervention. Each theme addresses a crucial aspect, shedding light on the intricacies of the literacy interventionist's role and the interconnected nature of fostering successful literacy outcomes.

Student Home Life

The impact of home life on student success cannot be overstated. Literacy interventionists, recognizing this influence, are called upon to actively cultivate partnerships with parents. This entails building a collaborative approach involving educators, parents, and the broader community, creating an environment that supports students on their literacy journey. As we explore the implications and recommendations associated with home life, a clear path emerges for literacy interventionists to engage with parents and contribute to a love of literacy within the community.

Recognizing the impact of home life on student success, literacy interventionists should actively work to develop partnerships with parents. Building a collaborative approach involving educators, parents, and the community is essential for creating a supportive environment for students, particularly in literacy.

Teacher Focus

Supporting teachers emerges as a critical theme, underscoring the need for enhanced instructional guidance, professional development, and improved alignment between intervention practices and Tier 1 classroom strategies. The challenge of balancing dual roles necessitates dedicated time and resources. In response, recommendations emphasize prioritizing the provision of time for literacy interventionists to assist teachers and implementing professional development programs that target identified challenges.

The identified challenges in helping teachers highlight the need for improved instructional guidance, professional development, and a better alignment between

intervention and Tier 1 classroom practices. Balancing dual roles requires time and resource allocation.

Schools and districts should prioritize providing literacy interventionists with dedicated time for helping teachers. Professional development programs should address the identified challenges, focusing on differentiated instruction, progress monitoring, and data-informed decision-making.

Administrator Support

The variation in administrator support reinforces the importance of collaboration between literacy interventionists and school leadership. Administrator support proves instrumental in ensuring program coherence, successful implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), and positive impacts on student learning outcomes.

Recommendations advocate for open communication and collaboration, coupled with training for administrators to better understand the nuanced role of literacy interventionists. Schools should facilitate open communication and collaboration between administrators and literacy interventionists. Training for administrators on the intricacies of the interventionist's role and the positive impact they can have is essential.

Fidelity and Preparation

Maintaining fidelity and preparation emerges as a cornerstone for successful literacy interventions. Clear expectations, district support, and consistent professional development are identified as key contributors to effective program delivery.

Recommendations call for ongoing professional development, clarification of expectations, and robust support mechanisms to uphold fidelity and adherence to established protocols.

Districts should provide ongoing professional development, clarify expectations, and assist interventionists in maintaining fidelity. Regular reviews of fidelity data and adherence to established protocols should be emphasized.

Data

The importance of data in informing instructional decisions becomes evident, emphasizing the need for a data-driven culture in literacy interventions.

Recommendations underscore the continual emphasis on utilizing diverse data sources and providing professional development opportunities to enhance data literacy skills among interventionists, teachers, and administrators.

Continued emphasis should be placed on the use of various data sources. Professional development opportunities should be provided to enhance data literacy skills among interventionists, teachers, and administrators.

Setting the Foundation

A focus on setting a strong foundation in the primary grades aligns with best practices in literacy intervention. Early intervention and addressing foundational gaps are deemed crucial for long-term success. Recommendations advocate for investments in early literacy programs, ensuring foundational skills are addressed collaboratively by interventionists and teachers.

Emphasis should be made on setting a strong foundation in the primary grades aligns with best practices in literacy intervention. Early intervention and addressing foundational gaps are crucial for long-term success.

Schools should invest in early literacy programs and interventions, ensuring that foundational skills are addressed in the primary grades. Interventionists and teachers should collaborate to provide comprehensive support to young readers.

Addressing the identified themes and implementing the recommendations can contribute to the overall improvement of literacy intervention programs. Collaborative efforts, adequate assistance, professional development, and a commitment to evidence-based practices are key components in fostering positive outcomes for both students and educators in the field of literacy intervention. The exploration of these themes and the subsequent recommendations present a holistic approach to improving literacy intervention programs.

Suggestions for Future Research

By addressing these implications and recommendations, educational institutions can enhance their support systems for literacy interventionists, leading to improved outcomes for students struggling with reading and fostering a culture of literacy excellence. The study provides a valuable contribution to understanding the complexities of the literacy interventionist's role and opens avenues for further research and exploration in this field. Building upon the insights gleaned from the narratives of literacy interventionists, this study provides a foundation for future research endeavors that can further enrich our understanding of effective literacy interventions. The identified themes open avenues for exploration, and the following recommendations delineate key areas for future research:

Student Home Life

Investigate the efficacy of specific strategies employed by literacy interventionists in fostering parental involvement and assistance for students struggling with reading. Explore the potential impact of community-based literacy programs and partnerships on enhancing the home support system for students.

Teacher Focus

Examine the long-term effects of various teacher support mechanisms implemented by literacy interventionists on improving Tier 1 classroom practices. Investigate strategies to overcome challenges in balancing the dual roles of literacy interventionists in assisting both teachers and intervention groups.

Administrator Support

Conduct a comparative analysis of literacy intervention programs in schools with varying levels of administrative support to understand the correlation between support and program effectiveness.

Explore the role of administrators in creating a conducive environment for literacy interventionists, with a focus on optimizing the balance between expectations and available resources.

Fidelity and Preparation

Investigate the impact of fidelity rates on the overall success of literacy intervention programs, considering variations in fidelity across different intervention models.

Explore the influence of ongoing professional development on the consistency and preparedness of literacy interventionists in delivering effective programs.

Data

Examine the effectiveness of different data sources in guiding instructional decisions and improving literacy outcomes for students.

Investigate the role of data literacy training for literacy interventionists, teachers, and administrators in creating a more informed and collaborative educational environment.

Setting the Foundation

Explore the longitudinal effects of early literacy interventions on students' reading proficiency and academic success in later grades.

Investigate strategies for collaboration between literacy interventionists and primary grade teachers to enhance foundational skills and prevent reading challenges.

These recommendations serve as a reference for researchers aiming to contribute to the ongoing discourse on literacy interventions. By delving deeper into these areas, future studies can provide nuanced insights, inform evidence-based practices, and contribute to the continuous improvement of literacy intervention programs.

Additionally, comparative studies across diverse educational settings can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing successful literacy outcomes.

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the perceptions and experiences of 11 elementary literacy interventionists, shedding light on the challenges, success, and insights these professionals encounter in their crucial roles. The emergent themes- Student Home Life, Teacher Focus, Administrator Support, Fidelity and Preparation, Data, and Setting the Foundation- have highlighted the interconnected nature of literacy intervention, emphasizing a number of factors in shaping successful literacy outcomes.

As we consider the future of literacy interventions, this study opens avenues for further research and exploration. The identified themes provide rich ground for in-depth investigations into specific strategies, long-term effects of support mechanisms, comparative analyses of administrative support, impact of fidelity rates, effectiveness of data sources, and strategies for collaboration in foundational skill development. By delving deeper into these areas, future studies can contribute nuanced insights, inform

evidence-based practices, and foster continuous improvement in literacy intervention programs across diverse educational settings.

The common themes identified in this study offered valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of literacy interventionists and showcased the collaborative efforts necessary to cultivate a supportive and enriching environment conducive to student success in reading. These findings have implications for literacy intervention practices, educator support, and student outcomes, highlighting the need for continued flexibility, stronger Tier 1 connections, and ongoing support for literacy intervention programs. The collective experiences of literacy interventionists provided valuable insights into literacy education and the evolving landscape of their roles within the educational system. Further research and action are needed to address the challenges identified and foster positive outcomes for all students in literacy.

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APPENDIX A:
POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

	Job Title	Yrs of Service in Current Job Role	Highest Level Of Education
1	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	5.6	Master's Degree
2	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	0.6	Master's Degree
3	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
4	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	0.6	Master's Degree
5	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	1.6	Master's Degree
6	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
7	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
8	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	5.6	Master's Degree
9	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
10	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ELEM T1 ELC	1.7	Bachelor's Degree
11	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.1	Bachelor's Degree
12	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	0.6	Master's Degree
13	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
14	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.3	Master's Degree
15	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
16	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.5	Bachelor's Degree
17	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
18	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.6	Master's Degree
19	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	1.5	Master's Degree
20	TEACHER LIT INTRVN ITIN E3	0.7	Master's Degree
21	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.6	Master's Degree
22	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.5	Master's Degree
23	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.6	Master's Degree
24	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
25	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.6	Master's Degree
26	TEACHER LIT INTRVN SEC T1	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
27	TEACHER LITERACY INTER BIL ELC	2.7	Master's Degree
28	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNT ELC	4.6	Master's Degree
29	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNT ELC	1.4	Doctorate Degree

30	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
31	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
32	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
33	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
34	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Master's Degree
35	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
36	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
37	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	5.6	Bachelor's Degree
38	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
39	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.4	Master's Degree
40	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	4.6	Bachelor's Degree
41	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
42	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
43	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	5.6	Master's Degree
44	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.9	Bachelor's Degree
45	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Master's Degree
46	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Master's Degree
47	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Master's Degree
48	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
49	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	5.6	Master's Degree
50	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Master's Degree
51	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
52	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Bachelor's Degree
53	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
54	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
55	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
56	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Master's Degree
57	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
58	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Master's Degree
59	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	4.6	Master's Degree
60	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.5	Master's Degree
61	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
62	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
63	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
64	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.7	Bachelor's Degree
65	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Bachelor's Degree

66	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.6	Master's Degree
67	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Bachelor's Degree
68	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.7	Bachelor's Degree
69	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	6.7	Bachelor's Degree
70	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.1	Master's Degree
71	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	4.6	Bachelor's Degree
72	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.0	Bachelor's Degree
73	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Master's Degree
74	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Master's Degree
75	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.4	Master's Degree
76	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
77	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	3.6	Master's Degree
78	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	2.7	Master's Degree
79	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	1.6	Master's Degree
80	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN	0.7	Master's Degree
81	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	6.6	Master's Degree
82	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
83	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
84	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
85	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	6.6	Bachelor's Degree
86	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	5.6	Master's Degree
87	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	1.6	Bachelor's Degree
88	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	5.6	Master's Degree
89	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	2.6	Bachelor's Degree
90	TEACHER LITERACY INTERVNTN BIL	4.6	Bachelor's Degree

APPENDIX B:
SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Times	Tasks
7:45-8:15	Prep Time
8:15-8:50	Kindergarten Tier 3
8:50-9:25	1 st Grade Tier 3
9:25-10:00	2 nd Grade Tier 3
10:00-10:35	3 rd Grade Tier 3
10:35-11:35	Tier 2 (small group/coaching/modeling
11:35-12:05	Lunch
12:05-1:05	Planning
1:05-1:40	4 th Grade Tier 3
1:40 – 2:15	Tier 2 (small group/coaching/modeling
2:15-2:50	5 th Grade Tier 3
2:50-3:25	Tier 2 (small group/coaching/modeling
3:25-3:45	Prep/Planning

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR LITERACY INTERVENTIONISTS

1. How many years have you been in education, please include in what capacity and the grade levels taught?
 - a. (If necessary) How many years have you been a literacy interventionist?
 - i. Have they all been on the same campus?
2. Why did you choose to become a literacy interventionist?
3. What degrees or certifications do you hold that helped prepare you for literacy instruction?
4. What expectations and/ or values do you have for yourself as a literacy interventionist?
 - a. Please describe the expectations you feel your administration has for you in your job role.
 - i. Do these expectations align with or differ from district expectations?
 1. Why do you or why do you not think they align with your own expectations and/or values?
5. Describe a typical day and/ or week. This includes meetings with administration, students, teachers, data analysis, etc..
6. If you were allowed to be utilized in any capacity, how would you set your schedule?
7. Describe an example of a strategy that you have used recently with a student that you find most effective? What was the goal? How can you tell it was effective?
 - a. Are there any other examples you would like to share?
8. What assessments do you find helpful when planning instruction with students and also to determine mastery?
9. Is there anything you feel hinders growth for your students in reading?
10. In what capacity have you supported teachers on your campus?
11. As an expert in literacy, is there anything you would like to say to the world?

Possible probes if additional details are needed:

- Do you mind expanding on this...
- What else can you tell me about this experience...
- Why do you think that...

After the Interview: This ends the interview questions. Would you like to add anything further before we conclude the interview?

APPENDIX D:
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Title of research study: *Supporting Instructional Leaders: Literacy Interventionists Perceptions of What Leads to the Greatest Growth in Reading in Elementary School*

Investigator: Randi Marshall This project is part of a dissertation being conducted under supervision by co-chairs, Dr. Leslie Gauna and Dr. Jane Cooper, University of Houston- Clear Lake.

Key Information:

The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document under the "Detailed Information" heading.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at any time during the study.

The purpose of this exploratory narrative inquiry is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary Literacy Interventionists working with students who struggle in reading and support classroom teachers. This inquiry aims to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading.

In general, your participation in the research involves about 90- 300 minutes of your time, during which you will participate in communication with the researcher involving an interview and member checking with the principal investigator. The interview will involve answering open-ended semi-structured questions related to your experiences as a literacy interventionist. Once the interview is completed and transcribed, you will be asked to verify that the responses accurately reflect your statements and possibly asked to schedule additional interview sessions.

We invite you to take part in a research study about Literacy Interventionists Perceptions of What Leads to the Greatest Growth in Reading in Elementary School because you have experience as a literacy interventionist.

In general, your participation in the research involves taking part in interviews and periodically communicating with the researcher to confirm or revise findings.

There are no known risks with participating in this study but benefits include adding to literature on unique challenges, successes, and insights of elementary literacy interventionists. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Detailed Information:

The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this exploratory narrative inquiry is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of elementary Literacy Interventionists working with students who struggle in reading and support classroom teachers. This inquiry aims to uncover unique challenges, successes, and insights of these professionals. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 90- 300 minutes. Interviews will take place between 45-60 minutes with follow up interviews scheduled as needed.

How many people will be studied?

We expect to enroll about 6 people in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You will be expected to participate in an open-ended, semi-structured interview with the principal investigator. The interview will take place in person at a location that is requested by the participant. The interview session will last about 45-60 minutes. You will also be expected to stay in contact with the researcher in order to participate in member checking of the transcription and findings and participate in additional interviews if needed.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

This research study includes the following component(s) where we plan to audio record you as the research subject:

- I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.
- I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

Due to the nature of the study, you may not participate if you choose not to be audio recorded.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your alternative to taking part in this research study is not to take part.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time, and it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research, no consequences will occur. If you stop being the research, already collected data that still includes your name or other personal information will be removed from the study record.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

We do not expect any risks related to the research activities. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please contact the principal investigator.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Will I receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive compensation for being in this study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

Benefits include adding to literature on unique challenges, successes, and insights of elementary literacy interventionists. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of what leads to student growth in reading

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information private, including research study records, and only released to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be changed to a pseudonym, which will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the pseudonym, will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee our research.

We may share and/or publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the research team at marshallr7369@uhcl.edu for Randi Marshall, gauna@uhcl.edu for Dr. Leslie Gauna, or cooperja@uhcl.edu for Dr. Jane Cooper.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston-Clear Lake Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (281) 283-3015 or sponsoredprograms@uhcl.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

_____	_____
Signature of subject	Date

Printed name of subject	
_____	_____
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent	

APPENDIX E:
PARTICIPANT SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Sample 1	
Time	Grade Level
7:50-8:15	Duty/planning
8:15-9:00	3
9:00-9:45	5
9:45-10:30	4
10:30-12:15	lunch/planning/coaching
12:15-1:00	2
1:00-1:45	K
1:45-2:30	1
2:30-3:50	PLC
Sample 2	
Time	Grade Level
8:15-9:00	1
9:10-9:55	K
10:00-10:45	2
10:45-11:45	Planning
11:45-12:15	Lunch
12:15-1:00	5
1:00-1:45	4
1:45-2:20	3
2:30-3:25	PLC

Sample 3	
Time	Grade Level
8:15 – 9:00	Planning
9:00 – 9:45	1
9:45 – 10:30	2
10:30 – 11:00	push in
11:00 – 11:45	k
11:45 – 12:30	3
12:30 – 1:15	5
1:15 – 1:45	lunch
1:45 – 2:00	data entry
2:00 – 2:45	4
2:45 – 3:15	5- push in
Sample 4	
Time	Grade Level
8:10-8:55	planning
8:55-9:40	2
9:45-10:30	1
10:30-11:15	k
11:15-11:45	lunch
11:45-12:25	campus support
12:25-1:10	5
1:10-1:55	4
1:55-2:40	3

2:40-3:50	Plc
Sample 5	
Time	Grade Level
7:50-9am	plc
9:00-9:45am	3
9:45-10:30am	4
10:30-11:15am	5
11:30am-12:15pm	1
12:15pm-1:45pm	lunch/ planning
1:45-2:30pm	2
2:40-3:25pm	k
Sample 6	
Time	Grade Level
7:50-9:00	plc/ coaching
9:10-9:55	3
10:00-10:45	4
10:50-11:35	5
11:40 - 12:10	lunch
12:15 – 1:00	1
1:05 - 1:50	2
1:50 - 2:35	k
2:35-3:15	planning

Sample 7	
Time	Grade Level
8:15 to 9:00	4
9:00 to 9:45	2
10:10 to 10:55	3
10:55 to 11:40	planning
11:45 to 12:15	lunch
12:25 to 1:10	k
1:10 to 1:55	1
2:10 to 2:55	5
2:55 to 3:25	plc/ additional tier 2 group
Sample 8	
Time	Grade Level
7:50-9	plc
9:00-10:05	planning/ coaching
10:05-10:50	1
10:50-11:35	lunch
11:35-12:15	K
12:20-1:05	2
1:05-1:50	4
1:55-2:40	5
2:40-3:25	3

Sample 9	
Time	Grade Level
8:15-9:00	4
9:00-9:45	2
10:10-10:55	3
12:25-1:10	k
1:10-1:55	1
2:10-2:55	5
2:55- 3:25	PLC/ Additional tier 2 group
Sample 10	
Time	Grade Level
8:15 – 9:00	k
9:00 – 9:45	1
9:45 – 10:30	planning
10:30 – 11:15	2
11:15 – 11:30	planning
11:30 – 12:00	lunch
12:00 – 12:15	data entry
12:15 – 1:00	5
1:00 – 1:45	3
1:45 – 2:30	4
2:30 – 3:50	plc

Sample 11	
Time	Grade Level
8:15-9:00	2
9:00-9:45	3
9:45-10:30	5
10:30-11:15	4
11:15-11:45	Lunch
11:45-12:30	1
12:30-1:15	k
1:15- 2:00	coaching/mentee support
2:00-2:40	planning
2:40- 3:50	plc