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# Implementation of a Response to Intervention Block

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Implementation of a Response to Intervention Block

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## DEDICATION

To my wonderful family, you have supported me through this process. To my husband, Bobby Dan, you have encouraged me and helped with the children. Ellie and Riley, you have watched Mommy work long hours and haven't complained, too much. To my mom and Dad, Terry and Sandra, you have been my village. To my dad, your hard work completing your doctoral program inspired me to go back to school and your support and encouragement helped me complete this.

To my aunt and first assistant principal, Rebecca Woods, you believed in me and hired me to teach for the first time, you saw potential that I didn't even know I had, and I will forever be grateful. Practically, you taught me how to order and inventory books, write a master schedule, facilitate parent/teacher conferences, and support teachers. The greatest contribution you have made to my career is that you taught me how to be an administrator who is compassionate, caring, helpful, and fair, to truly lead with a servant's heart. Aunt Becky, you are my hero in education.

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## ABSTRACT

The location of this study is Bulldog Elementary School (BES) (pseudonym) in Suburban School District (SSD) (pseudonym). According to the Read to Succeed Act (2016), students must read on grade level by the end of third grade. Therefore, the students reading achievement level is the problem of practice. This action research study describes the impact of the Response to Intervention (RtI) model within an instructional framework for English Language Arts (ELA) in an elementary level classroom and its impact on student growth in reading by reviewing student universal screening assessment data and progress monitoring using a pre-test/post-test model as well as observational records, intervention checklists, and teacher focus group data as part of the data collection. As the data was analyzed using a concurrent mixed methods approach, the implementation of an RtI block and research-based interventions were found to positively impact student reading skills. Specific instructional strategies used as well as research-based interventions and teacher perceptions of the intervention block were discussed and the implications of the RtI block are addressed as recommendations for future practice and research for curriculum leaders.

*keywords:* reading, Response to Intervention, Read to Succeed, intervention block

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of a student’s reading skills and its correlation to his/her overall academic success cannot be overstated. Luther (2012) believes “the primary grades are critical developmental years for children. In order to form a strong educational foundation, it is imperative that basic fundamental skills are fostered early in young children’s lives” (p. 36). Noltemeyer, Boone, and Sansosti (2014) concede as much in this expression of concern: “Although *reading proficiency is a prerequisite for later educational and occupational success*, many students struggle to learn the skills needed to read fluently and for comprehension” (p. 1) [Emphasis added]. Therefore, as Luther (2012) indicates, it is imperative to address the fundamentals of reading to ensure the later success of our students.

Students often lack essential reading skills. According to the South Carolina Department of Education, in 2016, only 43.7% of students in third grade met or exceeded grade level standards in reading on the SC Ready assessment (SCDE, 2016). Furthermore, the percentages of students who met or exceeded expectations decreased by fifth grade (SCDE, 2016). These facts underscore the importance of providing students with instruction in reading that meets their individual learning needs. These facts also provide the impetus for this action research project.



As a case in point, students at Bulldog Elementary School (BES) (pseudonym) are instructed in English Language Arts (ELA) in the general education classroom. During the ELA block, teachers provide direct instruction in reading, small group instruction, literacy workstations, and reading interventions. Students receive this instruction for 120 minutes daily. Although all students benefit from a balanced literacy framework, some students still require more strategic, direct instruction using intervention resources to master basic reading skills. This need was the catalyst for the *Read to Succeed Act 284* implemented by the State of South Carolina in 2016 (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016).

The *Read to Succeed Act* requires research-based intervention for students who demonstrate that they are performing below grade level in reading (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). This act dictates that students should be provided with research-based interventions that align to areas of weakness as indicated on a universal screening assessment.

The Read to Succeed legislation requires ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction for all students in kindergarten through grade five and thirty minutes of additional daily supplemental intervention for all students who do not yet demonstrate grade-level proficiency. (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016, p. 5)

Complementing the *Read to Succeed Act* is a federal initiative known as *Response to Intervention*. “Response to Intervention (RtI) is a comprehensive multi-tiered framework for improving academic and/or behavioral outcomes for all students through the systematic use of assessment data to allocate instructional resources aimed at

improving outcomes of at-risk students” (Noltemeyer et al., 2014, p. 40). This systematic use of interventions has been implemented in schools nationwide and limited research has been conducted regarding outcomes of its implementation (Noltemeyer et al., 2014). Many states have adopted the RtI model to focus on improving academic outcomes for at-risk students, while others have been mandated by state and federal guidelines in order to use the interventions as prerequisites for identifying students with disabilities (Sharp, Sanders, Noltemeyer, Hoffman, & Boone, 2016).

RtI is a result of the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and authorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 and thus is part of an effort to build basic foundational skills necessary for students (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009). According to the US Department of Education (2017), NCLB is legislation that was enacted during the Bush administration that was designed to improve student achievement and culture in schools. One important aspect of NCLB includes accountability and assessments for schools. One of the ways students become proficient on the litany of standardized assessments, is for the teacher to address core concepts and student deficiencies. The basic concept of RtI is to provide direct instruction in the areas of content where a student shows weakness (Buffum et al., 2009; Haager, Klinger, & Vaughn, 2007). As the research continues, meeting the needs of individual students and understanding the experiences that these students bring to the learning environment will play a vital role in preparing the appropriate classroom-based interventions.

For many years, schools have waited for students to fail before providing intensive support, but with the shift to RtI, schools are able to provide interventions in order to ensure students have had adequate exposure to curriculum before proceeding

with the identification of learning disabilities (Buffum et al., 2009). Because of the use of intervention data and the RtI process, it has become more important that interventions provided to students be implemented with fidelity (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2013). The implementation of RtI and its effect on reading skills will be developed further in Chapter Two of this research project.

As the RtI process has become more prevalent, intervention has become a “buzz word” in the field of education, but the effectiveness of interventions in the general education classroom needs to be addressed (Haager et al., 2007; Buffum et al., 2009). The goal of this action research project is to relate student growth in reading to the initiatives mandated by the South Carolina State Department of Education. In essence, the purpose of this project is to answer the question, “*How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*”

This question must be addressed because no intervention comes with built-in guarantees of success. Moreover, according to Mertler (2014), “a gap exists between what is learned by researchers, who conduct and report their research on educational topics, and practicing classroom teachers” (p. 22). Metler’s “gap” can be described as the breach between theory (or law) and practice. As an example, the state legislature mandated the implementation of the *Read to Succeed Act 284*, without also developing the instructional time, materials, training, and preparation. This action research will address this gap by collecting data from an actual intervention block in a real school. In turn, that data will provide insight on best practices for RtI initiatives.

The goal of this action research was to determine what best benefited the local student population. In light of that, the setting for the study was BES, which is located in

the central region of South Carolina. The focus of this study was on kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms, where teachers were required to implement the *Response to Intervention (RtI)* model in their general education classrooms using the thirty-minute intervention block. One potential limitation of this study was that students were required to receive 120 minutes of daily ELA instruction in addition to the thirty-minute intervention block. Since all students received this instruction, it could be difficult to measure exactly which portion of the instruction, the additional thirty-minute block or the ELA block, is making the impact. Another thought is that the students were identified as needing Tier 3 interventions because they were not doing well with just the ELA block, so it would be beneficial to increase the time and intensity of the intervention and having a smaller group of students.

### **Problem of Practice (PoP)**

BES is a suburban elementary school that has students from many diverse backgrounds. The school has a tradition of excellence in academics and consistently scores above the district average on state and local assessments. As the student body has become more diverse, the population that is being served has changed. There are more students in need of academic support than in several previous years. According to the 2017 SC Ready results for BES, 26.6 percent of students in the third through fifth grade did not meet grade level expectations in reading. Additionally, on the universal screening of kindergarten to second grade students, 20% of students scored on Tier 3, meaning they are significantly below grade level in reading skills. In order to have students reading on grade level by the end of third grade, early childhood reading deficits must be addressed. According to the Read to Succeed Act 284, students must read on grade level by the end

of third grade. Therefore, the students' reading achievement level is the problem of practice. This action research addressed this problem by implementing research-based interventions and measuring the reading skills of identified Tier 3 students to determine the effectiveness of a thirty-minute RtI block. This study also examined teachers' implementation of interventions in the classroom as well as the teachers' perceptions of the intervention block. Through the collection of multiple sources of data, the research question was answered.

### **Purpose of Study**

“RtI is a new movement that shifts the responsibility for helping all students become successful from the special education teachers and curriculum to the entire staff, including special *and* regular education teachers and curriculum” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 2). RtI employs a process of assessment and intervention to systematically support students who need assistance in a particular subject or concept (Buffum et al., 2009). This is a shift from the mindset of waiting for students to fail in order to find a discrepancy in their skills. Intervention provides students with the opportunity to master the skill(s) that they are missing in order to ensure appropriate instruction (Buffum et al., 2009).

According to Noltemeyer et al. (2014), “research suggests that once students fall behind in reading skill development, the (they are) unlikely to catch up with their peers” (p.1). In the primary grades, students are taught to learn how to read, but once they reach elementary grades, they are primarily reading to learn. The RtI process is an important component in providing assistance to students who are performing below grade level in reading. RtI provides a framework for implementing research-based interventions. The intent of the South Carolina *Read to Succeed Act* is to provide students with this

intensive, strategic support for these students (South Carolina Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). The purpose of this action research study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an additional daily, thirty-minute RtI intervention block at BES. The specific focus of the intervention block was on reading skills, as distinct from other academic skills. This research study also looked to determine which interventions were most effective in showing growth in reading for early childhood students. Twenty-one teachers were also interviewed during focus groups to discuss their perceptions of the intervention block and the researcher observed the intervention block to provide additional data on the process of intervention in the classroom.

It was important to investigate the effectiveness of an additional RtI block to ensure students were making adequate gains in reading and mastering reading skills. By working closely with primary teachers to monitor and adjust instruction, the goal was to increase students' reading skills, and therefore impact all academic areas.

In a recent study conducted by Sharp et al. (2015), the relationship of RtI implementation and reading achievement was evaluated. Sharp et al. (2015) found several implications for practice in the implementation of RtI. “Results suggest that Tier 3 implementation integrity significantly and positively predicts student reading performance” (Sharp et al., 2015, p. 158). Therefore, these “interventions should involve highly explicit, scaffolded instruction that focuses on a targeted set of foundational reading skills, provides frequent opportunities for responding, and matches student need” (Sharp et al., 2015, p. 158). The researchers also found that data collection, progress monitoring, and systematic monitoring of data is integral to the RtI process that promotes student growth in reading (Sharp et al., 2015). A study conducted in one Minnesota

district found that after ten years of implementation, RtI increased student achievement on curriculum-based measures and standardized assessments in reading (Noltemeyer et al., 2014).

### **Significance of Study**

The major objective of a school-wide RtI block as part of the *Read to Succeed Act* is to provide interventions in reading for students who scored below grade level standards on a universal screening (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). At BES, students are assessed three times each year using AIMSweb Plus, a universal screening tool, to gather baseline data on all students in grades K-5. This data is used to identify students in need of supplemental, strategic support during the RtI block. The RtI block must be provided to all students regardless of their classification as general education, special education, and/or English Language Learner (ELL) students.

Students who are identified through universal screening as requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions receive supplemental instruction and intervention in both the classroom and/or in a pullout program. They can be served by a classroom teacher, interventionist, ELL teacher, or special education (SPED) resource teacher. However, according to the *Read to Succeed Act*, the Tier 3 intervention must be provided by a certified teacher (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). Within the classroom, a standards-based curriculum is taught to all students. Additionally, students who score below grade level norms on AIMSweb are provided with Tier 3 research-based interventions and are progress monitored on a weekly basis. According to Buffum et al. (2009) research based interventions are educational interventions that have been proven

effective with most students. The process of RtI along with its correlation to the general curriculum is expounded upon in the literature review.

This study is significant in that provides BES with further information on how effective the intervention block is to assist students with basic reading skills. According to Torgesen (2004) prior research on reading instruction has provided us with the knowledge of skills to become a good reader, but it has not told us how teachers should work with children to acquire these skills. This research study also provides us insight as to how teachers provide the reading intervention to students and if it is effective in helping students become more skilled readers.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions reflect the direction of this study into the stated Problem of Practice:

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions do teachers use in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

*RQ3: What instructional strategies do teachers use during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the context of education, RtI is a relatively new pedagogical concept introduced in the early 2000's as part of the reauthorization of the Every Student



Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Buffum et al., 2009). Although the term RtI was coined recently, the concepts of providing intensive intervention and support are not new. These concepts have been documented through various theoretical frameworks and perspectives in education. By examining essentialism and Deno's cascade model, we can gain an understanding of the theory reading intervention.

**Essentialism.** There are many theoretical frameworks that impact American education. One that is impactful on the concept of RtI is essentialism. A component of essentialism is a focus on the mastery of skills and concepts and a back to basics approach. Bagley and other essentialists believed that schools needed to return to the essentials of education and master content (Bagley, 1939).

Essentialists argue that in an effort to reduce school failures during the elementary years, schools lowered the standards and made the curriculum less rigorous. Even in the early 1900's, when comparing elementary English speaking students from America with other English-speaking students around the world, American students scored lower on standardized measures (Bagley, 1939).

**Cascade model.** A precursor to RtI was the cascade model introduced by Stanley Deno in 1970 (Buffum et al., 2009). "Deno's cascade model was historic because it envisioned a continuum of environments in which students with special needs could be served" (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 16). This model was associated with the continuum of services through the least restrictive environment, which is a concept that is still used in the current special education model. A critical component of the cascade model was the development of curriculum-based measurements (CBMs). CBMs are "precise, direct assessments of growth in students' academic skills that are short and straightforward

enough to be administered frequently” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 17). Schools continue to use CBMs as a way to quickly monitor and assess student growth to make changes to curriculum and instructional methods within the classroom. Although this model was created for special education students, it served as springboard to the modern response to intervention process for all students.

### **Historical Context**

Throughout the twentieth century, educators and the government have created initiatives to help combat the issue of failing students. Reports such as *A Nation At Risk (1983)*, legislative measures like *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)(2002)*, and programs like *Race to the Top (2009)* are evidence of the continual efforts in the United States to increase student achievement. *A Nation At Risk* was part of the Reagan administration’s efforts to increase literacy in America’s children by adopting more rigorous standards for students while *No Child Left Behind* was the effort of George Bush to hold schools more accountable for student progress (US Department of Education, 2017). During the Obama administration, efforts were made to continue to hold schools accountable and to provide funding for schools that provide intervention for low performing students through the *Race to the Top* grant fund (US Department of Education, 2017).

At BES, teachers use several research-based programs, including *Project Read* and *Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI)*, to provide direct reading intervention in the classroom. *Project Read* provides a systematic approach to teach phonemic awareness and linguistics while *Fountas and Pinnell LLI* provides a systematic approach to teach comprehension strategies to students. Teachers use these programs based on the guided reading level of each student. Although teachers use these programs,

they must also understand the individual needs and weaknesses of students in order for the interventions to be effective.

During the reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* in 2004 (renamed NCLB), significant changes were made in the determination of learning disability status. Prior to the new law, a student could qualify as having a learning disability through a psycho-educational evaluation measuring both intellectual ability and academic achievement. If a severe discrepancy was found between the two scores, the student could be classified as learning disabled (LD). After NCLB was enacted, the criteria required that students be provided intensive intervention, after which a lack of significant progress would demonstrate the potential learning disability (Buffum et.al, 2009).

The use of the RtI model ensures that students are appropriately identified for special education services (Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan Thompson, 2007; Vaughn & Klingler, 2007). It also lowers the potential for disproportionate identification in comparison to the previous discrepancy model (Hartlip & Ellis, 2012). At BES, as in all schools in the district, the RtI initiative is built around a deficit model. For the purposes of this study, a deficit model is one that addresses specific areas of weakness in relation to basic reading skills when compared to their grade level peers enrolled at BES. All students at BES are assessed three times each year using AIMSweb Reading as a universal screening to provide a baseline for students' reading skills. In the grades K-2, the assessment may include letter recognition, letter sound fluency, phoneme segmentation, and reading fluency. This information is collected and analyzed by the classroom teacher, reading coach, reading interventionists, and administrators to

determine the needs of individual students for intervention either within the classroom or outside of the classroom in a “pullout” model. As the data is disaggregated in Professional Learning Communities and RtI planning meetings, discussions often center on targeting specific skills needed to build fluency and comprehension for students.

In an effort to return to mastery of content and increase test scores, in an era of high-stakes testing, the RtI model of tiered support has become a common practice in schools in both the general education classroom and the special education classroom (Haager et al., 2007, Vaughn & Klingler, 2007). In measuring the effectiveness of classroom-based interventions, the concern will be the mastery of basic reading skills for students.

According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), the RtI model was specifically designed to target early reading problems in a classroom that provides research-based interventions, students are less likely to miss the strategic skills necessary to become fluent readers. As a part of this research, classroom-based interventions will be studied to determine their effectiveness. Because students come to school with different background knowledge, if teachers are teaching only the standards that are mandated by state and federal entities, there will most certainly be areas of fragmented knowledge. Mantsios (2013) examined the economic spectrum of America and he suggests one out of every five children in the United States under the six years old lives in poverty. Although BES does not collect free and reduced lunch applications and does not have current data regarding the poverty rate at the school, SSD is considered a high poverty district and is provided with multiple grants to assist the students in SSD and BES. The students at BES come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and many of the students who are identified as Tier 3

students live impoverished areas, are ESOL students, or have not been provided with school readiness skills. Growing up in poverty greatly affects the prior knowledge and experiences of the children when they arrive at school. Luther (2012) states “poor children are three times as likely not to have a parent read to them as non-poor children and are less likely to recognize all letters of the alphabet or be able to write their name in or before kindergarten” (p. 36). The students who score in tier 3 may not have been exposed to phonemic awareness, vocabulary, letter sounds, or rhyming words, making it difficult for them to begin their kindergarten learning experience on a level playing field with other students (Luther, 2012). Due to their lack of prior knowledge, as we assess them, the baseline data for students of poverty may be significantly lower than their peers. An Ohio school board member, speaking about students of lower socio-economic status, is cited as saying “Our children start with a smaller basket of resources but are expected to produce at the same level as kids in high-achieving, affluent communities” (“Race against time”, 2011, p. 7).

In *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools*, Howard (2010) points out “there is undoubtedly a correlation between socioeconomic status and school outcomes” (pp. 46-47). This is important to remember as we are working with students in order to ensure that we bridge the instructional gap that exists. Another factor that has been researched is the influence on gender in early reading abilities. Limbrick, Wheldall, and Madelaine (2012) conducted research on early reading skill acquisition and gender effects. As Limbrick et al. (2012) reviewed literature on the subject, they found “boys and girls do not differ significantly in reading performance at the beginning of their school career (p. 343). On the other hand, Stinnett (2011) also reviewed prior studies on reading research

and found that males scored significantly lower on tests that measured reading and writing fluency. Each of these researchers provide valid arguments for looking at gender differences in reading. The diverse backgrounds of students who enter the classroom require teachers to provide instruction that is tailored to meet the needs of all learners.

Each of these perspectives and theories provide the impetus to ensure that educators meet the individual needs of students. In a back to basics approach, such as essentialism suggests, students can be provided with the most effective interventions to meet their needs and show growth in basic reading skills.

### **Research Design**

Although the RtI process was initially implemented over four years prior, due to the requirements of the Read to Succeed Act 2016, schools in SSD must re-evaluate the way RtI is executed in order to provide maximum results in student growth. One major provision of the Read to Succeed Act 2016 is that schools must provide intensive intervention to students who score at Tier 3 in reading on a universal screening. This action research study focused on all tier 3 kindergarten through second grade students at BES, including minority subgroups and/or students whose first language is not English (i.e., ESL students). According to current data at the time of the study, the student population at BES was 57% white, 25% African American, 10% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 4% other. Due to a grant that provides free and reduced lunch to the entire school district, socioeconomic status could not be verified and thus will was not disaggregated. The data was collected using a concurrent mixed-methods approach to research (Coe, Waring, Hedges, & Arthur, 2017). A universal screening, *AIMSweb Plus*, was administered to determine the tier of each student in kindergarten through second grade at

the beginning of the research and teachers will progress monitor weekly. The data from the first and last progress monitoring probes was used for a pre-test/post-test design to determine the amount of growth made by students during the intervention cycle. The data collected was used by professional learning communities (PLCs) to drive the instructional process, develop appropriate interventions, and to identify students in need of additional instructional support either through continued intervention or through school processes to determine what further services can be provided. The teachers documented the students who received intervention on an intervention plan form and submitted it to the researcher, who was the assistant principal at the school.

Research-based interventions implemented by the classroom teacher were based on the universal screening data from *AIMSweb Plus*. During the intervention cycle, the researcher used observation checklists that list foundational reading skills as outline by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR, 2016). The observation checklists provided a guideline for the researcher to observe the fidelity in which the interventions were implemented, correlating research-based reading practices with the instruction in the classroom. Measuring the fidelity of the implementation of interventions was directly related to the research questions posed. To measure adequately the fidelity of interventions, evidence was needed to show that outcomes are directly related to the interventions and no other extraneous variables. As the research plan developed, it became important to develop a way to verify the implementation of interventions by “documenting quality of instruction, identifying professional development needs, and sustaining effective practices related to improved student outcomes” (Harn et al., 2013, p. 4).

To collect qualitative data, six focus groups were conducted, by grade level, at the beginning and end of the intervention cycle to determine teachers' perceptions of the intervention block and provide additional insight into the instructional practices. As teachers participated in focus groups during PLCs, this gave the researcher insight on teachers' perceptions of the intervention block. Michele Fox (2012) studied two Georgia school districts and their teachers' perceptions of efficacy in providing interventions to students and the outcomes of student success in the intervention process. Because of limitations regarding interviews with the participants, Fox used a quantitative methodology and gathered data by administering several different surveys. She then completed a cross-sectional study of the survey results. This research reported that the majority of teachers surveyed felt that they were skilled or highly skilled at providing interventions, but that they were unsure of their own abilities to lead a meeting regarding the intervention process (Fox, 2012, pp. 110-116). This research found that teachers are comfortable with providing interventions, but not necessarily taking the next step in the process for students. The research by Fox (2012) provides background on general perceptions of the teacher on the intervention process. It also provides rationale for focus groups in this project in order to gain greater insight on the efficacy of the participants. As the current research study was conducted, it was important that the focus group questions were developed around how teachers move past providing the intervention to the next phase of planning for student success.

Nunn and Jantz (2009) have researched the concept of teacher efficacy as it relates to the intended outcomes of interventions. For example, Nunn and Jantz (2009) wrote:



Effective processes and methodologies to support interventions have the potential to develop effective teachers who are skilled and capable of dealing with difficult academic and behavioral concerns presented in their classroom. (p. 2)

Additionally, Harn et al. (2013) researched the concept of fidelity in interventions, defining fidelity as “the degree to which a treatment/intervention is implemented as intended” (p. 2). These definitions provide guidance for this research to ensure that teachers are provided with support in order to implement the interventions with fidelity.

These qualitative and quantitative measures, including the AIMSweb Plus data, classroom observation forms, and focus group transcriptions were used to answer the research questions. The question regarding the effectiveness of an additional RtI block was important to ensure students were making adequate gains in reading and mastering reading skills. By working closely with primary teachers to monitor and adjust instruction, the goal was to increase students' reading skills, and therefore impact all academic areas.

### **Limitations of Study**

There are several limitations of this study. First, students already receive 120 minutes of daily ELA instruction, therefore it is difficult to measure the full impact that the direct intervention from the additional thirty-minute intervention block will have on the students reading skills. By using a concurrent mixed-methods approach, the researcher hopes to gain a better understanding of which interventions were effective for the students. Second, since the researcher is in an outside role, observing the intervention, the researcher cannot control the fidelity of interventions provided by each teacher. Third, due to the varying background of students, the data may provide a wide variety of results.

## **Ethical Considerations**

There were several ethical considerations that were addressed while conducting this action research project. The first question of ethical procedure has to do with obtaining consent from the district to conduct the action research. According to SSD, the researcher had to obtain approval from the Accountability and Assessment Office by submitting a research proposal to the district committee (SSD, 2016). A requirement of SSD is that any data that is used that is not readily available on public websites, is approved by SSD.

There was also the question of whether informed consent should be obtained by the participants whose data is included within the study. According to Mertler (2014), if research is conducted for the sole purpose of sharing the information with colleagues within the school, it may not be necessary to collect formal permission for the research. Since this information is already used at BES to drive instructional practices, plan for differentiation, and identify students for intervention, informed consent was not requested from the kindergarten, first, and second grade students or their parents. Due to the implementation of the SC Read to Succeed (2016) mandate, students were identified as Tier 3 students were required to receive intervention. Their participation in the research study was not in addition to their instructional day. Per the Institutional Review Board, this was an Exempt Category 1 Study which is defined as "research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular or special educational instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods" therefore informed consent will not be

collected from students. Since focus groups, observations, and intervention plan forms will use information provided by the teachers and about the teacher's individual practices, the teachers were provided with an informed consent form to sign at the first PLC meeting (see Appendix A) to outline their participation and obtain consent to use their classroom data in the research. Each of the teachers in kindergarten through second grade were asked to participate. One important aspect was to ensure that they were aware their individual classroom data would not be identifiable. Another aspect is that their student data would be disaggregated by subgroups; therefore, results were reported for an entire grade level, not necessarily their group of students and therefore it ensures anonymity for the teachers.

The researcher was the data manager for *AIMSweb Plus* at BES, therefore no additional access or information was needed from the teachers.

Because BES had a large population of ELL students, it was essential to ensure that they receive the appropriate intervention. Literature by Kashima et al. (2009) discusses recommendations for ensuring culturally responsive teaching and suggests "when implementing RtI with ELL students, it is necessary to understand what type of support program students are enrolled in, how their native language and English proficiency is assessed and monitored, as well as the core literacy program they receive in their native language and/or English" (p.7). Since there are multiple factors to consider with ELL students, the data from teachers who serve our ELL students with direct Tier 3 interventions was included in this study. In order to provide the most accurate data, it was also important to note that the response to intervention for students who are native English speakers and non-native English speakers was included in this data sample, since

both the general education teacher and the ELL teacher provide interventions. The data should be reviewed with this in mind and understanding that these students were provided with additional ELL services.

Another ethical consideration was to ensure that the term “effective” intervention is measured equally among all participants. Some of the data collected was quantitative and could be verified for fidelity, but since this was also a mixed method approach to research, qualitative research was also conducted. There are several ethical considerations in this including ensuring the accuracy of the focus group transcription and coding as well as interpreting the results correctly. By ensuring that this process is done accurately, the researcher could verify the validity of the results.

Additional evaluation of the ethical considerations for teacher inquirers brings several more issues to the forefront. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) discuss the concept of teacher inquiry as a part of ethical teaching and the four main foci of good teaching that include looking at student work to monitor progress and make adjustments to instruction, assessing and analyzing student data (progress monitoring), obtaining student feedback on learning, and observing student learning. As an effective administrator, it is important to engage in these activities on a consistent basis. At BES, teachers and leadership are constantly doing each of these four steps to evaluate the instructional processes in the classrooms. When looking at RtI, these steps are part of the cycle of continuous improvement that evaluates the effectiveness of an intervention. Thus, while conducting this research, the process in which the qualitative and quantitative data was collected as a part of this cycle of continuous improvement.

The most important ethical consideration was that because the researcher was also the supervisor of the teacher participants, the researcher had to ensure the participants that the data collection and results were in no way evaluative. The results were obtained to provide additional information about the practice of intervention at BES and which instructional strategies provide the best growth for Tier 3 students in the intervention block.

The final consideration was ensuring the anonymity of the district, school, and students. As data was collected, it was important to analyze the data and then dispose of the information to maintain confidentiality. As the intervention process and data collection phase began, the researcher collected teacher information and their individual data without providing identifying information.

### **Social Justice Issues**

The need to ensure effective interventions for students who are low-performing in the general education classroom is important for several reasons. First, it is important to ensure that all groups of students in the school are being instructed at the instructional level at which they are performing. The first group of students at BES performing below grade level included those who come from a lower socio-economic status. According to reports by the SCDE (2016), in 2014-2015, students at BES who were categorized as low socio-economic students using free and reduced lunch data, 17% of the students scored met or above on the end of the year summative assessment. The second group of students performing below grade level included the African American males at BES. At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, 9.8% of the African American males at BES scored met or above grade level on the end of the year summative assessment in reading (Suburban

School District, 2015). The final group that we serve who have significant struggles were the ELL students. BES is a cluster site for an ELL program in the district and serves students from multiple elementary schools in SSD. On the same summative assessment, 7.3% of ELL students scored met or above on the summative assessment (Suburban School District, 2015). These numbers indicate a significant difference between the subgroups mentioned and the total student population, who scored 47.9% met or above on the assessment. Secondly, it is important to ensure that the teachers are providing the appropriate interventions to meet the individual needs of the learner. Torgesen (2004) argues that while some students need additional explicit, direct instruction, not all students come to school with deficits in certain areas. Therefore, it is important to differentiate instruction and teachers should offer the appropriate interventions to students. Thirdly, to ensure that students do not get over identified for special education services, it is important to provide effective interventions to ensure at-risk students have the opportunity to level the playing field with their peers.

### **Potential Risks and/or Benefits to Participants**

The potential for risks was minimal. The students received the reading interventions that were provided based upon their baseline data and were progress monitored weekly based upon the tier the student was in. The teachers who participated provided instructional strategies that were within the scope of their job description and qualifications.

The benefits of this research study provided BES with information on how the RtI process is implemented, how interventions are provided, and the effect on student growth in reading skills. This was important for several reasons. First, students at BES have

traditionally scored above the SSD average on standardized assessments, even earning on numerous occasions the Palmetto Gold and Silver on absolute ratings from the SC Department of Education. As the student demographic shifts, it was important for us to meet the instructional needs of all students by showing growth, especially with our Tier 3 students. Noltemeyer et al. (2014) states “although reading proficiency is a prerequisite for later educational and occupational success, many students struggle to learn the skills needed to read fluently and for comprehension” (p. 1). Investigating the approach to reading intervention will provide valuable data to drive instructional practices.

Additionally, since many of BES students struggle in reading, it was imperative to intervene early and appropriately to give them a solid foundation in reading. From the perspective of an administrator, it was important to monitor continuously and adjust instructional practices at BES. Without evaluating the effectiveness of programs, it was difficult to make adjustments as needed. Finally, in this era of high-stakes testing and accountability, it was important for teachers in the primary grades to provide effective instructional practices to promote early literacy in students, allowing them to have a greater chance at a successful educational career.

## **Conclusion**

This research study shows how an additional thirty-minute intervention block everyday impacts student reading skills through the implementation of interventions. This chapter has provided an overview of the historical perspectives and conceptual framework of RtI as well as ethical and cultural considerations that must be considered when implementing this study. At BES, students are provided with a well-balanced approach to literacy. As Luther (2012) states, “we must know how to teach, but we must

also know *who* we are teaching” (p. 40). Although most students were able to perform on grade level with the curriculum and standards that were taught during the primary instruction, there were still students who needed additional support to master specific skills related to reading. The SCDE and SSD have required a mandatory intervention time for this additional support to occur. By examining the instructional strategies that are used for intervention, gaining teachers perspectives on the interventions, and measuring the growth that students achieve, this research question was addressed. The question remains: does the thirty-minute intervention block work and do students show growth in reading skills when provided with direct intervention? Having stated the problem, it would be helpful to determine what others have learned regarding these matters. In chapter two, a body of information derived through a review of current literature on this topic is reviewed. Chapter three provides a detailed description of the methodology used to gather the data during the intervention cycle. In chapter four, the quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed using a concurrent mixed-methods approach. Chapter five includes recommendations and implications, including best practices for curriculum leaders as well as future research that could be conducted to gain more information about best practices in intervention and teachers’ perceptions of the intervention block.



## **Keywords Glossary**

AIMSweb Plus- general outcome measurement, a form of curriculum-based measurement (CBM), used for universal screening and progress monitoring (AIMSweb, 2016)

Baseline Data- data collected by universal screening before intervention occurs (Buffum et al., 2009)

Classification- the category in which students with disabilities are placed in special education, can include specific learning disability, intellectually disabled, emotionally disabled, etc. (US Department of Education, 2017)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)- a set of English Language Arts and Math content standards developed by the National Governor’s Association adopted by 46 states in 2010 (Spring, 2014, p. 447)

Core Curriculum- content and courses offered by a school and/or district (Buffum et al., 2009)

English Language Learners- students whose first language is not English (Buffum et al., 2009)

Fidelity- “the degree of accuracy with which an intervention, program, or curriculum is implemented according to research findings and/or its developer’s specifications” (Buffum et al., 2009. p. 208)

Goals 2000- an education reform framework by the Clinton Administration meant to identify world-class standards and assess students’ ability to compete in a global marketplace (Spring, 2014, p. 431)

High-Stakes Testing- testing and assessment that is used to make decisions about schools, teachers, students, and districts and for accountability and funding by the federal and state governments (Au, 2013)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)- “a federal statute, originally passed in 1975, that prescribed services to students aged 3-21 with disabilities” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 208)

Instructional Framework- provides schools and classrooms with a common language and set of expectations for instruction in the classroom

Intervention- instructional practices that have demonstrated effectiveness through scientific research and produce results in student learning (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 14)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)- the reauthorization of Title 1 of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that nationalized federal accountability standards for all students in elementary, middle, and high schools (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 209)

Progress Monitor- the process in which a student is assessed on a frequent basis to monitor their growth toward a specific goal, in this case, reading skills (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 210)

Race to Top- education reform during Obama administration in an effort to increase the quality of K-12 education and make students more competitive in a global society (Spring, 2014, p. 445)

Research Based Intervention/Instruction- educational interventions that have been proven effective with most students (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 210)

Response to Intervention (RtI)- the process in which students are systematically provided intervention, progress monitored, and decisions are made in regards to progress and placement (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 210)

South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards (SCCCRS)- in 2015, the State of SC introduced a new set of standards to replace the CCSS in ELA and Math (SC Department of Education, 2015)

Special Education- services provided to students with disabilities as determined by IDEA (US Department of Education, 2017)

Universal Screening- assessment provided to all students in a school to determine the appropriate instructional placement for reading instruction (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 212)

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical perspectives and previous research findings of the identified problem of practice in the present action research study. In planning for a Dissertation in Practice, it is important to conduct a literature review for several reasons. Mertler (2014) suggests that reviewing literature can help the researcher make informed decisions about their topic and research plan. A review of literature “can offer new ideas, perspectives, and approaches that may not have occurred” to the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.64). It also allows the researcher to review current and past research and theory and make connections to their topic.

To review adequately the available literature, searches were conducted of online databases including ERIC, EBSCO, and ProQuest that included journal articles, dissertations, theses, and technical assistance papers published by the South Carolina Department of Education. Books about RtI and research-based interventions were also reviewed. In this chapter, theoretical frameworks are reviewed, the historical context of RtI is studied, and prior research from which several themes emerged is reviewed to provide both the researcher and reader a greater understanding of prior research, publications, and legislation surrounding the topic of RtI and effective classroom-based interventions. The themes that emerged are discussed in this chapter.

Reading instruction and reading intervention has been studied and researched in American schools since the 1950's with increased priority since the 1980's (Torgesen, 2004). There have been multiple studies that have studied effective reading intervention practices and their outcomes (Foorman, Carlson, & Santi, 1997; Brown & Felton, 1990; Torgesen, 2004). Each of these studies found specific research based approaches to the instructional methods used during intervention and provide a starting point for further research.

### **Problem of Practice (PoP)**

At BES, students are instructed on reading skills in the ELA classroom. using a model that provides direct instruction, small group instruction, literacy workstations, and reading intervention during this time. The teachers use a standards-based approach, teaching to the SCCCRS by using a variety of instructional strategies and materials. Even with an intense focus on best practices in the classroom, there are still students who struggle to master basic reading skills and need additional intervention and support to work toward grade level expectations.

According to Noltemeyer et al. (2014), the statistics they found in research regarding the reading skills of students, “affirm the need for prevention and early intervention in the area of reading” (p. 40). Vaughn et al. (2007) also document the importance of early reading skills in order to prevent a higher risk for later failure and school dropout, citing statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress statistics in which 37% of fourth grade students in America cannot read at a basic level (p. 11). This need was the catalyst for the *Read to Succeed Act 284* implemented by the State of South Carolina in 2016 which requires students to read on grade level by the end

of third grade or face retention (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). Therefore, the students not reading on grade level as required by the Read to Succeed Act is the problem of practice. As teachers implement the required *Read to Succeed Act*, they must also plan for and provide direct intervention to students in the areas where they demonstrate low ability (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). The purpose of the present action research study is to evaluate how an additional daily, thirty-minute RtI intervention block at BES impacts student learning. The specific focus of the intervention block is on reading skills, as distinct from other academic skills.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions reflect the current direction of this study into the stated Problem of Practice

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions do teachers use in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

*RQ3: What instructional strategies do teachers use during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

### **Theoretical Framework**

Although many aspects of current educational theories have roots in Progressive theory, the concept of RtI has roots in Essentialist Theory. RtI is a result of the reauthorization of ESEA (2004), authorization of NCLB in 2002 and IDEA 2004, and

thus, is part of an effort to build basic/foundations skills necessary for students (Vaughn & Klingner, 2007). A major component of essentialism is a focus on the mastery of skills and concepts and a back to basics approach (Bagley, 1939). In order for students to “be successful” on the litany of standardized assessments, core concepts must be addressed and deficiencies addressed by the teacher. The basic concept of RtI is to provide direct instruction in the areas of a content area where a student shows a weakness. As the research unfolds, specifically in regards to the research question, meeting the needs of individual students and understanding the experiences that these students bring to the learning environment will play a vital role in preparing the appropriate classroom-based interventions. At BES, teachers use several research-based programs to provide direct reading interventions in the classroom. Although teachers use these programs, they must also have an understanding of the individual needs/weaknesses of students in order for the interventions to be effective. The essentialist movement is in contradiction with the progressive movement in education and its attempts to focus on the strengths of the individual students.

According to William Bagley (1939):

Essentialist emphasizes the basic significance of the accumulated experience of the race, and affirms the chief concern of education to be the transmission to each generation of the most important lessons that have come out of this experience, ...and affirms the chief concern of education to be the direction of individual growth. (p. 326)

Bagley and other essentialists believed that schools needed to return to the essentials of education and master content.

Essentialists argue that in an effort to reduce school failures during the elementary years, schools lowered the standards and made the curriculum less rigorous (Bagley, 1939). Even in the early 1900's, when comparing elementary English speaking students from America with other English-speaking students around the world, American students scored lower on standardized measures (Bagley, 1939). Throughout the twentieth century, educators and the government have created initiatives to help combat the issue of failing students. Reports and laws such as *A Nation At Risk*, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, and *Race to the Top* are all evidence of the continual efforts of the United States to increase student achievement.

As previously mentioned, a precursor to RtI was the cascade model introduced by Stanley Deno in 1970 (as cited in Buffum et al., 2009, p.16). “Deno’s cascade model was historic because it envisioned a continuum of environments in which students with special needs could be served” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 16). This model was associated with the continuum of services through the least restrictive environment, which is still used in special education. A major part of the cascade model was the development of curriculum-based measurements (CBMs). CBMs are “precise, direct assessments of growth in students’ academic skills that are short and straightforward enough to be administered frequently” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 17). Schools continue to use CBMs as a way to quickly monitor and assess student growth to make changes to curriculum and instructional methods within the classroom (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 17). Although this model was created for special education students, it served as springboard to the modern RtI process for all students.



In the *Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto*, Mortimer Adler (2013) quotes his friend and mentor, Robert Maynard Hutchins, who said “the best education for the best is the best education for all” (p. 184). Due to the diverse population of students at BES, in one classroom it is common to see 22 students ranging from the first percentile to the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile on nationally normed assessments (BES, 2017). Therefore, it is essential that the teacher provide the appropriate instruction for the students. By providing RtI within the general education classroom, students are given the opportunity to master content in areas of deficiency (Buffum et al., 2009). Just as Noddings (2013) noted in her critical review of *The Paideia Proposal*, “equality of quality in education cannot be achieved by forcing all students to take exactly the same course of study” (p. 187). In the primary classroom, it is especially important to be reminded that all students are not on the same course of study and teachers must plan to systematically provide interventions for these students.

An effect of the age of school accountability, which occurred in public education in America during the 2000’s, was and continues to be the era of high-stakes testing. Wayne Au (2013), a professor at the University of Washington, posed a very valid question in regards to curriculum and high-stakes testing. He asked the research question “What, if any, is the effect of high-stakes testing on curriculum?” (p. 235). To answer the question, he conducted a metasynthesis of 49 qualitative studies that focused on high-stakes testing and curriculum. Au (2013) found due to high-stakes testing, the teaching of specific subject areas has become fragmented and teachers focus only on content that is assessed. This study provides a small window on the effects of high-stakes testing on classroom instruction and curriculum development. If these test “results are used to make

important decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools and districts” (Au, 2013, p. 236), then it is possible that students are missing certain aspects of content knowledge. Specifically in relation to early literacy skills, if students miss the foundational skills but are taught the broad, overarching standards that are important for testing, they will begin to function at a deficit in the classroom. As is the case at many elementary schools, at BES early childhood classrooms are less likely to participate in high-stakes testing, but formative and summative assessments are administered to students, and the results of assessments are used to make important determinations including teacher effectiveness and school growth. CBMs are also used to provide brief, reliable data to make instructional decisions in the classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007).

### **Historical Context**

During recent years, a shift in education in America has been to prepare students to compete in the workforce of a global society (Spring, 2014). Beginning in the 1980’s during the Reagan administration, schools became focused on national standards to compare America’s students with students from other nations around the world. In 1983, the Reagan administration released *A Nation at Risk*, which “exhorted states and local communities to increase academic standards, improve the quality of teachers, and reform the curriculum” (Spring, 2014, p. 430). A continuation of these ideas came from President George Bush with the unveiling of Goals 2000, which promoted the idea of standardized assessments to measure the academic achievement of national education goals. President Clinton continued these practices with the passage of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act that promoted the education of students to prepare them to enter the

workforce and compete in a global society. This became the common goal for education in American during 1980's-2000 (Spring, 2014).

In 2001, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I, as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Through NCLB, “some semblance of control was maintained by states being able to determine the content of the federally mandated requirement that they establish standards and tests for all public schools” (Spring, 2014, p. 441). A provision of NCLB mandates “educational institutions to utilize research-based reading programs” (Ridgeway, Price, Simpson, and Rose, 2012, p.86). In Ridgeway et al. (2012) the authors cite Wright and Wright regarding NCLB as stating:

A primary focus of this law is the requirement that school districts and individual schools use effective research-based reading remediation programs so all children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. (p. 86)

A fundamental expectation of NCLB is that schools provide high-quality classroom instruction. Ridgeway et al. (2012) describe high quality as a set of characteristics that “include strong general intelligence and verbal ability strong content knowledge, pedagogical dexterity, an understanding of assessment and scaffolding techniques, and adaptive expertise” (p. 86). Schools can measure the quality of instruction by the use of formative assessment data, universal screening data, and classroom observations. Once classroom instruction is effective, it is then appropriate to use classroom-based interventions to meet the needs of the individual students in the classroom.

Another origin of the implementation of RtI was the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act. A major component was the move from a discrepancy

model to a RtI model in the identification of students with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Previously, students who demonstrated a severe discrepancy between their achievement and ability, qualified for special education services for SLD (Buffum et al., 2009). “A severe discrepancy does inform the psychologist and the school that the child is experiencing relatively normal development in some areas of language and cognition, but is failing to demonstrate a commensurate level of development in some aspect of academic performance” (Holdnack & Weiss, 2006, p. 873). One problem with this model became the over identification of students for special education. The use of certain achievement tests in young students, specifically before third grade, could cause false-negatives when comparing students by percentile rank to other either in their own school or outside of their own school. Holdnack and Weiss (2006) make the argument that evaluation results, RtI data, exclusionary factors, and professional clinical judgment must all be used in making the case for a student to be classified as a student with a specific learning disability.

As a part of President Obama’s educational reform, Race to Top (RTT) was signed into law in 2009. The purpose of Race to Top was “designed to link American school policy to global corporate competition” (Spring, 2014, p. 445). One of the major policies of RTT was for schools to build “data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction” (Spring, 2014, p. 445). This policy specifically related to the idea that the data be used to assess school success and link teachers, administrators, and schools for effectiveness. It could also be argued that by the enormous pressure placed on schools to improve instruction, this policy would filter down to individual student growth and achievement.

Another product of RTT was the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010. To continue to promote the goal of the U.S. Department of Education, the CCSS were developed “so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society” (Spring, 2014, p. 447). Buffum et al. (2009) referred to the Policy Evaluation and Research Center stating:

Three forces are converging to create this perfect storm that affects America’s future: the wide disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among our school-age and adult population, economic forces (particularly technology and globalization) that have produced a labor market very different from those of earlier decades, and sweeping demographic changes that will result in an increasingly older and more diverse America. (p. xvii)

As of 2012, all but four states had adopted the CCSS. Since that time, many parents and educators have voiced concern and in turn, specifically in SC, the state has since moved from the CCSS to adopt new South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards (SCCCRS). As schools continue to assess students for growth and achievement to measure school success on high-stakes assessments, it is important to be mindful of the needs of individual students. The foundation of RTI is “a framework of service delivery for addressing the needs of all students (within both general and special education) by embedding best practice and differentiated, evidence-based instruction in the classroom, and using specific, research-based intervention” (Kashima et al., 2009, p. 1). In order for students to master curriculum and perform on high-stakes tests that assess students for mastery of content and curriculum, they must first master the foundations of reading. By using classroom-based reading interventions, teachers are able to provide the

instructional intervention and also keep a pulse on student growth through continuous progress monitoring.

In 2016, the State of South Carolina began to implement the *Read to Succeed Act* 284. “The Read to Succeed legislation requires ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction for all students in grades kindergarten through grade five and thirty minutes of additional daily supplemental intervention for all students who do not yet demonstrate grade-level proficiency” (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016, p. 5). There are five critical elements of exemplary literacy classrooms that are listed in the South Carolina District Reading Plan Guidance Document. In addition to best practices of devoting daily instruction to reading and writing, having classroom libraries with matched interest and leveled texts, and providing high-quality literacy instruction, the final two elements are essential to the implementation of RtI at Bulldog Elementary. Element Four states “small groups and individualized instruction is observed” (SCDE, 2016, p. 8). At Bulldog Elementary, small groups are an integral part of the daily ELA block and are used to provide individualized, intensive instruction. As the administrative team conducts classroom observations, evidence of small groups including lesson plans, intervention plans, and progress monitoring are reviewed to ensure that classroom teachers are providing this “individualized instruction.” Element Five of the reading plan calls for “increased instructional focus and intensity based on student needs” (SCDE, 2016, p.8). According to the Office of Early Learning and Literacy, “it is critically important that classroom teachers are knowledgeable about the reading process, understanding how to provide effective instruction, select materials, and provide ample time every day for instruction and independent reading” (SCDE, 2016, p.8). An

understanding of the RtI process as well as effective instructional practices are crucial in effective implementation.

### **Themes of Literature Review**

The literature that was reviewed for this study includes information that supports the need for reading intervention in the early childhood classroom. Many factors are involved in teaching a child to read and these factors must be addressed. According to Torgesen (2004) research about intervention should examine instructional methods that are effective in helping children learn the skills and knowledge that is needed to become a good reader. Researchers have observed although “remedial reading generally is not very effective in making children more literate,” by providing evidence-based research practices in instruction, teachers can assist children who have reading difficulties (Greenwood, Kamps, Terry, & Linebarger, 2007, p. 73). As the literature has been reviewed, there are several themes that are related to reading intervention that are addressed including reading skills, student readiness skills, classroom instructional practices, students with disabilities, and assessment of students.

**Reading skills.** In order for a student to learn to read fluently and with accurate comprehension, there are specific skills that must be learned by the student. These specific reading skills are described as phonemic awareness, phonemic decoding, fluency, text processing, and comprehension text (Foorman et al., 2007, p. 46). Each of these skills provide a building block to help a student read fluently. As students enter the classroom with different knowledge of these fundamental reading skills, teachers must make adjustments to reading instruction and ultimately to the interventions that are implemented (Torgesen, 2004). Foorman et al. (2007) indicate that research shows that

“explicit direct instruction in phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding is important for improving struggling readers and those at risk of reading difficulties” (p. 46). In addition, Torgesen (2004) also found that explicit direct instruction in phonics increased student’s reading skills. *Project Read* is a research-based program that is used at BES because it addresses phonemic awareness and provides a teacher-directed and scaffolded approach to teaching basic literacy skills. By implementing *Project Read* during the intervention block, teachers can provide this instruction to struggling readers. In order to address the fluency and comprehension aspects of reading, *Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention* is a systematic program used for direct instruction in fluency and comprehension skills. By addressing these specific skills, BES will work toward building confident, accurate readers who are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. In addition, there are often long-term implications for students who do not have these reading skills remediated, including failing core courses in high school, which may lead to a higher risk of becoming a high school dropout.

**Student readiness skills.** Another area to consider is the readiness of students as they enter school. According to Torgesen (2004) “children who are at risk for reading failure are already behind their peers in many essential prereading skills.” Many children do not have these skills due to environmental or socioeconomic factors. As Mantsios (2013) examined the economic spectrum of America and he suggested “approximately one out of every five children (4.4 million) in the United States under the age of six lives in poverty” (p. 151). As new kindergarteners walk through the school doors each year, one of every five (approximately) comes from a home below the poverty line. These families live on less than \$19,307 per year for a family of four (Mantsios, 2013, p. 151).



This greatly affects the prior knowledge and experiences of the children when they arrive at school, many for the first time ever. Many have only been in the care of other family members, grandparents, parents, aunts, or cousins who have not provided any pre-kindergarten instruction therefore as we assess them, the baseline data may be significantly lower than their peers. Regarding students of lower socio-economic status, an Ohio school board member says, “Our children start with a smaller basket of resources but are expected to produce at the same level as kids in high-achieving, affluent communities” (NEA, 2011, p. 7). As Howard (2010) points out “there is undoubtedly a correlation between socioeconomic status and school outcomes” (pp. 46-47). Luther (2012) also concurs with Howard, citing research that indicates students living in poverty have lower performance than those who are not and have a greater risk of dropping out of school.

Therefore, issues such as poverty, minority groups, and even gender must be addressed in order to fully ensure that the deficit skills are not due to a lack of exposure to content and curriculum (Howard, 2010, NEA 2011). Stinnett (2011) concluded from prior research that “proficient reading is the result of a hierarchal process of skill development” and “studies examining gender differences in early reading skill development have documented a female advantage” (p. 73). Although Stinnett found this “female advantage,” other researchers cited have found “boys and girls do not significantly differ in aspects of reading, but more boys are identified through methods of referral” (Limbrick et al., 2012, p. 343). Limbrick et al. (2012) found in their research on boys and reading acquisition, there is no statistical difference in boys and girls in year one or year two of school and “it does not appear that gender is a strong or consistent

predictor of reading ability” (p. 355). As students who are identified as Tier 3 in reading skills are identified, it is important to determine if these factors are also an element in why a student is not performing at grade level in reading. If a student has not been exposed to basic reading skills in reading, providing intervention is important to determine if they are performing at a deficit due to a lack of exposure or if there are other factors that need to be examined including potential learning disabilities. By determining this, this information can have a pertinent role in the next steps after intervention.

**Instructional and intervention practices.** In a recent study conducted by Sharp et al. (2015), the relationship of RtI implementation and reading achievement was evaluated. Sharp et al. (2015) found several implications for practice in the implementation of RtI. “Results suggest that Tier 3 implementation integrity significantly and positively predicts student reading performance” (Sharp et al., 2015, p. 158).

Therefore, these “interventions should involve highly explicit, scaffolded instruction that focuses on a targeted set of foundational reading skills, provides frequent opportunities for responding, and matches student need” (Sharp et al., 2015, p.158). The researchers also found that data collection, progress monitoring, and systematic monitoring of data is integral to the RtI process that promotes student growth in reading (Sharp et al., 2015). A study conducted in one Minnesota district found that after ten years of implementation, RtI increased student achievement on curriculum-based measures and standardized assessments in reading (Noltemeyer et al., 2014).

In, *Balancing Fidelity with Flexibility and Fit: What Do We Really Know about Fidelity of Implementation in Schools*, Harn et al. (2013) discussed the measurement of fidelity of implementation of interventions in elementary schools. Harn et al. (2013) state

that interventions that are “implemented with high fidelity will result in improved outcomes, whereas low fidelity will lead to poor outcomes” (p.1). Therefore, through the research methods, it is important to measure if the interventions being implemented are done with fidelity.

In addition to ensuring the fidelity of the interventions, it is important to comment on teacher efficacy. In a recent study conducted by Fox (2012), the researcher evaluated two Georgia school districts’ teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in providing interventions and the outcomes of student success in the intervention process. She used a quantitative methodology and gathered information by administering several different surveys to the participants and then completing a cross-sectional study of the survey results, which could limit what the researcher would uncover by conducting interviews with the participants. She found that teachers felt they were very effective in providing the interventions in the classroom, but still unsure about how to conduct a meeting and discuss the data in the RtI process. The research by Fox (2012) provides background on general perceptions of teachers on the intervention process in the classroom and will provide guidance as to research questions that may still be unanswered that can be addressed in this study. It also provides rationale for using observations and focus groups in this project in order to gain greater insight on the efficacy of the participants. The concept of teacher efficacy has also been researched as it relates to the intended outcomes of interventions. For example, Nunn and Jantz (2009) wrote:

Effective processes and methodologies to support interventions have the potential to develop effective teachers who are skilled and capable of dealing with difficult academic and behavioral concerns presented in their classroom. (p. 2)

Popham (2013) proposes that educators need to have a goal in which they are headed with content. His work, *Objectives*, unmistakably denotes what he is referring to. The background of the term “objectives” is described as a movement that began in the 1960’s with programmed instruction enthusiasts and “a number of other instructional specialists also began to support the worth of explicitly stated objectives” (p. 95). Popham believes that these objectives must be stated explicitly, and more importantly “must be stated in terms of measurable learner behavior” (2013, p. 95). Teachers need to plan the interventions with a goal in mind, whereby setting measurable goals for the intended outcomes of the intervention, and thus guiding the implementation of the intervention.

According to Callender (2012), schools that do not have a systematic approach to intervention will more often see interventions that are not effective. Callender (2012) also believes that interventions must be differentiated and provide repetition, scaffolding, modeling, and correction using a systematic approach which will allow teachers to address the problems that are interfering with student learning. He also states that in some instances

At BES, classroom-based interventions are the foundation for addressing the deficits that are discovered through universal screening. Students who need more intensive support are provided with pullout reading intervention on a daily basis in addition to the classroom level support. One of the suggestions made by Callender (2012) is to use interventions that have scientific research to prove their effectiveness. This is crucial in the continuity of the support provided to the students. The programs that are used for intervention at BES provide the teacher with direct intervention that is research based to use according to the individual needs of the students. By using the same programs

and approaches in each classroom, it ensures consistency for the student throughout not only the primary classrooms, but in the intermediate classrooms as well.

Currently, the State of South Carolina requires specific standards of instruction, and SSD creates a plan for implementation of those standards, including learning objectives. While implementing these objectives, teachers at BES are finding students deficit in specific skills that must be remediated. This is the beginning of the RtI process for the school.

**Students with disabilities and other factors.** During the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004 (renamed NCLB), significant changes were made to the requirements for a student to be classified as a student with a learning disability under special education. Prior to the new law taking effect, a student could qualify as having a learning disability through a psycho-educational evaluation measuring both intellectual ability and academic achievement. If a severe discrepancy was found between the two scores, the student could be classified as Learning Disabled (LD). After NCLB was enacted, the criteria now required that students be provided intensive intervention and a lack of significant progress would demonstrate a potential learning disability (Buffum et al., 2009; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The use of the RtI model ensures that students are identified appropriate for special education services and therefore also lowers the potential for disproportionate identification in comparison to the previous discrepancy model (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Hartlip & Ellis, 2012; Haager et al., 2007). The disproportionate identification of students for special education included high numbers of at-risk students. These at-risk students can be defined as students who enter school with significant delays, lack of access and/or prior exposure to

academic curriculum, come from a lower socio-economic background, or have some type of weakness that causes delays in learning to occur (Torgesen, 2004).

According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), the RtI model was specifically designed to target early reading problems. In a classroom that implements the RtI process by providing research-based interventions, students are less likely to miss these strategic skills necessary to become fluent readers. As a part of this research, classroom-based interventions will be studied to determine their effectiveness. If teachers are teaching only the standards that are mandated by state and federal entities, there will most certainly be areas of fragmented knowledge.

In addition to teacher efficacy in providing the appropriate interventions, in order to ensure efficacy for all students involved in the intervention process, it is important to ensure that students are receiving interventions outside of the general education curriculum. Not all students need the same level of explicit, direct instruction in the area of reading (Torgesen, 2004). At BES, it is important to ensure that all of our learners, including our English Language Learner (ELL) students are provided with the appropriate instructional practices. In, *Cultural Considerations with Response to Intervention Models*, Klingner and Edwards (2006) discuss how RtI affects students who are ELL, low socio-economic status (SES) students, and other culturally diverse students. The major contention is that RtI can assist in lowering the disproportionate amount of students in these groups who are identified for special education programs by providing more appropriate intervention to the students. These authors make several statements regarding what appropriate interventions should look like and the questions that need to

be asked regarding the effectiveness of interventions. The position of the Klingner and Edwards (2006) is that:

[W]e must ensure that children have received culturally responsive, appropriate, quality instruction that is evidence-based, but in order to be deemed appropriate, quality instruction, and evidence-based, it should be validated with students like those with whom it was applied. (p.109)

Klingner & Edwards (2006) mention the framework that includes accommodation, incorporation, and adaptation in culturally responsive literacy instruction. This information will be beneficial to ensure that teachers at BES are planning the appropriate reading interventions for those whose first language is English and for those who are ELL, and that they are implementing the interventions with fidelity.

Kashima et al. (2009) discuss the concept of disproportionate identification for special education of linguistically and ethnically diverse students. Kashima et al. (2009) contend that by implementing RtI, schools can combat the overrepresentation or underrepresentation in special programs and provide recommendations for ensuring responsiveness for ELL students. Interestingly, the authors refer to Klingner and Edwards (2006) concept that interventions need to be developed to address what works for students and in what contexts it will work effectively. It is also important to ensure that students who are ELL be assessed for their knowledge of their first or primary language as well as English to measure if the language acquisition is a concern or more specific learning problems.

**Assessment.** In an effort to return to mastery of content and increase test scores in an era of high-stakes testing, the RtI model of tiered support has become a common

practice in schools in both the general education classroom and special education classroom (Buffum et al., 2009). In measuring the effectiveness of classroom-based interventions, the concern will be the mastery of content for students.

Teachers use a variety of ways to determine skill deficiencies, but one specific way is through ongoing formative assessment. Popham (2011) describes the formative assessment in which the teacher collects evidence and uses that evidence to adjust instruction. As teachers assess students, they may find that a student is not proficient in the objective that they are currently teaching, but as they assess the student further, they may find foundational weaknesses that need to be addressed (Popham, 2011). This is where the remediation of skills in the format of RtI begins (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). As the intervention occurs, there is continual progress monitoring of student performance. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2007) “as schools implement validated interventions within general education, the effects of those interventions on children’s reading performance must be monitored so that children who do not respond adequately can be identified promptly” (p. 29).

## **Conclusion**

As the shift has moved to help all students become more successful in the general education classroom by providing early intervention, it is important to look at RtI as the process through which these goals are accomplished (Buffum et al., 2009; Vaughn & Klingner, 2007). RtI employs a process of assessment and intervention to systematically support students who need assistance in a particular subject or concept (Buffum et al., 2009). This is a shift from the traditional mindset of waiting for students to fail in order to find a discrepancy in their skills (Vaughn & Klingner, 2007). Intervention provides



students with the opportunity to master the skill(s) that they are missing in order to ensure appropriate instruction (Buffum et al., 2009).

As the literature was reviewed, there are several factors that impact how a student becomes a good reader including reading skills, student readiness skills, classroom instructional practices, students with disabilities, and assessment of students. As the authors suggest, these factors must be addressed in order to effectively teach children to read on grade level. Each of these serve as an impetus for the Read to Succeed Act 2016 and the subsequent implementation of an intervention block. Teachers must use a systematic, research-based approach to intervention in order to meet the needs of the Tier 3 students.

This literature review raises other concerns that inform this research project and address the stated problem. Among them are teacher efficacy in the implementation of RTI, efficacy in implementation with ELL students, and fidelity of the interventions. Each of these areas needs to be addressed to ensure that student growth is accurately measured. The most important aspect is to ensure that students who are identified as Tier 3 students are provided with interventions that will produce accurate data related to their growth on specific reading skills. As discussed, this is critical to ensure students are reading on grade level.

Chapter three will examine the methodology, that is, what systems and structures will be employed to address the stated problem. The literature reviewed in this chapter has guided the processes and procedures developed for data collection. The themes that were found in the literature, regarding reading intervention, including reading skills, student readiness skills, classroom instructional practices, students with disabilities, and

assessment of students provided the rationale for the use of multiple forms of data that were collected. The different types of data, both quantitative and qualitative, helped to answer the research questions and link them to the theoretical and practical aspects of reading intervention that were included in this chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the research methods that will be used to conduct this action research at BES. According to Mertler (2014), action research is a systematic inquiry conducted by those who have a vested interest in the teaching and learning process. Action research is a timely process that can produce immediate results for the researcher about real time experiences in the classroom (Mertler, 2014). As educators, it is important to continually reflect upon our practice in the classroom through an inquiry process and allows the researchers to address the issues confronting their communities (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). As a community of learners at BES, this present action research study evaluated how an additional, daily, thirty-minute RtI intervention block affects student reading skills. In this study, measuring the effect of interventions in a thirty-minute reading period yielded data that is valuable to understanding the impact of the *Read to Succeed Act* and connecting theory as well as state mandates to practice.

Since the action research process is a cyclical process, this project closely followed Hendricks's Action Research Process model with the researcher continually acting, evaluating, and reflecting the process (Hendricks, 2009). Within this process, teachers continually reflect on the teaching process, act on their reflections, and evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional process (Mertler, 2014). This is a continual process which allows the teacher to constantly reflect upon the instruction and intervention in the

classroom (Mertler, 2014). The process can also change as the needs of the school and student body change (Mertler, 2014). In this research project, teachers reflected upon the baseline data, acted by providing direct interventions, and evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention through continual progress monitoring. Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) believe the action research process moves beyond putting theory into action and allows the researcher to derive theory from practice. This project served to provide a process for action at BES to implement best practices for reading intervention and to evaluate and reflect upon the data that is derived from the intervention.

An integral part of the RtI process is using data to drive instructional practices in the classroom. According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014), “Data-driven decision making is embedded in teacher inquiry as teachers use assessment data and background information to inform decisions related to planning and implementing instructional strategies at the school, classroom, or individual student levels” (p. 16). Therefore, the question of student growth as it relates to intervention is an excellent example of the action research process. One way that schools can evaluate this continuous cycle is through the use of PLCs. Mertler (2014) suggests when educators as members of PLCs reflect on their practice, they are able to identify their own personal learning needs, and thus be more vested in any professional training that may occur as a result. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) also make a compelling argument that “PLCs enhance the possibilities for conducting an inquiry and cultivating a community of inquirers” (p. 24). They suggest using the data collected to “learn from practice through structured dialogue and engage in continuous cycles through the process of action research” (p. 24). Thus, the action research process provides an excellent basis for inquiry. This information will be

used to reflect with the other members of the PLCs at BES to continually improve instructional practices.

### **Context of the Problem of Practice**

At BES, the school has moved to implement a school-wide RtI block as part of the *Read to Succeed Act 2016*. The purpose is to provide interventions in reading for students who are scoring below grade level standards on a universal screening (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). Each year, all K-5 students at BES are assessed using a universal screener, AIMSweb Plus, in order to gather baseline data. By using this data to identify students in need of supplemental, strategic support during the RtI block, teachers implement a continual cycle of evaluating, acting, and reflecting on student performance and instructional needs. According to the *Read to Succeed Act 2016*, the RtI block must be provided to all students regardless of their classification as general education, special education, and/or ELL students, therefore at BES, all students who are identified using the universal screener are provided with reading intervention.

Every day, students who are identified through the AIMSweb Plus universal screening as requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, receive supplemental instruction and intervention in both the classroom and/or in a pullout program. These services must be provided by a classroom teacher, interventionist, English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, or special education (SPED) resource teacher who is a certified teacher (SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). Each teacher uses a standards-based curriculum in the classroom, providing the state standards to all students. In addition, students who score below grade level norms on the *AIMSweb Plus universal screener* are

provided with Tier 2 and Tier 3 research-based interventions and are progress monitored on a bi-weekly and weekly basis, respectively.

The implementation of interventions with fidelity is also important because results from progress monitoring and other screenings can affect students' instructional placement and services. The progress monitoring data collected on students should show evidence of growth or lack of growth in order to support any request for additional services within the school setting. As a part of this continual reflection, through observation, classroom assessments, and progress reports, the teacher can monitor student achievement and growth and determine areas of concern. This information gives the teachers and administrators at BES a comprehensive view of the student's academic progress.

### **Problem of Practice (PoP)**

According to the Read to Succeed Act, students must read on grade level by the end of third grade. Therefore, the students reading achievement level is the problem of practice. At BES, teachers have provided classroom instruction for students based on the state standards and district framework for ELA. Traditionally, students who required Tier 2 or Tier 3 reading intervention have received services through a pull-out model, provided by reading specialists. Only recently, with the mandate of the Read to Succeed Act, have the teachers provided direct intervention in the classroom. The previous model, although effective for the students who received intervention, did not address all students who potentially needed more direct reading intervention. This was due to the limited time and personnel resources available. This action research will address this problem by implementing research-based interventions in the general education classroom and

measuring students reading skills to determine the effectiveness of a thirty-minute RtI block.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions reflect the current direction of this study into the stated Problem of Practice:

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions do teachers use in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

*RQ3: What instructional strategies do teachers use during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

### **Role of the Researcher and Positionality**

As an assistant principal at BES, the researcher's primary role is to oversee curriculum, instruction, PLCs, and RtI. Action research, as opposed to traditional research, allows the researcher to participate in the study and to conduct "systematic inquiry into one's own practice" (Mertler, 2014, p. 4). During this study, as an insider at BES, the researcher's position will be that of a facilitator and observer of the RtI process. Because of this position as an insider, it is important to remember that the researcher has certain bias, belief systems, and even cultural background are variables in the research process (Bourke, 2014).

The researcher provided information to the participants about the study, including an overview of their involvement and the expectations for participation. She also provided the teachers who participated with informed consent forms, providing a description of the document. During PLCs, the researcher provided a timeline and any training needed for the *AIMSweb Plus* assessments and progress monitoring that was administered to students. Since the researcher was the data manager for BES, she had access to the online data center and provided assistance as needed to teachers. During the intervention block, the researcher conducted classroom observations using the form in Appendix B. The researcher also facilitated the focus groups with the involved participants. The researcher used all data collected to analyze and report the findings to the school participants and other school level stakeholders.

Because of the researcher's position as an insider, it was important to ensure that the teacher participants were aware that the observations, reflections, and student growth results were not evaluative. The information obtained for this study provided the researcher with insight on best practices in intervention which promote student growth in reading. One bias that could occur is that the researcher is highly involved in this process and has a vested interest in the research question and ultimately, the effectiveness of intervention on the reading skills of the students at BES. As Bourke (2014) states "the identities of both the researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process" (p. 1).

### **Research Design**

The research design used a concurrent mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. Since action research allows for "the use of all types of data collected



through the use of a wide variety of techniques,” (Mertler, 2014, p. 42) it was important to develop a research plan that used the appropriate data collection tools to address the research questions. In order to determine how the additional intervention block impacts student reading skills, it was also important to examine multiple data sources to provide an adequate interpretation of the data. Mertler (2014) cites Frankel and Wallen (2003) and Johnson (2008) who believe multiple measures on the variables of interest in a particular study should be collected. By collecting both quantitative data and qualitative data, the researcher was able to triangulate the data to interpret the results and provide validity to the study. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher documented the process using an online journal and participated in peer debriefing throughout the data collection and analysis process. The quantitative measures that were collected (student data from *AIMSweb Plus* and twenty-one classroom observations) and the qualitative measure (focus groups conducted twice with each grade level, K-2) provided multiple sources of data that were used to substantiate the results.

**Setting.** The setting for this study was an elementary school in an urban school district in South Carolina. The school had approximately 895 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. According to school-based data, the demographic makeup of these students included 23% Black, 12% Hispanic, 3% Two or More Races, and 62% White. The gender makeup of the students was 47% boys and 53% girls. There were students from a wide background of socio-economic status, including students on free and reduced lunch as well as middle and upper middle class students. The diverse population of students included ESOL students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented

students. The school employed 105 staff members, including 65 certified teachers and administrators.

**Sample.** The sample for this study included kindergarten, first, and second grade students and teachers at BES.

**Students.** The Tier 3 sample included approximately 80 students in grades KG-2 who, based on the benchmark assessment received Tier 3 interventions. Their demographic data closely mirrored the school-wide data and one had documented behavioral difficulties. Once the students were identified through the universal screening, the students were provided Tier 3 interventions within the general education setting. The sampling of students was chosen by a convenience sample because they were the easiest to access for the researcher, were required to receive the intervention, and were representative of the student population at BES. The students in this sample provided the researcher with data that is specific to the students at BES and allowed the researcher to elaborate on best practices once the research was completed.

**Teachers.** There were 19 kindergarten through second grade classrooms at BES, with 19 classroom teachers. Eighteen classroom teachers and three support staff teachers participated in this research study. Of the twenty-one participants, all were white females and range in age from 22 to 70. All teachers who participated in the study have obtained SC teacher certification in early childhood education and four teachers have a bachelor's degree, four have a bachelor's plus 18 hours, ten have master's degrees, and three have a master's plus 30 hours on their official SC teacher certificate. The teachers' years of experience range from first year teacher to 45 years with an average of 14.5 years. The majority of teachers who participated have between 6-20 years of experience teaching

early childhood education. Table 3.1 below shows the participants with pseudonyms assigned.

Table 3.1

*Teacher Participants Pseudonyms*

Grade Level	Name (Pseudonym)
Kindergarten	Mrs. Jennings
	Mrs. Drew
	Mrs. Paisley
	Mrs. Langston
	Ms. Nelson
	Mrs. Thompson
First Grade	Mrs. Joye
	Mrs. Spence
	Mrs. Townsend
	Mrs. William
	Mrs. Bennett
	Mrs. Bryant
Second Grade	Mrs. Thomas
	Mrs. Anderson
	Mrs. Sheldon
	Mrs. Brown
	Mrs. Wesley
	Mrs. Ball
Other Certified Staff	Mrs. Bowen
	Mrs. Singleton
	Mrs. Hayward

**Data collection instruments.** In order to gain a better understanding of how the additional intervention block affects students' reading skills, it was necessary to gather multiple sources of data. This ensured that the findings address the impact of the intervention process. Quantitative data was collected using *AIMSweb Plus* which is a product of NCS Pearson, Inc., and has been normed with over 31,000 students who are representative of U.S. demographics (AIMSweb Plus, 2015). Pearson NCS applied

descriptive statistical methods to ensure the reliability and validity of the assessment, and equivalency studies were conducted to ensure accurate scores (AIMSweb Plus, 2015).

*AIMSweb Plus* is used as a universal screening, given to all students at BES. *AIMSweb Plus* was chosen as the assessment for several reasons. BES has used *AIMSweb Plus* for four years prior to this study and has had excellent results correlating the data with the end of the year summative assessments. This assessment also provides built-in progress monitoring probes through the system. *AIMSweb Plus* also assesses early literacy skills, which correlate with the interventions used in the classrooms.

The final quantitative measure was gathered by the researcher who conducted classroom observations during the intervention block. The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) provides Principal Reading Walk-through Checklists (appendix B) that were developed specifically for each grade level. These checklists provide a comprehensive approach to observe the reading intervention block. They are based on research-based indicators including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, which are essential components for reading instruction (FCRR, 2016). These checklists were developed to provide principals' and school leaders with a tool to ensure that effective reading instruction is occurring in the classroom.

Data was also collected using a qualitative method, semi-structured focus groups. The researcher documented discussions during PLCs audio recording the sessions using Apple QuickTime. The researcher created focus group questions to guide the semi-structured interviews during the six focus group meetings. These questions are included in appendix C and were used to determine what intervention strategies the teachers are using, if they are serving students outside of their homeroom class (switching based on

levels), the teachers' perceptions of how the intervention block affects student reading skills, and next steps for the intervention block. These questions were pilot tested to ensure they provide meaningful information to the research.

**Data collection methods.** The *AIMSweb Plus* universal screening assessment was administered to the students at the beginning of the intervention cycle. The universal screening can be completed by students in 15-20 minutes and has specific subtests of skills that are administered based upon grade level, with different amounts of questions for each subtest. All kindergarten through second grade students were assessed on grade level. Kindergarten students were assessed on Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) and Initial Sounds (IS). First grade students were assessed using Auditory Vocabulary (AV), Word Reading Fluency (WRF), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) probes. Second grade students were assessed using Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), Vocabulary (V), and Reading Comprehension (RC) probes. The test was administered to kindergarten and first grade students individually using paper and pencil, with the teacher using an online data collection bank to input the student responses. The second-grade students completed the vocabulary and reading comprehension assessment using an application online and the oral reading fluency was administered one on one by the teacher. Because each grade level is assessed on different skills and not all skills are progress monitored weekly or biweekly, Table 3.2 shows the areas in which the students will be assessed and the areas that can be progress monitored (Appendix D).

Table 3.2

*AIMSweb Plus Administration Matrix*

Kindergarten	Fall	Letter Naming Fluency* (LNF) Initial Sounds* (IS) Auditory Vocabulary (AV)
First Grade	Fall	Letter Word Sound Fluency * (LWSF) Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Letter Word Sounds Fluency (LWSF) Phoneme Segmentation (PS) Word Reading Fluency (WRF)
Second	Fall	Oral Reading Fluency* (ORF) Vocabulary (VO) Reading Comprehension (RC) Oral Reading Fluency* (ORF)

Note. \*area that can be progress monitored

This data for the universal screening was calculated and reported as a national percentile and a scaled score for each subsection. This provides a way for the scores to be measured consistently and accurately. The national percentile also shows the researcher the student scores comparatively to the norms for the assessment. The universal screening data was used to identify students for intervention.

After administering the universal screening, teachers used the data provided by *AIMSweb Plus* to determine the tier 3 students. Reports have been created by *AIMSweb Plus* to assist teachers in determining the skill levels of students. These students were provided with research-based interventions and were administered progress monitoring probes weekly (Tier 3) throughout the course of the data collection cycle. The progress monitoring probes were completed in 3-5 minutes per student and provided a rate of improvement (ROI) for each student. The data collection cycle will last for 8 weeks. Using a pre-test, posttest model, the first score from the progress monitoring probe and the final progress monitoring probe score were used to determine if growth was made during the intervention cycle. In kindergarten, initial sounds (IS), letter naming fluency

(LNF), and letter sound fluency (LSF) was measured, in first and second grade, oral reading fluency (ORF) was measured for purposes of this research study. The measures of central tendency and t-test were calculated and reported in the data analysis.

Other forms of quantitative data were collected through an intervention plan form and classroom observations. An intervention plan form (see Appendix F) was completed by the teachers to determine which research-based intervention instructional tools and strategies were used as the treatment and to also provide the researcher with additional information about the students including special education, ESOL, or other pertinent information that could contribute to their participation in the intervention. This information was combined with the classroom observation data to triangulate the results.

For the observations, the kindergarten, first, and second grade checklists were used to provide data about the implementation of the intervention within each classroom (see Appendix B). The main purpose of the observations was to verify that the intervention occurred, what strategies and materials were used, and to observe the student responses and behaviors during the intervention.

As students in need of Tier 3 intervention were identified through the universal screening *AIMSweb Plus*, teachers met in grade-level PLCs to discuss the data and interventions that were most appropriate for the students. According to Buffum et al. (2009) “the essential characteristics of a professional learning community are perfectly aligned with the fundamental elements of response to intervention” (p. 49). The PLCs met once a month and the meetings were documented using the PLC protocol provided by SSD. This collaborative planning time provided teachers with an opportunity to make data-driven decisions based upon the RtI block and reflect upon the intervention process.

“In line with the goals of teacher research, data-driven decision making and progress monitoring are two professional activities that school reformers suggest will lead to improved student learning” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 16). This inquiry process allowed teachers to become familiar with the data and how to use this data to inform their instructional practices in the classroom (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Focus groups were conducted twice throughout the data collection cycle during grade level PLCs for a total of six focus groups, and the researcher used semi-structured questions to investigate teachers perceptions about the intervention process. The focus group questions can be found in Appendix C. Because the teachers already meet as a PLC every week for 50 minutes, there are established norms for the group about participation, time, and privacy. These norms were utilized during the focus groups.

Using the quantitative data, including the student data and classroom observations, and the qualitative data in the form of focus groups, the researcher analyzed the data by using a side-by-side approach to the data, and used the results to compare of all the data sources (Coe et al., 2017, Creswell, 2014). In chapter four, the researcher discusses the quantitative data, followed by a discussion of the qualitative data to confirm the findings through categories that emerge (Coe et al., 2017, Saldana, 2017). This allowed the researcher to monitor the quality of interventions, the effectiveness of the intervention block, and specifically how the additional intervention block impacts student reading skills while being supported by data.

**Intervention.** The focus for intervention during the RtI block was on Tier 3 students. In kindergarten, teachers used *Project Read* as the main research-based intervention. *Project Read* “provides curricula with lessons built on direct concept



teaching, multisensory strategies, systematic instruction, and higher-level thinking skills” (Project Read, 2016). This approach used visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile (VKAT), and body language through explicit direct instruction in the area of phonemic awareness. This phonemic awareness instruction was used to address deficits from the pre test data for the areas of IS, LSF, and LNF. When new concepts were introduced VKAT strategies and body language were used to meld sound symbol relationships. These strategies provided the student with an input and memory retrieval process to increase their automaticity of sound symbol relationships. *Project Read* was the research-based intervention chosen at BES to use in kindergarten because it addresses phonemic awareness and provides a teacher-directed and scaffolded approach to teaching basic literacy skills. Teachers used this in small group instruction to provide direct intervention to students. The areas that are addressed in intervention include phonological and phonemic awareness, sound/symbol knowledge, letter formation, concepts of print, vocabulary enrichment, and text reading (Project Read, 2016). In support for this phonemic instruction, the researchers at the Florida Center for Reading Research (2016) found it is critical to develop these skills early and it is important to begin to assess them early because students who are behind in these skills early in elementary school may not be able to read on grade level at the end of third grade.

In first and second grade, teachers provided intervention using *Project Read* as well as Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), depending on the level and need of the student. “Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is a small group, supplementary literacy intervention designed for students who find reading and writing difficult” (Heinemann, 2016). The classroom teachers used LLI to provide

students with explicit, direct instruction in reading skills focusing on close reading skills and allowing for instruction on both the students independent reading level and instructional reading level (Heinemann, 2016). The lessons were chosen based upon the individual student benchmark data. Because students who receive interventions were progress monitored on a weekly basis to determine the effectiveness of the interventions, the teachers used the data to make instructional adjustments as needed.

**Data analysis.** BES uses *AIMSweb Plus*, a universal screener and progress monitoring tool from NCS Pearson, Inc. (AIMSweb Plus, 2015). AIMSweb Plus has been normed with over 31,000 students who are representative of U.S. demographics (AIMSweb Plus, 2015). Using descriptive statistical methods, Pearson NCS provides equivalency studies to ensure the validity and reliability of the scores (AIMSweb Plus, 2015). This research will use the reporting system provided by *AIMSweb Plus* to collect and disaggregate the quantitative data.

This study measured growth using formative assessment data from AIMSweb Plus, including the benchmark and progress monitoring data to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions as they were presented to the students. The scale scores as calculated by *AIMSweb Plus* were used to determine student growth in the subtests. The composite nationally normed percentile on the universal screening was also reported. All students in kindergarten through second grade, who received Tier 3 interventions are reported. Students who have already been classified as special education students also participated in the study and the data will be noted as such. All other Tier 3 students including general education students, ELL students, and students who were in the process of being evaluated as having a potential learning disability were included in the reported data.

Descriptive statistical methods were used to calculate the rate of growth for all students and a t-test was calculated to determine if the results of the intervention were statistically significant. Second, the observation checklists (see Appendix B) were analyzed and categorized to determine which interventions were used and correlate with the progress monitoring scores in order to determine the effectiveness of instruction in the classrooms. Finally, the intervention plan forms (see Appendix E) completed by teachers provided the researcher with other pertinent information about the students who received the interventions. This information was added to the classroom observation data to triangulate the results. Tables and figures are included in chapter four to provide a visual representation of the quantitative data.

The qualitative data was analyzed using several methods. First, the focus group data was transcribed to provide a detailed record of the groups. This information was analyzed and separated into categories that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The categories were grouped into patterns, and patterns were grouped into themes (Saldana, 2009). Saldana (2009) discusses coding for patterns in the data, that categories may emerge, and although they “may not look alike” (p. 19) in fact, there are commonalities in their differences. The teachers’ attitudes toward the intervention process, their view on the effectiveness of the intervention block, and best practices moving forward after the intervention cycle, were reported.

The researcher chose a concurrent mixed methods design in order to compare the qualitative and quantitative data to confirm or disconfirm the results (Coe et al., 2017). The data was analyzed side by side and reported separately in order to make an interpretation about the intervention (Saldana, 2017). As the data was analyzed

concurrently, it was triangulated to determine how the additional thirty-minute intervention block effects reading skills in students. As the researcher interpreted the results, she used the data to determine best practices and instructional strategies that occurred during the intervention also provides the researcher with limitations of the study, areas for further study, and/or future action research projects. The researcher also gained insight on the effectiveness of the interventions and if specific teachers need additional professional development to implement the interventions effectively. The results were reported to the school, to the teacher participants, and other various stakeholders to evaluate the practices and plan for continuous improvement (Creswell, 2014). Although the researcher had access to student information, including names of students, this information is not pertinent, therefore it is not be reported in the results section of this project. Individual information was reported to the administrative team at BES and to teachers to provide reflection on the intervention block.

**Participant involvement.** The teachers at BES were the main participants in implementing the intervention block and assessing the students on *AIMSweb Plus*. Since this is already a part of their daily schedule, they were not asked to do any additional work for this study. Teachers also participate in weekly PLC meetings and therefore participation in the focus group is not an additional task. The questions that were posed during focus groups were also used as guiding questions for the PLC. The intervention plan form which was used is also already used at BES to assist teachers in planning for effective intervention instruction. This document also provided additional documentation for students who may not respond to the intervention and are referred to the school's RtI team. Teachers were given an informed consent form to sign at the first PLC meeting (see

Appendix A) to outline their participation and obtain consent to use their classroom data in the research.

Since the implementation of the SC Read to Succeed (2016) mandate, students who are identified as Tier 3 students are required to receive intervention. Their participation in the research study was not additional to their instructional day. Per the Institutional Review Board, this was an Exempt Category 1 Study which is defined as "research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular or special educational instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods" therefore informed consent was not collected from students.

The researcher was the data manager for *AIMSweb Plus* at BES, therefore no additional access or information needed to be provided by the teachers.

## **Conclusion**

At BES, it was important to determine whether or not the RTI practices that we employ are effective in showing growth in students' reading abilities. This is important for several reasons. First, students at BES have traditionally scored above the SSD average on standardized assessments, even earning, on numerous occasions, the Palmetto Gold and Silver on absolute ratings from the SC Department of Education. As the student demographic shifts, it is important for us to meet the instructional needs of all students by showing growth, especially with our Tier 3 students. As stated previously, "although reading proficiency is a prerequisite for later educational and occupational success, many

students struggle to learn the skills needed to read fluently and for comprehension” (Noltemeyer et al., 2014, p. 1).

Additionally, since many BES students struggle in reading, it is imperative to intervene early and appropriately to give them a solid foundation in reading. From the perspective of an administrator, it is important to monitor continuously and adjust instructional practices at BES. Without evaluating the effectiveness of programs, it is difficult to make adjustments as needed. Finally, in this era of high-stakes testing and accountability, it is important for teachers in the primary grades to provide effective instructional practices to promote early literacy in students, allowing them to have a greater chance at a successful educational career.

As this research was conducted, it was important to use a mixed-methods approach as the research design in order to adequately determine how the intervention block effects students reading skills. By following Hendricks’s model for action research, the researcher and teacher participants can continuously evaluate, act, and reflect on the intervention process (Hendricks, 2009; Mertler, 2014). This research design included collecting quantitative and qualitative data from multiples sources and using these data sources to determine how the intervention block impacts students reading skills (Coe et al., 2017, Creswell, 2017; Saldana, 2009). In the next chapter, the quantitative data from AIMSweb Plus as well as the teacher observations and intervention plan forms are analyzed alongside the qualitative data from the focus groups. This data is discussed in terms of themes that emerged from the data and is interpreted through triangulation to provide insight which can help BES provide effective interventions to increase reading skills in our students.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The importance of this research study has been outlined in chapters one and two, which indicated that students must read on grade level by the end of third grade. According to the SC Read to Succeed Act 284, students who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade are in danger of being retained (SCDE, 2016). Furthermore, research shows they have difficulties later in school, performing below their grade level peers in reading (Noltemeyer et al., 2014; Luther, 2012; SC Department of Education [SCDE], 2016). In order to ensure that students are learning to read on grade level, it is important to determine the areas of deficit for students who score in Tier 3 on a universal screening and provide frequent, intensive intervention to fill in the deficit areas (Haager et al., 2007; Buffum Mattos, & Weber, 2009). At BES, students are given a universal screening, *AIMSweb Plus* three times each year and using these results, teachers provide intervention to students identified as Tier 3. In chapter four, the data collected through the methodology delineated in chapter three is reported and analyzed. Data was collected through a concurrent mixed-methods approach to answer the research questions. To measure how an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills, quantitative data from *AIMSweb Plus*, classroom observations, and a fidelity checklist along with qualitative data from teacher focus groups were collected and analyzed. It is through these multiple sources of data that the researcher attempts to

answer the research questions. The data was collected over an eight-week period during the fall semester at BES to answer the following research questions:

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions teachers use in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

*RQ3: What instructional strategies teachers use during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

The data was analyzed and organized in the order of the research questions. To answer research question one, how does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills, pre-intervention and post-intervention quantitative data from *AIMSweb Plus* was analyzed to determine growth in the reading skills. To answer research questions two and three, classroom observations quantitative data were analyzed to determine what type of research-based interventions were used in the classrooms. The classroom observations were also analyzed to determine what types of instructional strategies were used during the intervention block. Finally, to answer research question four, qualitative data collected through the format of focus groups were analyzed and the researcher looked for themes that emerged from the data to give insight into the teachers' perceptions of the intervention block.



### ***AIMSweb Plus Universal Screening***

The students who received Tier 3 intervention were identified using the fall *AIMSweb Plus* universal screening. The students who participated in this data analysis include general education, special education, and ESOL students who receive Tier 3 reading intervention. During the thirty-minute block they received small group intervention daily in reading skills. Each week, students in Tier 3 were administered progress monitoring probes based on the grade level and the final progress monitoring probe was analyzed for growth. Using a pre-test/post-test design, the first and last progress monitoring probe scores were used to determine if growth was made by each student. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods calculating the mean, median, range, minimum and maximum scores, in addition to paired t-test to determine if the growth made was statistically significant.

Classroom observation data was also collected to determine what instructional strategies and research-based interventions were used in each classroom. This data was combined by grade level and then categorized to determine what was observed in each classroom. The results are listed in tables and discussed in this section.

**Kindergarten *AIMSweb Plus* data.** The universal screening was used to determine which students were performing as Tier 3 students on the *AIMSweb Plus* assessment. On the fall universal screening, the mean composite score in early literacy skills for the Tier 3 students was in the 11<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally which included mean raw scores of three initial sounds, six letter names, and one letter word sound. The students were administered a pretest using progress monitoring probes in letter naming, initial sound fluency, and letter word sound fluency using the *AIMSweb Plus* progress

monitoring probes. For letter naming, the students were asked to name as many random ordered upper and lower case letters as they could in one minute. For initial sounds, students were shown four pictures and asked to identify which picture represented the beginning sound that the teacher gave them verbally. When assessed in letter word sound fluency, the students were asked to say the sounds of printed letters, syllables, or words. At the end of the eight-week intervention cycle, the students final *AIMSweb Plus* progress monitoring scores were recorded for a post-test. In initial sounds, the mean score was five, in letter naming fluency the mean was 20 letters per minute, and in letter word sound fluency, the mean was 16 sounds per minute. Because the winter universal screening window had not opened, only the individual scores were reported and not the composite score with a national percentile. The measures of central tendency are represented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1

*Kindergarten AIMSweb Plus Data*

<b>Column</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Composite Nat'l Percentile	32	11	9	21	1	22
Baseline Initial Sounds	32	3.59	2	12	0	12
Final Initial Sounds	28	5.11	4.5	12	0	12
Baseline Letter Naming Fluency	32	6.13	5	15	0	15
Final Letter Naming Fluency	32	20.47	20	48	0	48
Baseline Letter Word Sound Fluency	32	1.66	1	6	0	6
Final Letter Word Sound Fluency	29	16.48	18	40	1	41

In letter naming fluency, students grew from an average of 6 to 20, showing that there was an increase in the number of upper case and lower case letters that the students could identify in random order. Students also made growth in letter word sound fluency, growing from an average of 1 correct to 16 correct in the eight-week period.

Interestingly, although students made gains in letter naming, they struggled with initial sounds. The student average for initial sounds was 3 at the baseline and 5 for the final assessment. Based on the observations conducted, students were instructed in letter sounds, but not in the format in which the assessment was administered. During observations, students were asked to identify a letter and its corresponding sound. It was observed that the students could do this in isolation, yet on the assessment, they were asked to look at four pictures, and identify which one had the initial sound that the teacher gave them verbally. The transference of the skill in isolation to practical application was not observed at this point in the year.

A paired t-test was conducted to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test administered to the kindergarten students in the areas of initial sounds, letter naming fluency, and letter word sound fluency. The paired t-test showed a statistically significant difference in the scores for the pre-test ( $M= 6.13$ ,  $SD=4.62$ ) and posttest ( $M=20.47$ ,  $SD=10.9$ ) conditions;  $t= -6.85$ ,  $p= <.0001$  for letter naming fluency. A statistically significant difference was also found in the scores for the pre-test ( $M=1.66$ ,  $SD=2.01$ ) and post-test ( $M=16.48$ ,  $SD=9.61$ ) conditions;  $t=-8.15$ ,  $p=<.0001$  for letter word sound fluency. For initial sounds, there was not a statistically significant difference in the scores of the pre-test ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=3.88$ ) and post-test ( $M=5.11$ ,  $SD=3.36$ ) conditions;  $t=-1.62$ ,  $p=.11$ . The results indicate that students made a significant amount of gains in letter naming and letter word sound fluency during the intervention cycle given the amount of time the intervention was provided to the students. The results also indicate that there were no significant gains in initial sounds. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2

*Kindergarten AIMSweb Plus Data T-Test*

Test	Difference	Sample Difference	Std. Err.	DF	T-Stat	p-value
Initial Sounds	$\mu_1 - \mu_2$	-1.51	0.93	58.00	-1.62	0.1106
Letter Word Sound Fluency	$\mu_1 - \mu_2$	-14.83	1.82	30.22	-8.15	<0.0001
Letter Naming Fluency	$\mu_1 - \mu_2$	-14.34	2.09	41.79	-6.85	<0.0001

**First grade AIMSweb Plus data.** The first-grade students were administered the *AIMSweb Plus* universal screening as a pretest at the beginning of the intervention cycle. Students identified as Tier 3 from the universal screening were provided with daily reading intervention and given *AIMSweb Plus* progress monitoring probes each week in Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)(which is the only area available to progress monitor for first-grade students). The students were given a passage on first grade level and asked to read as many words as they could in one minute. Any errors were subtracted from the total number of words the students read. On the fall universal screening, the Tier 3 students had a mean composite of 7<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally normed on the oral reading fluency, with a mean raw score of 8 words per minute on ORF. On the posttest, after the eight-week intervention cycle, the Tier 3 students grew to a mean of 18.5 words per minute on the final ORF probe, growing 10 words per minute during the intervention cycle. Because the intervention cycle ended before the winter universal screening window opened, the composite national percentile was not available. The scores are displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*First Grade AIMSweb Plus Data*

Column	n	Mean	Median	Range	Min	Max
Composite National Percentile	31	7.16	7	12	1	13
Baseline Oral Reading Fluency	31	8.32	9	13	0	13
Final Oral Reading Fluency	26	18.50	14	58	0	58
Baseline to Final	27	9.89	7	47	-1	46

A paired t-test was conducted to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test administered to the first-grade students in oral reading fluency. There was a statistically significant difference in the scores for the pre-test ( $M= 8.32, SD=4.08$ ) and posttest ( $M=18.5, SD=12.29$ ) conditions;  $t= -4.04, p= .0003$  for oral reading fluency. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 4.4 that the eight-week intervention was effective in increasing students' oral reading fluency.

Table 4.4

*First Grade AIMSweb Plus Data T-Test*

Test	Difference	Sample Difference	Std. Err.	DF	T-Stat	p-value
Oral Reading Fluency	$\mu_1 - \mu_2$	-10.18	2.52	29.62	-4.04	0.0003

**Second grade AIMSweb Plus data.** The second-grade students were administered the *AIMSweb Plus* fall universal screening as a pretest at the beginning of the intervention cycle. Students identified as Tier 3 from the universal screening were provided with daily reading intervention and *AIMSweb Plus* progress monitoring probes were administered each week in ORF(which is the only available progress monitoring probe for second-grade students). The students were given a passage on second grade

level and asked to read as many words as they could in one minute. Any errors were subtracted from the total number of words read. On the fall universal screening, the Tier 3 students had a mean composite of 8<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally normed on the oral reading fluency, with a mean raw score of 25 words per minute on ORF. After the eight-week intervention cycle, on the posttest, the Tier 3 students grew to a mean of 39 words per minute on the final ORF probe, growing 14 words per minute during the intervention cycle. The winter universal screening window did not open before the end of the intervention cycle and therefore the composite national percentile was not available. The scores are displayed in Table 4.5

TABLE 4.5

*Second Grade AIMSweb Plus Data*

	n	Mean	Median	Range	Min	Max
Composite Baseline Nat'l Percentile	17	8.06	8	15	1	16
Baseline Oral Reading Fluency	17	25.41	25	53	3	56
Final Oral Reading Fluency	16	39	33	63	9	72
Baseline to Final	17	12.69	13	35	-6	29

A paired t-test was conducted to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test administered to the second-grade students in the area of oral reading fluency. There was a statistically significant difference in the scores for the pre-test ( $M=25.41$ ,  $SD=15.07$ ) and post test ( $M=39$ ,  $SD=21.36$ ) conditions;  $t= -2.10$ ,  $p= .0453$  for oral reading fluency. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 4.6. When analyzing the data for second grade, it is important to look at different variables that may account for the small gains that were made by the students. First, by second grade at BES, many of our students have been identified as students with a disability, ESOL students, or students who receive

accommodations through a 504 plan. The students who participated in this sample there were five students with documented disabilities, three ESOL students, and one student with a 504 plan documenting a limitation of a major life impairment. Although these students made gains, their gains were not as rapid as the other students.

Table 4.6

*Second Grade AIMSweb Plus Data T-Test*

Test	Difference	Sample Difference	Std. Err.	DF	T-Stat	p-value
Oral Reading Fluency	$\mu_1 - \mu_2$	-13.59	6.47	26.83	-2.10	0.05

**Classroom Observation Data**

Throughout the eight-week intervention cycle, the researcher conducted classroom observations in all the classrooms who served Tier 3 students during the thirty-minute intervention block. The observation forms in appendix B were used to collect data on the reading instruction provided during the intervention. These forms provided a checklist type format for the researcher to collect the data. During the cycle, 17 classroom observations were completed, including 6 kindergarten groups, 8 first grade groups, and 3 second grade groups. The data was then separated into categories based on the appropriate grade level instructional strategies and content. These categories include the research-based intervention, lesson focus, materials used, and instructional strategies, and which areas of reading were addressed including phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and reading comprehension. These areas correlate with the FCRR (2016) components of reading instruction that includes phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These and other terms used to describe the intervention observations in

this section are defined in a glossary of terms and instructional strategies found in Appendix F.

**Kindergarten observation data.** The researcher conducted classroom observations during the intervention cycle using the Kindergarten Observation Checklist (Appendix B). The observations were conducted during the thirty-minute intervention block, which is the concentration of this study, and focused on the Tier 3 intervention. Each of the observations lasted thirty minutes, to ensure that all strategies that were used during intervention were observed. Data collected during the observations were separated into categories. The observations looked at the type of research-based intervention that was used, how students were grouped for the intervention, materials used during the intervention, and instructional strategies involving the four of the components of reading most relevant for kindergarten students including letter naming, letter sounds, phonics, and phonemic awareness.

**Research-based intervention focus and grouping.** The first area indicated which research-based intervention was used during the Tier 3 intervention. It was observed that each classroom was serving their Tier 3 students in small groups, consisting of 2-4 students. In all six of the kindergarten classrooms Project Read was used as the research-based intervention. For the Tier 3 lesson focus, all classrooms were working on letter sounds and letter naming fluency.

**Materials used during intervention.** Although they were working on the same lesson focus, different materials were used in each classroom. Examples of these materials include wipe off the boards, red word cards, letter-sound cards, alphabet cards, leveled readers, and felt boards.



***Instructional strategies used during intervention.*** To address the areas of phonics and phonological awareness, the teachers provided explicit direct instruction using a variety of strategies. These strategies included arm-tapping, fingerspelling, skywriting, and other tactile writing strategies. Definitions of these strategies are available in Appendix F. To address the area of phonological awareness the teachers used oral activities including rhyming and scaffolding the basic reading skills, and the teachers used phrases such as “catch the word” and “unlock the words,” to direct students to decode and blend the words using kinesthetic and tactile methods. The methods used by individual teachers are listed below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

*Kindergarten Instructional Strategies*

Instructional Strategies	Number of Teachers Observed
Letter Naming	1
Letter Sounds	4
VKAT Strategies	2
Arm Tapping	2
Finger Spelling	1
Skywriting	2
Writing Practice	2
Oral Rhyming	3
Scaffolding Basic Reading Skills	1
Decoding	2
Blending	1

*Note.* Total number of teachers observed = 6

The use of these strategies provided the students with multiple ways to learn the objectives of each intervention lesson. As Table 4.7 suggests, not all teachers used the same strategies, but all six used multiple strategies during each thirty-minute observation, providing students the opportunity to practice phonemic awareness skills using multiple

modalities. This allowed the students to become familiar with the skill in a way that each child would be able to recall and apply as their skill level increased through growth in reading skills.

**First grade observation data.** The first-grade observations were conducted in six classrooms and with two additional interventionists who serve Tier 3 students. Each group was observed using the First Grade Observation Checklist (Appendix B) and lasted for the entire thirty-minute intervention block. The observer used the protocol to determine what type of research-based intervention was used and the lesson focus, how the students were grouped for the intervention, materials that were used, and the intervention strategies that were used to address the components of reading, including phonics, phonological awareness, fluency skills, and comprehension.

**Research-based intervention focus and grouping.** Of the groups observed, four teachers used a combination of LLI and Project Read, one teacher used LLI exclusively, and two teachers used Project Read exclusively for their groups. The choice of research-based intervention was based on the individual level and needs of students in the Tier 3 groups based on the *AIMSweb Plus* Fall universal screening data. It is important to note that the first-grade student data, in Table 4.8, shows the wide discrepancy in reading skills of the students and therefore necessitated the different levels of reading intervention.

During the observed lessons, the lessons focused on leveled texts (which are text materials on the students' instructional level, not necessarily their grade level), specific Project Read lessons including s-blends, l-blends, letter naming and letter sounds, and writing letters.

***Materials used during intervention.*** During the intervention blocks observed, each teacher used a variety of instructional materials that included leveled texts from the LLI kits, the LLI teacher manuals, the Project Read teacher manual, and student supplies including white boards, felt boards, letter cards, alphabet lines, and student copies of leveled texts.

***Instructional strategies used during intervention.*** During the intervention, the teachers provided explicit direct instruction in the areas of phonics, phonological awareness, fluency, and comprehension. In two of the groups with lower level students, the teachers worked on letter naming and letter sounds. When working on phonics, the teachers used VKAT strategies from Project Read that included finger spelling words, blending words and segmenting words. As the teachers worked with students on phonological awareness, they taught the students explicit decoding strategies, application of letter sounds in reading words, and introduced common irregular words using the red word cards. LLI was used to teach fluency and comprehension. The teacher and students used strategies including shared reading, oral reading, partner reading, choral reading to increase reading fluency and the teacher guided conversation about the leveled reading with the groups asking the students to make predictions about the text, make connections and activate prior knowledge, and use graphic organizers to increase comprehension. These instructional strategies are defined in Appendix F and listed in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8

*First Grade Instructional Strategies*

Instructional Strategies	Number of Teachers Observed
VKAT Strategies	4
Segmenting	2
Finger Spelling	2
Decoding	2
Blending	5
Application of Letter Sounds	2
Common Irregular Words	2
Shared Reading	4
Oral Reading	4
Partner Reading	1
Choral Reading	2

*Note.* Total number of teachers observed = 8

The first-grade teachers all used multiple strategies during the intervention block. Like the kindergarten teachers, the researcher observed each first-grade teacher using multiple strategies to meet the learning styles of the students in each group. The researcher also observed that by providing multiple strategies, when asked to practice independently, the students chose the strategy that they were most comfortable using. When asked to read with a partner, read chorally, or practice shared reading, the students were familiar with the strategies and participated without hesitation, even if they were unsure how to decode a word or unfamiliar with a red word (common irregular word). Teaching students using multiple modalities provides a way to increase retention of the skill for the students.

**Second grade observation data.** In the second grade at BES, the students in the entire grade level are grouped based on the fall *AIMSweb Plus* universal screener and a Project Read pre-test. They are then served during the intervention block with a teacher

based on the individual needs and tier of the students using Project Read exclusively as the research-based intervention. Since the students are grouped in the entire grade level by reading level, the teachers differentiate the level of lesson, teaching the Project Read curriculum based upon the need of the students in each group. The students switch classrooms for the intervention block, with three teachers serving the Tier 3 students. Therefore, only three teachers were observed with Tier 3 student groups. Each group was observed using the Second-Grade Observation Checklist (Appendix B). The observer looked for the type of research-based intervention that was used and the lesson focus, how students were grouped for the intervention, materials used during the intervention, and instructional strategies involving the components of reading most relevant for these Tier 3 students including letter sounds, phonics, and phonemic awareness.

***Research-based intervention focus and grouping.*** In second-grade intervention, each teacher used Project Read as the research-based intervention. The student groups observed were the three groups of second graders in Tier 3 who scored an average of 8<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the fall universal screening and were grouped according to the pre-test results. These students averaged one to two grade levels below second grade in reading skills and this grouping allowed the teachers to provide instruction on skills that were specific to the needs of the children. The teachers focused the lessons on letter naming, letter sounds, the digraphs –ch and –sh, application of letter sounds to word reading, and open vowels at the end of word.

***Materials used during intervention.*** The teachers used multiple materials throughout the lesson including the Project Read manual, white boards, an alphabet line, red word cards, and letter/sound cards. One teacher used an interactive smartboard

activity that allowed the students to practice the digraphs and choose the correct answer on the smartboard. The students also used whisper phones to practice a leveled reading passage for fluency. To teach the phonics skills, the teachers used letter/sound cards to provide examples for practice. They also used word cards to apply letter sound knowledge to reading words, including digraphs and open –e words.

***Instructional strategies used during intervention.*** The majority of the time spent in intervention, the teacher provided explicit direct instruction, modeling the skills and having the students then practice the specific skill. The students practiced skywriting letters and words as a VKAT strategy and the teachers also provided time for the children to practice, blended and segmented words, practiced decoding skills, applied the rules to words, and practiced common irregular words. Because these groups scored significantly below grade level, they were not instructed in fluency and comprehension skills during the observations.

Table 4.9

*Second Grade Instructional Strategies*

Instructional Strategies	Number of Teachers Observed
VKAT Strategies	3
Segmenting	2
Finger Spelling	3
Decoding	3
Blending	3
Application of Letter Sounds	3
Common Irregular Words	3

*Note.* Number of teachers observed = 3

In second grade, all three of the intervention teachers used most the instructional strategies listed in Table 4.9. Again, this provides students with multiple ways to practice the skill and commit it to memory to help with retrieval of the skills.

**Observation analysis.** As these observations were conducted and analyzed, it became evident that no matter which research-based intervention was used, using explicit direct instructional strategies was the method used to provide the instruction. All the teachers, regardless of grade level, were presenting different instructional content based upon the needs of the students in their small groups, and they all were able to make gains in reading skills as measured by the quantitative data. The teachers were observed consistently applying and teaching the strategies in the same way. To answer research questions two and three, what research-based interventions are used and what types of instructional strategies are used, several categories resulted from this data that are important in answering these questions. These categories include providing explicit direct reading instruction using research-based interventions including Project Read and Fountas and Pinnell LLI, and the use of varying instructional strategies can assist students in acquiring basic reading skills. Another area that was implied through the observations was that each of these teachers provided the thirty-minute intervention five times each week for a total of eight weeks, totaling twenty hours of intervention. This is additional time that the Tier 3 students received explicit direct instruction above their grade level peers. In addition, the researcher's observation of the use of VKAT strategies suggests that using multiple modalities assists students in learning basic phonemic awareness skills. Appendix F provides a list of the instructional strategies for other teachers to be able to replicate the intervention strategies within their own classrooms.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Teachers of each grade level, K-2, who participated in the study, participated in focus groups twice during the intervention cycle. The purpose of the focus groups was to

gain insight on teachers' perceptions of the additional thirty-minute intervention block and the research-based interventions that were used. Each focus group was divided by grade level, kindergarten, first, and second grade and each grade level met at the beginning and end of the intervention cycle. Each time the focus groups met, the questions listed in Appendix C were used to guide each discussion in a semi-structured format. When they met at the beginning of the intervention cycle, the questions were posed to them and they answered about their perceptions at that time. The three separate focus groups met again and discussed the interventions and gave more insight into the process and the teachers perceptions of the intervention block after the cycle was completed. There were a total of six focus groups conducted. The kindergarten focus group had 8 participants, the first-grade focus group had 8 participants, and the second-grade focus group had 8 participants. Each of the focus groups was audio recorded using Apple QuickTime and the researcher took notes during the groups. Once the focus groups were completed, the researcher used an online transcription service to transcribe the audio files and then checked the transcriptions for accuracy. After the interviews were transcribed, the responses were coded and analyzed to find common categories throughout the discussions. Two main themes emerged from the focus groups. They were organization and structure of the intervention block and teaching and learning in the intervention block. Each theme included several categories shown below. Due to the length of the focus groups and the types of questions used, there were some limitations. One limitation was the time allowed for the discussion of the questions. The teachers were participating in PLC's during their planning time and therefore the amount of time that could be allocated to these questions was limited. Another limitation was the type of



questions that were used to guide the conversation. Although they were intended to illicit open-ended responses, some of the participants did not elaborate fully when answering the questions and answered the questions as yes or no, or gave a very short responses.

**Organization and structure of the intervention block.** As the data was analyzed from the focus groups, it became clear that several patterns were important in the intervention process. The duration, or time, that the students received the intervention was important to the academic growth in students. The teachers also spoke frequently of the inflexible scheduling aspect of the intervention block. Another factor that emerged was the suitability of the format in which the intervention was presented to students was addressed by the teachers. Since the intervention block was a required mandate by the *SC Read to Succeed* law, another category that emerged was that of the inflexibility of the scheduling for the teacher to provide the intervention. The teachers' overall perceptions of the intervention block were also discussed and provided insight into the role their perceptions played in the intervention process. Each of these areas is examined further in this section.

***Required duration of the intervention for students.*** Some teachers felt that the thirty-minute intervention block was an adequate amount of time to work with the students specifically on skills that were needed in addition to the ELA instruction during the day. Two teachers, Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Anderson, indicated that 30 minutes is a good amount of time to work with these students, because "it is helpful to be able to teach to their specific needs." During one focus group, Mrs. Jennings noted, in regards to timing that they were "not just [working with the students] during the intervention block, we are working with them all throughout the day, so it's not just that thirty-minute time"

and Mrs. Drew responded, “I think we were already doing it, it’s just putting it in a segment in time.” Mrs. Spence stated, “I think we all like the thirty-minute extra block for it, it’s just all doing it the exact same time every single day. We’re finding that to be a bit of a struggle sometimes.” The teachers also indicated that they wished there was more flexibility in the particular time of day the thirty-minute intervention block is scheduled and how long they had to work with Tier 3 students. They felt that not having the intervention block connected to the ELA block provided a disconnect in reading instruction. The consensus among most teachers was that it provided time to get intensive frequent support for each child who was not successful during the whole group instructional time. One teacher, Mrs. Joye also felt that some days, thirty-minutes was too much time to work on the same strategies stating, “there are times when my children are just not able to have the attention needed to work that intensively for thirty minutes.”

***Inflexible scheduling of the intervention.*** When asked question two, “Is the intervention strategy or strategies that you are providing only occurring during the intervention block,” all teachers indicated that they are also using these strategies during their ELA block. In kindergarten, all six teachers indicated that they are using the same strategies during whole-group ELA instruction, but it is apparent that the Tier 3 students are not keeping up with the pace and therefore they need more intensive instruction. One kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Jennings stated, “I feel like I am kind of doing intervention during my literacy centers. I have a group every day, but it’s not always the lowest Tier 3 group” indicating that while the literacy centers are teaching the same skills, these children are not always provided direct instruction during that period of time. The first-grade teachers also indicated that some students receive LLI during the thirty-minute

intervention block as well as during the ELA block, therefore they are getting the instruction twice throughout the day. One first grade teacher, Mrs. Bennett indicated that she “highlights the [Project Read] rules that they have already learned” during morning work each day. Since the second grade teachers change groups based on reading levels and only teach Project Read strategies in isolation during the intervention block, the participants in the focus group indicated that the inflexibility of the scheduling has led to less transference of the skills for the students. The teachers’ attitudes about the scheduling of the intervention block indicated that they liked having the additional time to work with the Tier 3 children, they just did not like that it was dictated in their schedules each day. The first grade teachers spoke about the inflexibility of the intervention block and how they feel that “it’s very choppy...we’re just going to have to sit and talk during planning to see how we can make it flow better” (Mrs. Spence). They would like the flexibility of moving this time around as needed, especially since first-grade is self-contained in classrooms, adding this time to the ELA block would help them with scheduling. This was especially true in kindergarten and first grade, where teachers felt that by having this scheduled time, it inhibited what they could plan for the rest of the students in the classroom.

***Suitability of the format of intervention.*** During the intervention cycle, four of the six kindergarten teachers provided the Tier 3 direct intervention to the students in their own classroom, and the other two teachers served the students in their two classes together, grouping students who had similar needs based on the student reading level as indicated by *AIMSweb Plus*. The kindergarten teachers had small groups of 2-5 students

in their Tier 3 intervention groups. They continued this format for the duration of the intervention.

During the first focus group conducted with first grade, it became apparent during the discussion that the format of the intervention block in first grade needed to be adjusted. Mrs. Spence indicated that she had “eleven Tier 3 students” and Mrs. Joye said she had “eight Tier 3 students” with Mrs. Spence stating “that small group isn’t a small group.” After additional conversation, two additional certified teachers were added to the intervention block to alleviate this concern. The new intervention teachers, Mrs. Singleton and Mrs. Hayward, were used to provide intervention for the nineteen Tier 3 children in the two classes, lowering the group sizes to 3-5 students, and allowing for more intensive intervention in specific areas of need for those children.

One of the questions asked who provided the intervention for the teachers’ homeroom students. The second-grade teachers indicated that they group the students based on the *AIMSweb Plus* data and a Project Read pre-assessment to determine individual strengths and weaknesses in reading and that all students move between classes for the intervention based on their results. The second-grade group had six teachers and two intervention teachers who participated in the thirty-minute intervention block. When asked why they chose to do format the intervention block this way, Mrs. Wesley responded:

I think it is because it meets all levels. It's boosting up our higher students who are ready to move on to multi syllabic words, and but it's pushing those who are on grade level to getting them where they are, so that kids aren't getting bored. It's a good fit for each one of the flexible groups. If we notice that a child needs to be

moved up, or move down, we can do that also. Tier three are more confident...they're just successful. It definitely boosts tier three children's self-esteem with intervention groups.

Another teacher, Mrs. Thomas noted:

You can't meet the needs of all your learners in one spelling list, or one Project Read rule. It's just like two totally different places and I think once we saw the pretest you can definitely tell those differences. You have a child who scored in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile and then you have a child who might be in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile.

There's no way you could teach them the same thing.

Although each grade level used a different format for providing the intervention, the three significant areas for successful intervention that were noted included the frequency of the intervention, the size of the small group, and differentiating the instruction based on the identified deficit skills of the children.

***Teacher perceptions of intervention.*** As the focus groups were conducted, it became evident that teachers' perceptions were important in the success of the intervention. When asked "How do you think the additional thirty-minute intervention block impacts student reading skills?" the teachers had different responses. They all indicated that the intervention for Tier 3 students is positive, but some also had concerns about the intervention block. The two areas that teachers had specific ideas about were student progress and behavioral concerns in small group intervention.

**Teaching and learning in the intervention block.** As the data was analyzed, the concept of teaching and learning in the intervention block also became apparent and its importance was reiterated during the focus groups. In looking at student growth, the

importance of appropriate research-based interventions became a category. Teachers discussed the two programs that were used and then which instructional strategies were helpful in showing student growth. The final categories that emerged was about the application of the skills taught during the intervention block and the students' ability to transfer those skills into the ELA classroom. Each of these categories is discussed further in this section.

***Appropriateness of research-based interventions for student growth.*** Using the questions that guided the focus groups, when asked what research-based interventions were used during the thirty-minute intervention block, all six kindergarten teachers responded that they use Project Read lessons based on the level and need of the children in their group. While the teachers indicated that they provide these skills during the thirty-minute intervention block, it is also important to note that these skills are taught as a part of the ELA block as whole group instruction. The kindergarten teachers specifically indicated that they would work on letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, and identifying the parts of a book with the Tier 3 students as part of the Project Read lessons during this intervention cycle.

When the first-grade teachers were asked what research-based interventions were used with the Tier 3 students during the intervention, they indicated that they are using Fountas and Pinnell LLI and some Project Read strategies during the block. Based on the first focus group, two additional certified teachers were added at the beginning of this intervention cycle to the first-grade intervention block to meet the needs of the large number of Tier 3 students in two of the classes. Because of the reading levels of the students in the two new groups, those two teachers indicated that they used Project Read

exclusively to teach phonemic awareness, encoding, and decoding skills. Mrs. Bennett talked about doing “word work and building sentences” with their Tier 3 students and the other five agreed that this is what they are doing as well.

The second-grade teachers also indicated that they use Project Read exclusively during the intervention block. In second grade, the two groups of Tier 3 students worked on off grade level skills including reviewing consonant sounds and vowel sounds also working on blends. They are each teaching different Project Read lessons, but are “following the scope and sequence that the reading interventionist at BES provided,” according to Mrs. Anderson.

There is consistency throughout early childhood classrooms at BES in the use of two main research-based interventions, Project Read and Fountas and Pinnell LLI, for the thirty-minute intervention block. Each teacher that participated in the focus groups indicated that they were using one of the two research-based interventions and most first and second grade teachers indicated that they used both. These interventions provide the students the skills necessary to make connections during the ELA instruction with the classroom activities.

There were several limitations that became evident during the analysis of the focus groups in regards to the strategies and methods used during the research-based interventions. First, due to the types of the questions that were asked during the focus groups, the teachers did not provide more details about the strategies. This could be attributed to the researcher being an insider and therefore there was an assumption that the researcher understood the terminology that was being discussed. Another reason for this limitation was the time constraints during the focus groups. The focus groups

occurred during normally conducted professional learning communities and in the interest of not taking too much time, the researcher and teachers were very succinct in the responses and conversation. These factors limited the analysis of this area of the data, but the actual instructional strategies and methods used were observed during the data collection and are reported in the quantitative data analysis.

*Student progress.* The teachers indicated that the intervention block is important to provide that individual support for struggling readers. They indicated that they saw progress with their students and one kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Drew stated, “The thirty-minute is useful for the Tier 3’s because it is direct instruction with them.” As the conversation progressed to talking about growth in reading skills, another teacher, Mrs. Langston commented that she sees growth by working one on one and in small groups, especially with letter naming, stating “it’s quite beneficial.” Mrs. Nelson said, “our Tier 3’s are always playing catch up” in reading skills. As the conversation progressed, the researcher posed an additional question about the teachers’ perceptions of student growth in the reading intervention block. The teachers indicated that they felt the intervention block was effective in helping students learn to name their letters, identify letter sounds, and begin to decode words. The teachers’ perception of student progress indicated that they saw results working with these children, but they were working toward a moving target and the distance that the children needed to move was large. They needed to acquire very basic skills, while their peers were continuing to make even greater gains during the whole class instructional time.

The second-grade teachers responded to the question, “how do you think the additional thirty-minute intervention block impacts student reading skills?” with



thoughtful insights. The teachers indicated that working with the children during intervention based on their individual levels students could 1) learn the material on their own instructional level 2) gain confidence in what they were learning because they were successful (“they are more confident in what they do”(Ms. Thomas)), and 3) transfer the knowledge from the Project Read strategies into their reading in the classroom (“the students are using the skills in writing words they have to sound out and when decoding new words to read that follow the patterns in Project Read” (Mrs. Wesley)). In kindergarten, Mrs. Drew indicated that the “Tier 3 children were still working on letter naming, letter sounds, and decoding words, but this is below where the rest of the class is working, they have moved on.” During the final focus group, when the second-grade teachers were asked the same question, all the teachers indicated that the children were making progress learning the rules taught in Project Read but were not necessarily able to transfer the knowledge to the reading and writing occurring in the classroom. Mrs. Thomas indicated “I do feel like they feel confident and they are doing well on the skill because it’s based on where they are. They’re getting good grades on their weekly assessment but not necessarily applying it to the writing.” The teachers planned to make changes on how they make connections with the ELA instruction in the classroom and how to help the children make the connections in writing. Mrs. Thomas also stated that she was proud of the Tier 3 students and was seeing growth with what she’s doing with them but they’re so far below grade level. Other teachers also indicated that although they’re not seeing the strategies and skills used implemented in writing, they are seeing it implemented in the children’s reading skills. One teacher, Mrs. Jennings stated “the

children are using the skills to decode new words, it is taking them time, because they started so low, but they are making gains.”

The teachers who participated in the focus groups indicated that students were making progress using the skills that they were learning, but that the progress that was made took time. When students are in Tier 3, they are already performing lower than their peers in reading and therefore the intensive intervention is important to show student growth. The teachers main goal for this intervention block is to provide students with the tools to make progress. Each grade level indicated that they saw slow progress in the skills, but as Mrs. Thomas stated, “I definitely think it is worth our time” to see the progress students are making.

*Behavioral concerns in small groups.* One first grade teacher, Mrs. Spence indicated that although she did see growth in her students who were pulled out with a different teacher using the Project Read strategies, the students she was working with her classroom were not making much progress. She indicated there were a lot of behavioral concerns that were impeding the group dynamics and Mrs. Townsend indicated the behavioral concerns were occurring in her small group as well saying “a lot of times we don’t even end up getting half of our group work done because I am dealing with one child, sometimes I have to keep moving and leave that child out of the group while they won’t participate” due to the behaviors. Mrs. Spence also noted that she did not see an increase in skills because “there are a lot of different things such as attention issues and language [ESOL students] that are out of my control.” This teacher has two children who are brand new to the English language and she indicated that they “probably need

intervention on the kindergarten level, very basic” and while she provides intervention, they could use instruction in more basic skills than what she was providing.

Although the behavioral concerns were only addressed by two teachers, it is important to analyze because they significantly impacted the amount of instruction that occurred during the intervention in these two classrooms. When looking at these behaviors holistically, it is important to look at the factors that contributed to the student behavior and work to make instructional and classroom management adjustments to ensure that all students in the groups were not adversely impacted by these concerns.

***Appropriateness of instructional strategies.*** The main instructional strategy that was used was explicit direct instruction in letter naming, letter sounds, phonemic awareness, encoding and decoding strategies, and basic comprehension skills. As a part of the small group, direct instruction the teachers also used feedback and mastery of content to ensure student understanding of the concepts being taught. In first grade, teachers used “red word cards to help with memorization of sight words or red words,” while in kindergarten, teachers used more “auditory and kinesthetic strategies to help students sound out letters, words, and syllables.” One teacher, Mrs. Paisley, described her small group and how they use “kinesthetic strategies including tapping the words on their arms, using their fingers to ‘finger spell’ words, and writing the words in the sky, also known as skywriting.” The first-grade teachers who used LLI used small leveled readers and taught the children strategies for finding answers to comprehension questions. For example, one teacher described how she follows the LLI lesson “exactly as it is prescribed” in the manual. Even though she used the level the children were working on, this was an area that could be built on to ensure that the needs of each child were met.

The use of these strategies, as prescribed by the research-based interventions, are important to understand specifically what instructional strategies the teachers were using to help students increase their reading skills. As evidenced in the quantitative data analysis, these strategies were also observed by the researcher and their use provide examples for other teachers to implement in the classroom.

***Application of skills and transference.*** One additional conclusion that could be drawn from the focus groups is that the teachers indicated that they wanted to add more application of the skills in their lessons and continue to monitor the progress of their students. All three grade levels indicated that they felt the children were learning the skills in isolation, but would need more work in applying the skills independently and appropriately when reading and writing. A second-grade teacher made the observation that “I don’t know if we’re seeing the gains that we want to see with them applying what we teach them in intervention and taking it out to their regular classroom in writing and reading.” Because of this observation, they also planned to teach more application skills moving forward to ensure the students are transferring the knowledge of the word work to the writing and reading in the individual classrooms. Further discussion of the transference issue was discussed and moving forward, Mrs. Thomas indicated that they would “add the reading passages that are provided by the research-based curriculum, Project Read, to help with the transference piece.” This is also what was recommended by the reading interventionist, Mrs. Bowen “to help children apply this skills they are taught in isolation to reading passages and increasing oral reading fluency.”

## Interpretation

The data analyzed in this chapter provides a holistic overview of the additional intervention block and the results that have been found during the intervention cycle. In an effort to answer the research questions, quantitative and qualitative data was collected concurrently and analyzed separately. The data was then compared to determine how each source of data directly works to answer the research questions and its implications for reading intervention in the kindergarten through second grade classroom. The interpretation of the data is organized below by research questions.

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

As shown in the quantitative data collected from *AIMSweb Plus* data, kindergarten, first, and second grade students made statistically significant gains during the intervention cycle. The exception to this was on the initial sounds assessment in kindergarten. Because the KG students only gained an average of 2 initial sounds during the intervention cycle, the qualitative data was analyzed and interpreted to determine if there was a reason why students did not make significant gains. The classroom observation data was also reviewed to determine if the teachers were instructing letter sounds. This data found that although the teachers had taught initial sounds of letters in isolation, they had not taught the students the skill of identifying the initial sounds in words and syllables, which is how the students were assessed on the pretest and posttest. In looking at these quantitative data sources a conclusion that can be made is that although the students were instructed in this area of initial sounds during the thirty-minute intervention block they did not have enough exposure to looking at initial sounds

in words and syllables and did not transfer their knowledge during the pretest and posttest. The gains that were made on the *AIMSweb Plus* data were made during an eight-week intervention cycle, and during this time, the students received approximately twenty hours of intervention. The intervention was additional to their daily ELA instruction and provided more intensive, direct instruction to gain these skills. The explicit, direct instructional strategies that were observed during the intervention block for all grades provide specific examples of the types of skills that were taught.

During the focus groups, the second-grade teachers indicated that although students appeared to make gains in the specific skills that were taught in isolation, application of those skills during other instructional times produced mixed results. When looking at the classroom observations and the format of the interventions, it is evident that the classrooms which saw more success with transference of skills (kindergarten and first-grade) provided the intervention in the homeroom classroom, provided by the teacher most familiar with the student, and in an environment where the teacher could reinforce the skills throughout the day for the child to learn how to transfer the skills learned to the reading in the general classroom instruction.

The research data indicates that the thirty-minute intervention block impacts student reading skills positively, yet the data also indicates that there are specific areas that must be addressed in order to make it successful. The focus groups and classroom observations provided examples of the strategies that were successful as well as how the frequency and intensity of the interventions contributed to their success. As evidenced in the focus groups and observations, in order to address the issue of transference of reading

skills from isolation into practice, teachers must provide immediate practice in applying the skills to reading.

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions are used in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

After analyzing the data, including the classroom observations, focus groups, and quantitative data from *AIMSweb Plus*, the researcher found the use of research-based interventions including Project Read and Fountas and Pinnell LLI that provide explicit, direct instruction in letter naming, letter sounds, phonics, phonemic awareness, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension was integral in the gains made by the Tier 3 students. The observations conducted by the researcher reinforced the discussions from the focus groups in which the teachers discussed the research-based interventions that they had done during the intervention block. This discussion along with the observations indicates the teachers use of interventions that provide foundational skills for reading where the teacher can customize the lesson focus based on the needs of the students is essential to increase skills. By using Project Read, teachers could teach specific phonics and phonemic awareness skills in which the student participants were weak and fill the gaps the Tier 3 students had. The first-grade teachers who used LLI were able to target specific areas in reading fluency and comprehension to increase student skills as needed. The researcher found the availability of multiple research-based interventions for the teachers to use during the intervention cycle was important to meet the needs of the individual students.

*RQ3: What instructional strategies are used during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

As the data from the focus groups and observations was analyzed, the main instructional strategies that were observed by the researcher included explicit, direct instruction, scaffolding, visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile strategies. Specifically, the teachers used multiple types of these strategies during the same lessons to scaffold the instruction. The use of leveled readers, letter naming cards, letter sound cards, and auditory activities were also used during instruction. Each of these instructional strategies and materials provided the teacher with multiple ways to address the individual needs of the students while using multi-sensory methods to provide students with a way to be able to recall the information and apply it to reading. The focus groups indicated that the teachers used these instructional strategies and that they were useful for students to ensure they mastered the reading skills.

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

The perceptions of teachers about the intervention block became very evident during the focus groups. As the teachers reflected on the intervention block, four teachers specifically felt that although the additional time was beneficial for Tier 3 students, having the time scheduled for them and not connected to the ELA block, limited how they worked with the students in their classroom. As previously discussed, one group of teachers indicated that they felt the intervention block was extremely important because it provided them time to instruct the students on their level and provide appropriate instructional strategies and content. The researcher found even though there were mixed feelings on the intervention block, as evidenced in the quantitative data, students reading skills were positively impacted. It is also evident that the behavior of some of the Tier 3



students impacted the amount of instruction that those children received and in turn, impacted the perception of the effectiveness of the additional thirty-minute block. Interestingly, even with those behavioral concerns, the students showed growth on the post-test *AIMSweb Plus* data indicating that the strategies being used were helpful for all students and provided multiple ways to meet the needs of the learners.

Each of the research questions guided the data collection in this study. As the data shows, the students made gains during this short intervention cycle and the strategies that were provided to students played an integral part in this growth. As Sharp et al. (2015) found the implementation of interventions with fidelity as well as the use of multiple instructional strategies is essential in providing Tier 3 interventions to students. The teacher participants in this study provided consistent, intentional implementation of the research-based interventions. The teachers' perceptions were equally important in their overall success of providing the Tier 3 interventions. Fox (2012) found in her research that teachers were comfortable in providing interventions and the teachers at BES also indicated that they were comfortable in systematically providing intervention to students in their classrooms.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected in order to answer the research questions and more importantly, the benefits of an additional thirty-minute intervention block. The students identified for this study began the year performing significantly below their peers in reading skills and using the universal screening were identified as Tier 3. Since this was the case, they were provided with intensive daily intervention in reading. As the data was analyzed concurrently, the qualitative data

collected confirms the results from the quantitative data that these students made gains during the intervention cycle and the additional intervention block positively impacted their reading skills. However, the teachers also indicated that there were some concerns about the inflexible scheduling, the timing of the interventions, transference of skills, as well as behavioral concerns in some groups.

Although the gains that were made by the second-grade students were smaller than the kindergarten and first-grade students, it is important to note that the sample size was smaller and there were nine students with other factors that could account for some of the slower progress. These factors include the factor that some kindergarten students in tier 3 did not have prior exposure to instruction and therefore needed some additional support to master the skills, once they had this support, they were back on target for being on grade level. When moving to first and second grade, the teachers and administrators at BES have already identified students who significantly struggle and many have been evaluated for other learning concerns.

After the implementation of the intervention block at BES, there are several considerations that will be useful in the future practice of RtI at BES and for other schools to consider. As the data was analyzed, areas for future research both in schools as action research and through educational research developed. Chapter five will provide a summary of this research project and provide recommendations for further implementation of the thirty-minute intervention block as well as future research in the area of RtI.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a review of the purpose of this study along with the research questions that were addressed by the study. Relevant literature about RtI and reading skills is reviewed the methodology is briefly outlined. An important review of social justice and the implications and recommendations for practice regarding RtI and reading interventions for students is discussed as well. The findings of this research study are examined in regards to the implications of the results on current and future practice for early childhood teachers. The researcher, as an insider in this process, has been a curriculum leader at the school where the data was collected, and the implications for the future practice as a curriculum leader are examined. Finally, the research findings have provided insight into best practices in RtI and reading intervention, but leave other areas to be examined. Areas for future research are briefly discussed.

BES is a suburban elementary school that has students from many diverse backgrounds. The school has a tradition of excellence in academics and consistently scores above the district average on state and local assessments. As the student body has become more diverse, the population that is being served has changed. There are more students in need of academic support than in several previous years. According to the 2017 SC Ready results for BES, 26.6 percent of students in the third through fifth grade did not meet expectations in English Language Arts. Additionally, on the universal

screening of kindergarten to second grade students, 20% of students scored on Tier 3, meaning they are significantly below grade level in reading skills. In order to have students reading on grade level by the end of third grade, early childhood reading deficits must be addressed. According to the Read to Succeed Act 2016, students must read on grade level by the end of third grade. Therefore, the students' reading achievement level is the problem of practice.

The purpose of this action research study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an additional daily, thirty-minute RtI intervention block at BES. The specific focus of the intervention block is on reading skills, as distinct from other academic skills. The impact of an additional thirty-minute RtI block was examined in relation to student reading skills. This research study also examined what types of instructional strategies and research-based interventions were used in reading for early childhood students. Finally, the perceptions of teachers about the thirty-minute intervention block were evaluated to look at teacher perception on the effect of student reading skills.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions reflect this study as stated in the stated Problem of Practice:

*RQ1: How does an additional thirty-minute RtI block everyday impact student reading skills?*

*RQ2: What types of research-based interventions do teachers use in increasing reading skills in kindergarten through second grade students?*

*RQ3: What instructional strategies do teachers use during the additional thirty-minute intervention block?*

*RQ4: How do teachers perceive the additional thirty-minute intervention block and its effect on student reading skills?*

## **Review of Literature**

Although RtI is a new initiative that was introduced with the reauthorization of ESEA in 2002, the concept of reading intervention is not new (Vaughn & Klingner, 2007). Because RtI is a relatively new subject in the field of education and in educational research, the literature that was reviewed on RtI is recent and relevant for educators. Providing reading intervention on basic reading skills has its roots in essentialism and provides a basic approach to reading instruction and intervention as Deno's cascade model suggests (Bagley, 1939; Buffum et al., 2009). As Torgesen (2004) discusses reading intervention, he suggests that research about intervention should examine instructional methods that are effective in helping children learn the skills and knowledge that is needed to become a good reader. Even though researchers have observed that "remedial reading generally is not very effective in making children more literate," by providing evidence-based research practices in instruction, teachers can assist children who have reading difficulties (Greenwood, Kamps, Terry, & Linebarger, 2007, p. 73). Sharp et al. (2015) evaluated the relationship of RtI implementation and reading achievement and found several implications for practice in the implementation of RtI. "Results suggest that Tier 3 implementation integrity significantly and positively predicts student reading performance" (Sharp et al., 2015, p. 158). As Fox (2012) found, the teacher participants felt that they could provide the interventions with efficacy to address the individual needs of the Tier 3 students.

Foorman et al. (2007) and Torgesen (2004) propose the use of explicit, direct instruction in the fundamentals of reading including phonemic awareness, phonemic decoding, fluency, text processing, and comprehension text for reading intervention. Moving from whole group instruction in the classroom to the thirty-minute intervention block, it is important that teachers provide interventions that “involve highly explicit, scaffolded instruction that focuses on a targeted set of foundational reading skills, provides frequent opportunities for responding, and matches student need” (Sharp et al., 2015, p. 158). As an intervention cycle is implemented, individual student assessment in the form of pre-and post-test data and continuous progress monitoring validate the intervention process and provide the teacher with valuable data on student progress (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). To ensure the successful implementation of the thirty-minute intervention block as required by the *SC Read to Succeed Act*, best practices which emerged as themes during the literature review were examined as the intervention was implemented. These themes included reading skills, student readiness skills, instructional and intervention practices, assessment, and other patterns. The literature reviewed provided valuable information in planning for implementation of the intervention cycle and areas in which to gather more information.

### **Review of Methodology**

This research study was conducted at BES, a large elementary school in an urban school district in SC. The researcher used a convenience sample including the kindergarten, first, and second grade students at BES. Approximately 420 students in these grades were screened and the 80 students who scored Tier 3 in the fall universal screening were provided classroom-based interventions during the new thirty-minute

intervention block by a certified teacher. There were 21 teachers who participated in this study, all of whom were certified in early childhood education, the majority had master's degrees, and had an average of 14.5 years of experience.

A concurrent mixed methods approach was used to collect and analyze the data. Quantitative data was collected using AIMSweb Plus, a product of Pearson, Inc. which is used as a universal screening tool for reading. The students who were identified in need of Tier 3 reading intervention were given a pre-test, using the progress monitoring tools available in AIMSweb Plus, at the beginning of the intervention cycle, and given a posttest using another progress monitoring probe at the end of the intervention cycle. Another form of quantitative data, teacher observations, was collected by the researcher to provide information about the instructional strategies that were used by teachers during classroom intervention.

The teachers who participated in the study also participated in semi-structured focus groups. Questions were developed by the researcher to guide the conversation and provide insight into the intervention block and the teachers' perceptions of the intervention process. Each of these data collection instruments was collected concurrently and analyzed to answer the research questions.

The teachers' use of *Project Read* and *LLI* for the research-based interventions addressed these fundamental reading skills. As an elementary school, with students who begin attending in kindergarten, it was difficult to directly address the student readiness skills that the literature recommends. The use of pre-test data, using the AIMSweb Plus universal screening, provided the kindergarten teachers with rapid data to know the areas of concern for students and begin to remediate those skills. The instructional strategies

and intervention practices were observed throughout the data collection and the focus groups provided insight on the teacher's perceptions, practices and concerns about the intervention block.

### **Review of Findings**

The researcher looked to answer the research questions through the data that was collected during the intervention cycle. The quantitative data consisted of AIMSweb Plus pre-test and posttest data and the classroom observations. The qualitative data included the six focus groups conducted with the teachers. These sources provided data to analyze in order to answer the research questions.

The pre-test and post-test data from AIMSweb Plus showed growth for the Tier 3 students in K-2 who received Tier 3 interventions. The kindergarten students grew in the areas of letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, and initial sounds, although the growth in initial sounds was not as significant. This could be attributed to a difference in the way that students were taught to identify initial sounds and the way in which it was assessed. The first grade and second grade students grew in oral reading fluency during the intervention cycle.

As the observation data was analyzed, the data was categorized into three areas including the research-based intervention focus and grouping, the materials used during intervention, and the instructional strategies that were used during the intervention. All of the teachers used explicit, direct instructional strategies during the intervention block and the content was differentiated based upon the needs of the students in the groups. The use of the two research-based interventions, Project Read and Fountas and Pinnell LLI, was observed and the teachers used varying instructional strategies to assist the students



in learning the basic reading skills. The students received an average of twenty hours of intervention during the cycle and this additional support using strategies that addressed multiple modalities of learning was integral in the success of the intervention.

Based on the needs of the students in each classroom, the teachers used either *Project Read* or *Fountas and Pinnell LLI* as the research-based intervention that was implemented during the intervention cycle. Each of these programs provided instruction in the fundamental reading skills identified by the FCRR (2016). *Project Read* provided a systematic approach to teaching phonics and phonemic awareness including encoding and decoding skills. The teachers employed a variety of instructional strategies using explicit, direct instruction in visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile strategies that allowed the students multiple ways to learn the skills. *Fountas and Pinnell LLI* provided teachers a program to systematically teach fluency and comprehension strategies to students who had deficits in those areas of reading.

The focus groups were analyzed and two main themes emerged, organization and structure of the intervention block and teaching and learning in the intervention block. Several patterns emerged during the discussions that are important to address when looking at teachers perceptions of the additional thirty-minute intervention block. Under the first theme, the organization and structure of the intervention block, the required duration of the intervention for students, the inflexible scheduling of the intervention, the suitability of the format of intervention, and the teachers' perceptions of intervention were addressed by the teachers. The second theme that emerged, teaching and learning in the intervention block, included patterns such as the appropriateness of research-based interventions for student growth, the appropriateness of instructional strategies, and the

application of skills and transference. Each of the themes and subsequent patterns that emerged from the focus groups provide insight on the intervention block and how it can effectively be integrated into the classroom setting and the impact on student reading skills.

**Social justice issues.** An integral part of educational research is advocating for social justice. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) content “by generating data and evidence to support decisions and positions you take as an educator, you help reform classrooms and schools, which results in the promotion of social justice” (p. 56). The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the implementation of an additional thirty-minute reading intervention block as it was required by state mandate. When planning for this research study, the researcher focused on three main areas to address social justice issues. First, ensuring that the needs of all groups of students at BES were being met in the classroom through instructional practices. Since SSD is an urban school district, with students from all SES, races, and ethnicities, there has been a focus on closing the academic achievement gap for students who are low performing. Although BES has a tradition of academic excellence, earning state awards for an absolute rating on state assessments, the growth rating, is an area of focus. Second, addressing the need for teachers to provide appropriate intervention for students performing below grade level. By addressing the academic needs of the low-performing students, the researcher hoped to increase the growth for all the students. Third, looking at the intervention process as an opportunity to limit over-identification for students placed in special education. The implementation of RtI with fidelity and providing the appropriate interventions provided teachers with a way to measure individual student growth or lack thereof. This provided teachers at BES

another data source to monitor and use as evidence to support student achievement in reading or the need for additional evaluation and support services.

As this research project progressed, the concept of equity of instruction also became essential. Before RtI, often in response to guidelines provided by state and federal agencies, educators would wait for a child to fail, looking for a discrepancy in academic performance and ability levels, before they would provide assistance for children (Buffum et al., 2009). Providing research-based interventions and monitoring progress through an RtI model in the general education classroom provided a more equitable approach to meeting the needs of learners, focusing on the results of the intervention. In order to provide an equitable education for all children in the classroom, the needs of the individual learners must be addressed. This research provides a plan for implementing a process in the K-2 classroom and instructional strategies that are useful for many different learners.

Addressing the social justice issues that are outlined provided an equitable learning environment for all students at BES. As educators, it is imperative that we meet the needs of all learners in the classroom and as the needs of our students change, educators must constantly re-evaluate the methods in which we instruct students. Providing high-quality instruction in reading is essential to ensuring that students are provided with the foundational reading skills necessary to be successful in their academic careers and in the future, meeting the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.

### **The Researcher as Curriculum Leader**

At BES, the idea of community is truly embraced by the faculty and staff, the classrooms, and the school. The researcher believes that as an administrator, a shared

vision should be developed and shared with the staff, faculty, and other stakeholders at our schools. Sharing this vision will create a ‘community of mind’ and allow teachers to engage in meaningful instructional practices with our students and for us to become transformational leaders. Valle (1999) states, “by verbalizing a focused vision leaders contribute to the integration of activities” (p. 117). “Leadership could well be considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform” (Marzano, as stated by Hall, Child’s-Bowen, Cunningham-Morris, Pijardo, Simeral, 2016, p. 2). Shores and Chester (2009) discuss the use of RtI as a “vehicle for school improvement” (p. 160). As an administrator, after collaborating with the administrative team sharing a vision for BES, it is important to outline the work that must take place in order for the vision to become action. According to Shores and Chester (2009), there are specific features of system change and sustainability that must be considered for programs to lend itself to school improvement. As this new thirty-minute intervention block is implemented in future years, it will be important to understand the system and ensure that the entire RtI process is implemented with fidelity.

As an administrator, a focus of leadership should be on curriculum and instruction. According to Hall et al. (2016), “student performance expectations rest squarely on the shoulders of the principal” (p. 2). It is the researcher’s belief that in an era of accountability, school administrators are charged with ensuring that all students are provided with a high quality, effective, and appropriate education. In the researcher’s current leadership experience, this can be accomplished using the practice of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). At BES, this PLC time is where the leadership team discuss ideas, share data, and plan for instruction with the grade level teams. This time is

a 'sacred time' for teachers and administrators, and the weekly meetings are not cancelled as it is a time for all teachers to be involved in the instructional planning process and to create a shared vision for the students. As Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2009) discuss in Pyramid Response to Intervention, PLCs help reculture your school by laying a foundation for a culture of learning, a collaborative culture, and a focus on results (pp. 47-53). The researcher and administrative team truly embrace themselves as a community of learners, creating a "schoolwide focus on learning" and thus creating a "culture of collective responsibility" (Buffum et al., 2009, pp. 50-51).

Another core belief of the researcher is that it is important to use the experiences and expertise of all staff members in the building. David DeMatthews (2014) states, "Instructional leadership is necessary to set the direction, organize teachers and staff, and align curricula to standards; however, these efforts require a distributed approach to leadership because a principal does not typically possess sufficient knowledge, skill, time, and experience" (p. 195). As leaders, it is important to always strive to build the leadership capacity of the staff at your school. According to Hall et al. (2016), "teacher leaders exert quite a bit of influence over their peers and other school leaders, illustrating the simultaneous top-down, bottom-up nature of change" (p. 11). At BES, teacher leaders function at the core of the curriculum and instruction vision. There are multiple groups of teachers who participate in PLC's that constantly reevaluate the instructional processes that occur.

Although there is significant value in being a transformational leader, there is a time, place, and need for situational leadership, and as Hersey and Blanchard (2016) state "A good leader will be able to adapt her or his leadership to the goals or objectives to be

accomplished” (p. xx) In the researcher’s leadership experience, there have been times where this style of leadership has been implemented to meet immediate goals that had to be accomplished. It is the skill of self-awareness as part of emotional intelligence discussed by Goleman (2001) that makes this adaption possible.

### **Action Plan for Future Practice**

As a curriculum leader at BES, the researcher sought to investigate the outcomes of implementing an additional thirty-minute intervention block and its impact on student reading skills, using the RtI process. Throughout the research process, the researcher has taken a reflective stance on the project. The RtI process itself requires continual reflection on the process, the interventions that are implemented, and the results of the interventions, focusing on results for students (Buffum et al., 2009). High performing principals and curriculum leaders also engage in supervising, monitoring and evaluating school practices that impact their students learning (Blase, Blase, & Phillips, 2010; Hall et al., 2016; Sullivan & Glanz, 2009). The reflection process impacted this study as well as how the researcher will implement an action plan following the results of the study at BES.

**Reflection process.** There are several areas that were reflected upon during and after this action research project. First, it was important to reflect upon the RtI process and procedures to ensure that the teachers and interventionists were provided with the appropriate training and understanding of the new intervention block. This reflection occurred using feedback from PLCs and after the various trainings are delivered and reflected upon by the reading interventionist and researcher. The feedback given as well

as observational notes recorded by the researcher will continue to be reviewed and future adjustments in implementation of the thirty-minute intervention block will be made.

Second, the actual implementation of the interventions during the intervention block was reflected upon. During PLC's and individual teacher conferences, the researcher conferred with the participating teachers about the intervention needs of the students in the classes. The baseline data and progress monitoring data was also reviewed and changes were implemented during the next intervention cycle.

Finally, the growth of students from the beginning of the implementation until the end of the cycle was reflected upon and future changes were made. The *AIMSweb Plus* data was also looked at by interventions provided, growth attained, and most importantly, to answer the research questions.

During the reflection process, the researcher also collaborated through peer review of the data both within the process of this project and at the school level. After reflecting on this project, the researcher has shared some of the results with the teachers at BES and plans to share the entire study with the teachers at the end of the school year in order to plan for the next school year. The data will also be shared with other school administrators at BES to help plan for the next school year in creating a master schedule and professional development that will be offered. Other schools may want to use this research and data to plan for effective intervention blocks and learn from the process at BES.

Another aspect to reflect upon is to measure whether or not the new state mandate in regards to the Read to Succeed Act (2016) is serving its intended purpose. By sharing the results with other stakeholders, the impact of the intervention block will be discussed

and the process can be improved. According to Mertler (2014), “sharing the results-either formally or informally- is the real activity that helps bridge the divide between research and application” (p. 245).

**Implications for future practice for curriculum leaders.** As an administrator at BES, the researcher’s primary role was to oversee curriculum, instruction, PLCs, and RtI. Action research, as opposed to traditional research, allows the researcher to participate in the study and to conduct “systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (Mertler, 2014, p. 4). Shores and Chester (2009) note that many different personnel should be involved in developing systematic changes and that “one person or department in a school district or building cannot bring about this type of change on his or her own” (p. 161). Implementing this type of systemic change requires a significant change of mindset for those involved (Shores & Chester, 2009, p. 161).

As research suggests, the building administrators have a large impact on the success of new programs in schools (Shores & Chester, 2009, p.163). Along with Marzano, Demeter studied schools that are innovative and noted

Building principals are key figures in the innovation process. Where they are both aware of and sympathetic to an innovation, it tends to prosper. Where they are ignorant of its existence, or apathetic, if not hostile, it tends to remain outside the bloodstream of the school (as cited in Shores & Chester, 2009, p. 163).

Therefore, as a school-based administrator and curriculum leader, it is vital that they work to ensure there is buy-in from the teachers. It is also very helpful to use teacher leaders in the process of implementing this new program. Using these teacher leaders can help in creating a culture of acceptance with teachers who may be resistant to change.



In order to implement an effective intervention block, there are several areas that need to be addressed in order to ensure teacher understanding of the process.

One of the main areas in which the curriculum leader can support the implementation of the thirty-minute intervention block is to provide a master schedule that not only meets the state mandated requirements of an intervention block, but is also scheduled at a time where each grade level feels it would be most useful. The results of this project show that the teachers' felt that at times having a thirty-minute intervention block that was not connected to their ELA block segmented the time and was not as helpful. The teachers did like having the time designated to work with the Tier 3 children, but indicated that it would be most beneficial added onto the ELA block as a whole. This has already been addressed and changes have been made to the master schedule for the next school year. Another aspect of scheduling that can be addressed is the format of the intervention. Each school should evaluate how the students can best be served, providing explicit, direct instruction on specific skills in isolation, and then the transference of the skills to the overall concepts taught during the whole-group instruction in the classroom.

Teachers also need to be trained to implement the research-based interventions with fidelity that will be used during the intervention block. An important outcome in this research study was the importance of using research-based interventions that use explicit, direct instruction in fundamental reading skills. Also, providing training for teachers to implement VKAT strategies for reading intervention with early childhood students is important. Using a reading interventionist, reading coach, or other instructional leader at a school to conduct trainings is useful in creating a shared sense of commitment to the implementation of the intervention block.

Another area for practice would be to ensure teachers are familiar with the use of the data that the school uses to determine which students need intensive interventions. This training can provide teachers with an understanding of the baseline data that is collected through *AIMSweb Plus* or other universal screening tool and how the data correlates to the instructional and intervention needs of the students.

Within PLCs, the RtI process and procedures will need to be presented to the teachers. This process includes addressing the misconception that intervention and progress monitoring are the same. As the curriculum leader, it is important to provide training on the available intervention programs that can be used to meet the instructional needs of the students.

As the interventions are implemented, the curriculum leader should observe classroom implementation of interventions, facilitate data driven discussions through the use of PLC's, schedule and conduct professional development, and disaggregate *AIMSweb Plus* data or other data collection tools. I will provide opportunities for teachers to be trained to provide interventions based upon individual students' baseline data. As teachers implement the interventions, AIMSweb data will be collected weekly and biweekly for review. As the administrator and administrator, I review the data along with intervention plans to ensure that the students are receiving interventions that are appropriately matched with their need. After implementing the interventions, students will be given a second baseline assessment to measure growth.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The concept of RtI is relatively new in the area of educational research. As noted in the literature review, there are not many studies that provide exemplars in the

implementation of RtI, or more specifically, an additional intervention block. As this research was conducted and the data analyzed, several additional areas evolved that would provide excellent areas for future research in the implementation of an RtI block.

As the focus groups were conducted, it became evident that teacher's perceptions of the intervention block are important to the overall effectiveness of the intervention. Conducting a more in-depth study on teacher's perceptions using qualitative methods would provide excellent data on the effectiveness. Fox (2012) conducted research on this topic and found that teachers were comfortable in providing interventions in their classrooms, and this study confirmed this as well. The areas that teachers found least favorable were the inflexibility of the scheduling as well as the duration of the intervention. More information would be helpful in providing best practices for the scheduling of an RtI block and how it affects teacher's perceptions.

Another area that could be studied would be using different assessment tools, other than AIMSweb Plus, to look at student growth in reading skills after an intervention cycle. *AIMSweb* or *AIMSweb Plus* has been used at BES for five years and the consistency of the data has provided excellent information for teachers and administrators to plan for instruction. There are many other valuable assessment tools that could be used to measure student growth in areas such as letter naming fluency, letter word sound fluency, initial sounds, and oral reading fluency. The use of another tool to compare the results would be beneficial in validating the results of this study.

The teachers also talked about the transference of skills that were taught in isolation during the intervention block. Looking at how to effectively teach students to transfer the skills learned to reading and writing would provide additional support for

teacher practice. One way this could be researched would be to replicate the current study, changing the scheduling of the intervention to connect with the ELA block to see if the teacher was able to help students transfer the skills to the tier one, general instruction, in the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an additional thirty-minute intervention block as it was implemented at BES. Providing research-based interventions to students performing below grade level was important to ensure that students were provided instruction in their areas of weakness. It was also important to close these gaps in reading before the students get to third grade and face the possibility of retention, as mandated by the SC Read to Succeed Act 284 (SCDE, 2016). The implementation of this intervention block and understanding the impact of the instructional strategies, teacher's perceptions when providing the interventions, and if the interventions implemented were effective is important for future instructional practices, both within BES and in other schools. This study found that the students in K-2 made statistically significant gains in the areas of reading that were measure and there were multiple patterns that contributed to the success of the intervention including the use of specific research-based interventions, instructional strategies that allowed students to use multiple modalities in learning, and teachers who implemented the interventions with fidelity as observed by the researcher. The recommendations for future practice in this chapter provide additional areas to be explored for the instructional leaders at schools and the recommendations for future research provide teacher researchers additional considerations when conducting action research.

As there has been a shift from managerial leadership for administrators to instructional leaders, a shift must be made to provide ways that will have the “maximum impact on student achievement” and use “data to inform instructional decisions” (Blase et al., 2010, p.5). The implementation of systematic programs in the school to address the needs of students is critical. As stated in chapter one, the importance of a student’s reading skills and its correlation to his/her overall academic success cannot be overstated and “the primary grades are critical developmental years for children. In order to form a strong educational foundation, it is imperative that basic fundamental skills are fostered early in young children’s lives” (Luther, 2012, p. 36). This study provides the impetus to implement intervention practices with fidelity in order to have the greatest impact, not only on student achievement, but individual student success.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### Implementation of a RtI Block

##### **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

You are being asked to volunteer for a research study conducted by Amy Roberts McGlohorn. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at the University of South Carolina. The purpose of this study is to determine how the additional thirty-minute intervention block effects students' reading skills. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an early childhood teacher.

This study is being done at Brennen Elementary School and will involve approximately 20 volunteers. This form explains what you will be asked to do, if you decide to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask questions before you make a decision about participating.

##### **PROCEDURES:**

If you agree to be in this study, the following will happen:

1. You will be asked to participate in a focus group about your classroom intervention block. This will be conducted during the two PLCs in September and October.
2. The researchers will audio record the focus group in order to ensure the details that you provide are accurately capture.
3. You will be asked to administer the AIMSweb Plus universal screening.
4. Each week, you will instruct your Tier 2 and Tier 3 students using research-based interventions during the thirty-minute intervention block. You will be asked to fill out the intervention plan form and provide a copy to the researcher each week during PLC.
5. Weekly or biweekly, you will be asked to administer the AIMSweb Plus progress monitoring probes to your Tier 3 or Tier 2 students, respectively.
6. The researcher will conduct classroom observations during the intervention cycle (8 weeks).

##### **DURATION:**

Participation in the study will take about 8 weeks during the fall semester.

##### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:**

Focus Groups:

Others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. The researchers cannot guarantee what you say will remain completely private, but

the researchers will ask that you, and all other group members, respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

**Classroom Observations:**

The researcher will observe your classroom at least one time during the intervention cycle. The researcher will use secure, coded information to ensure that your name is not documented in the findings or results to provide anonymity.

**BENEFITS:**

Taking part in this study is not likely to benefit you personally. However, this research may help researchers understand if the additional thirty-minute intervention block provides students with an increased understanding of foundational reading skills. It will also provide us with information on the most effective intervention strategies for working with Tier 2 and Tier 3 students.

**COSTS:**

There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

**PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS:**

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS:**

Unless required by law, information that is obtained in connection with this research study will remain confidential. Any information disclosed would be with your express written permission. Study information will be securely stored in locked files and on password-protected computers. Results of this research study may be published or presented at seminars; however, the report(s) or presentation(s) will not include your name or other identifying information about you.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop participating at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please call or email the principal investigator listed on this form.

I have been given a chance to ask questions about this research study. These questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have any more questions about my participation in this study, or a study related injury, I am to contact Amy Roberts McGlohorn at \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

If you wish to participate, you should sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject / Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

K, 1, & 2 OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS



Date:	Time:
Teacher:	School:
Grade:	Subject:
<p>1. Learning objective(s) for the lesson Objective(s):</p>	
<p>2. Learning objective(s) is evident to the students  <input type="checkbox"/> Evident                      <input type="checkbox"/> Not evident                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>3. Learning objective(s) on target for grade-level standards  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>4. Identify grouping format  <input type="checkbox"/> Whole group                      <input type="checkbox"/> Small group                      <input type="checkbox"/> Paired                      <input type="checkbox"/> Individual</p>	
<p>5. Determine levels of class engagement  <input type="checkbox"/> Highly engaged—Most students are authentically engaged.  <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed—Students are willingly compliant and ritually engaged.  <input type="checkbox"/> Not engaged—Many students are not participating in the assigned task or substituting another activity.</p>	
<p>6. Classroom Environment</p>	
<p>6a. Classroom behavior management system effectively creates a positive learning environment.  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>6b. Classroom arrangement is conducive to whole group instruction and reading centers (teacher-led center and independent student centers).  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>6c. Daily class schedule is posted and indicates a minimum of 90 minutes for reading instruction that includes whole-group instruction, reading centers, and additional time for intensive intervention.  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>6d. Classroom displays of current student work and curriculum material reflect the skills and concepts taught.  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>6e. Teacher's interactions with students reflect warmth, encouragement, and enthusiasm.  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>7. Instructional Materials</p>	
<p>7a. Teacher and student program materials are accessible and organized (e.g., teachers' guides, big books, puppets, letter-sound cards, pre-decodable and decodable books, vocabulary word lists, charts, student readers, and sufficient selection of leveled texts).  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	
<p>7b. Teacher uses a variety of resources during reading instruction (e.g., wipe-off boards, overhead projectors, computers, listening centers, letter tiles).  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine</p>	

<b>8. Teacher Instruction</b>		
<b>8a.</b> Teacher provides appropriate and clear instruction for all students including students at risk, English Language Learners, and students with special needs.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8b.</b> Teacher implements program components with fidelity.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8c.</b> Teacher differentiates instruction according to student needs based on assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8d.</b> Teacher uses explicit instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8e.</b> Teacher scaffolds instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8f.</b> Teacher provides ample opportunities for students to practice and receive corrective and positive feedback.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8g.</b> Pacing is appropriate during whole-group and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8h.</b> Transitions are smooth and quick between whole-group instruction and reading centers.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8i.</b> Evidence exists that reading routines and procedures are familiar to the students.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8j.</b> Teacher fosters active student engagement and motivation to learn.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9. Reading Centers</b>		
<b>9a.</b> A center management system indicating flexible student placement and group size is evident.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9b.</b> Reading centers are clearly designed, labeled, and defined.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9c.</b> At the teacher-led center, reading instruction is based on student assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9d.</b> At student centers, students are working on activities that directly build reading skills.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9e.</b> Students remain academically engaged during student centers and independent work.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10. Concepts of Print</b>		
<b>10a.</b> Teacher identifies parts of a book (e.g., front, back, title page), print on a page and how it is organized (e.g., top to bottom, left to right).		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10b.</b> Teacher demonstrates how print matches speech and written words are separated by spaces.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>10c.</b> Teacher explains <b>simple punctuation</b> rules (e.g., first-letter capitalization, ending punctuation).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11. Phonological/Phonemic Awareness</b>			
<b>11a.</b> Teacher uses <b>oral activities</b> that include <b>rhyming, word play, and manipulation</b> of words, syllables, and sounds.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11b.</b> Teacher uses <b>engaging activities and materials</b> to support instruction (e.g., hand motions, clapping, puppets, Elkonin boxes, other manipulatives to represent sounds).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11c.</b> Teacher <b>clearly and accurately pronounces</b> individual sounds that are the focus of the lesson with enough volume for students to hear.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12. Phonics</b>			
<b>12a.</b> Teacher uses <b>manipulatives</b> , such as letter tiles and Elkonin boxes, to help make the connection between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters). (Second semester)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12b.</b> Teacher uses <b>visual aids</b> (e.g., alphabet cards, letter-sound cards, word cards) as designed by the program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12c.</b> Teacher introduces an <b>explicit decoding strategy to sound and blend</b> simple words.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12d.</b> Teacher introduces and reviews <b>common irregular words</b> (e.g., was, to, the) frequently.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13. Fluency</b>			
<b>13a.</b> Teacher models <b>fluent reading (i.e., speed, accuracy, and prosody)</b> during read-aloud and shared reading activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13b.</b> Teacher and students are academically engaged in <b>shared reading</b> activities (e.g., big books, choral reading, charts, poems, songs).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13c.</b> <b>Pre-reading</b> activities (e.g., letter naming, letter sound, shared reading, pre-decodable and decodable books) are taking place in <b>small groups</b> with the teacher providing immediate <b>scaffolded feedback</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14. Vocabulary</b>			
<b>14a.</b> Teacher <b>contextualizes unfamiliar words</b> in stories read orally to students by using <b>student-friendly explanations</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14b.</b> Explicit <b>vocabulary instruction</b> is purposeful and ongoing as evidenced by teacher providing lists of vocabulary words, word walls, concrete examples, and other resources to determine the meanings of words.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>14c. Teacher categorizes key vocabulary and identifies important features.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14d. Teacher relates new vocabulary to prior knowledge through questioning and other instructional activities.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14e. Students are actively involved with thinking about and using words in multiple contexts.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>15. Comprehension</b>		
<b>15a. Teacher models and encourages students to make predictions about text content using pictures, background knowledge, and text features (e.g., title, subheading, captions, illustrations).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>15b. Teacher models and encourages students to use prior knowledge and supporting details from text to make connections with the reading selection.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>15c. Teacher models and encourages students to retell the main idea, identify supporting details (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, how), and arrange events in sequence.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>15d. Teacher models and encourages students to determine whether a reading selection is fact or fiction and to identify the author's purpose.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

Date:	Time:		
Teacher:	School:		
Grade:	Subject:		
<b>1. Learning objective(s) for lesson</b>			
Objective(s):			
<b>2. Learning objective(s) is evident to the students</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Evident	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>3. Learning objective(s) on target for grade-level standards</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>4. Identify grouping format</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Whole group	<input type="checkbox"/> Small group	<input type="checkbox"/> Paired	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual
<b>5. Determine level of class engagement</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Highly engaged—Most students are authentically engaged.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Well managed—Students are willingly compliant and ritually engaged.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not engaged—Many students are not participating in the assigned task or substituting another activity.			
<b>6. Classroom Environment</b>			
<b>6a. Classroom behavior management system effectively creates a positive learning environment.</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>6b. Classroom arrangement is conducive to whole group instruction and reading centers (teacher-led center and independent student centers).</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>6c. Daily class schedule is posted and indicates a minimum of 90 minutes for reading instruction that includes whole-group instruction, reading centers, and additional time for intensive intervention.</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>6d. Classroom displays of current student work and curriculum material reflect the skills and concepts taught.</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>6e. Teacher's interactions with students reflect warmth, encouragement, and enthusiasm.</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>7. Instructional Materials</b>			
<b>7a. Teacher and student program materials are accessible and organized (e.g., teachers' guides, big books, puppets, letter-sound cards, pre-decodable and decodable books, vocabulary word lists, charts, student readers, and sufficient selection of leveled texts).</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	
<b>7b. Teacher uses a variety of resources during reading instruction (e.g., wipe-off boards, overhead projectors, computers, listening centers, letter tiles).</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine	

<b>8. Teacher Instruction</b>		
<b>8a.</b> Teacher provides appropriate and clear instruction for all students including students at risk, English language learners, and students with special needs.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8b.</b> Teacher implements program components with fidelity.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8c.</b> Teacher differentiates instruction according to student needs based on assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8d.</b> Teacher uses explicit instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8e.</b> Teacher scaffolds instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8f.</b> Teacher provides ample opportunities for students to practice and receive corrective and positive feedback.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8g.</b> Pacing is appropriate during whole-group and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8h.</b> Transitions are smooth and quick between whole-group instruction and reading centers.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8i.</b> Evidence exists that reading routines and procedures are familiar to the students.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8j.</b> Teacher fosters active student engagement and motivation to learn.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9. Reading Centers</b>		
<b>9a.</b> A center management system indicating flexible student placement and group size is evident.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9b.</b> Reading centers are clearly designed, labeled, and defined.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9c.</b> At the teacher-led center, reading instruction is based on student assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9d.</b> At student centers, students are working on activities that directly build reading skills.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9e.</b> Students remain academically engaged during student centers and independent work.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10. Phonological/Phonemic Awareness</b>		
<b>10a.</b> Teacher uses oral activities that include segmenting, blending, and manipulation of sounds in words.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>10b.</b> Teacher uses <b>engaging activities and materials</b> to support instruction (e.g., hand motions, clapping, puppets, Elkonin boxes, other manipulatives to represent sounds).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10c.</b> Teacher <b>clearly and accurately pronounces</b> individual sounds that are the focus of the lesson with enough volume for students to hear.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11. Phonics</b>			
<b>11a.</b> Teacher uses <b>manipulatives</b> , such as letter tiles and Elkonin boxes, to help make the connection between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11b.</b> Teacher uses <b>visual aids</b> (e.g., alphabet cards, letter-sound cards, word cards) as designed by the program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11c.</b> Teacher introduces an <b>explicit decoding strategy</b> to sound and blend simple words	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11d.</b> Teacher introduces and reviews <b>common irregular words</b> (e.g., <i>there, because</i> ) frequently.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11e.</b> Students are applying <b>letter/sound knowledge in reading and writing activities</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12. Fluency</b>			
<b>12a.</b> Teacher models <b>fluent reading (i.e., speed, accuracy, and prosody)</b> during read-aloud and shared readings.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12b.</b> Teacher and students are academically engaged in <b>shared reading</b> activities (e.g., big books, choral reading, charts, poems, songs).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12c.</b> <b>Oral reading</b> takes place in whole and small groups; the teacher provides immediate <b>scaffolded feedback</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12d.</b> Students are <b>reading orally</b> (e.g., choral reading, partner reading, repeated reading).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13. Vocabulary</b>			
<b>13a.</b> Teacher <b>contextualizes unfamiliar words</b> in stories read orally to students by using <b>student-friendly explanations</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13b.</b> Explicit <b>vocabulary instruction</b> is purposeful and ongoing as evidenced by lists of vocabulary words, graphic organizers, word walls, word sorts, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13c.</b> Teacher <b>categorizes key vocabulary</b> and identifies important features.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13d.</b> Teacher relates new vocabulary to <b>prior knowledge</b> through <b>questioning and other instructional activities</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>13e. Students are actively involved with thinking about and using words in multiple contexts.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14. Comprehension</b>			
<b>14a. Teacher models and encourages students to make predictions about text content using pictures, background knowledge, and text features (e.g., title, subheading, captions, illustrations).</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14b. Teacher models and encourages students to use prior knowledge and supporting details from text to make connections with the reading selection.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14c. Teacher models and encourages students to retell the main idea, identify supporting details (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, how), and arrange events in sequence.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14d. Teacher models and encourages students to use prior knowledge and supporting details from text to determine whether a reading selection is fact or fiction and to identify the author's purpose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14e. Teacher models and encourages students to use graphic and semantic organizers to help students focus on text structures and to examine relationships in text.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14f. Teacher models and encourages students to self-monitor comprehension and use appropriate fix-up strategies (e.g., rereading, summarizing, questioning and clarifying, context clues).</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14g. Students identify, ask, and answer questions about story grammar (e.g., characters, setting, problems, solutions).</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>14h. Students and teacher are discussing answers to higher-level questions (e.g., inferential, analytical) about shared readings and selections read.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>Notes and Reflection Prompts</b>			



Date:	Time:	
Teacher:	School:	
Grade:	Subject:	
<b>1. Learning objective(s) for the lesson</b>		
Objective(s):		
<b>2. Learning objective(s) is evident to the students</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Evident	<input type="checkbox"/> Not evident	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>3. Learning objective(s) on target for grade-level standards</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>4. Identify grouping format</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Whole group	<input type="checkbox"/> Small group	<input type="checkbox"/> Paired <input type="checkbox"/> Individual
<b>5. Determine levels of class engagement</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Highly engaged—Most students are authentically engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed—Students are willingly compliant and ritually engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Not engaged—Many students are not participating in the assigned task or substituting another activity.		
<b>6. Classroom Environment</b>		
<b>6a. Classroom behavior management system effectively creates a positive learning environment.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>6b. Classroom arrangement is conducive to whole-group instruction and reading centers (teacher-led center and independent student centers).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>6c. Daily class schedule is posted and indicates a minimum of 90 minutes for reading instruction that includes whole-group instruction, reading centers, and additional time for intensive intervention.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>6d. Classroom displays of current student work and curriculum material reflect the skills and concepts taught.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>6e. Teacher's interactions with students reflect warmth, encouragement, and enthusiasm.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>7. Instructional Materials</b>		
<b>7a. Teacher and student program materials are accessible and organized (e.g., teachers' guides, decodable books, letter-sound cards, vocabulary word lists, charts, student readers, sufficient selection of leveled texts).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>7b. Teacher uses a variety of resources during reading instruction (e.g., wipe-off boards, overhead projectors, computers, listening centers, letter tiles).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>8. Teacher Instruction</b>		
<b>8a.</b> Teacher provides appropriate and clear instruction for all students including students at risk, English language learners, and students with special needs.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8b.</b> Teacher implements program components with fidelity.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8c.</b> Teacher differentiates instruction according to student needs based on assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8d.</b> Teacher uses explicit instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8e.</b> Teacher scaffolds instruction during whole-group instruction and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8f.</b> Teacher provides ample opportunities for students to practice and receive corrective and positive feedback.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8g.</b> Pacing is appropriate during whole-group and at the teacher-led center.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8h.</b> Transitions are smooth and quick between whole-group instruction and reading centers.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8i.</b> Evidence exists that reading routines and procedures are familiar to the students.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>8j.</b> Teacher fosters active student engagement and motivation to learn.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9. Reading Centers</b>		
<b>9a.</b> A center management system indicating flexible student placement and group size is evident.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9b.</b> Reading centers are clearly designed, labeled, and defined.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9c.</b> At the teacher-led center, reading instruction is based on student assessment.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9d.</b> At student centers, students are working on activities that directly build reading skills.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>9e.</b> Students remain academically engaged during student centers and independent work.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10. Phonics</b>		
<b>10a.</b> Teacher uses visual aids (e.g., letter-sound cards, prefix-suffix charts) as designed by the program.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10b.</b> Teacher begins to provide explicit instruction of advanced phonics/word analysis (e.g., root words, prefixes, suffixes, r-controlled vowels, vowel pairs) to decode single and multi-syllable words.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

<b>10c. Teacher introduces and reviews common irregular words (e.g., laugh) frequently.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>10d. Students are applying letter/sound knowledge and advanced phonic elements in reading and writing activities.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11. Fluency</b>		
<b>11a. Teacher models fluent reading (i.e., speed, accuracy, and prosody) during read-aloud and shared readings.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11b. Teacher and students are academically engaged in shared reading activities (e.g., choral reading, charts, poems, songs).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11c. Oral reading takes place in whole and small groups; the teacher provides immediate scaffolded feedback.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>11d. Students are reading orally (e.g., choral reading, partner reading, repeated reading).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12. Vocabulary</b>		
<b>12a. Teacher contextualizes unfamiliar words in stories read by using student-friendly explanations.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12b. Explicit vocabulary instruction is purposeful and ongoing as evidenced by lists of vocabulary words, graphic organizers, word walls, word sorts, etc.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12c. Teacher categorizes key vocabulary and identifies important features.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12d. Teacher relates new vocabulary to prior knowledge through questioning or other instructional activities.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>12e. Students are actively involved with thinking about and using words in multiple contexts.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13. Comprehension</b>		
<b>13a. Teacher models and encourages students to make predictions about text content using pictures, background knowledge, and text features (e.g., title, subheading, captions, illustrations).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13b. Teacher models and encourages students to use prior knowledge and supporting details from text to make connections with the reading selection.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13c. Teacher models and encourages students to identify main idea and supporting details (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, how) and arrange events in sequence.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine
<b>13d. Teacher models and encourages students to use prior knowledge and supporting details from text to determine whether a reading selection is fact or fiction and to identify the author's purpose.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to determine

**13e.** Teacher models and encourages students to use **graphic and semantic organizers** to help students focus on text structures and to examine relationships in text.

Yes  No  Unable to determine

**13f.** Teacher models and encourages students to **self-monitor comprehension** and use appropriate fix-up strategies (e.g., rereading, summarizing, questioning and clarifying, context clues).

Yes  No  Unable to determine

**13g.** Students identify, ask, and answer questions about **story grammar** (e.g., characters, setting, problems, solutions).

Yes  No  Unable to determine

**13h.** Students and teacher are **discussing answers to higher-level questions** (e.g., inferential, analytical) about shared readings and selections read.

Yes  No  Unable to determine

**13i.** Students make **inferences from text** by determining important ideas and **drawing conclusions**.

Yes  No  Unable to determine

#### Notes and Reflection Prompts

## APPENDIX C

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What did you do for intervention with Tier 3 students during the thirty-minute block?
2. Is the intervention strategy or strategies that you are providing, only occurring during the intervention block (not during the ELA block)?
3. Who provided the intervention for your homeroom students?
4. How do you think the additional thirty-minute intervention block impacts student reading skills?
5. Moving forward, what changes would you make instructionally during the intervention block?

APPENDIX D

AIMSWEB PLUS ADMINISTRATION MATRIX

Grade	Season	Reading Measure
Kindergarten	Fall	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) Initial Sounds (IS) Auditory Vocabulary (AV)
	Winter	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) Initial Sounds (IS) Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Letter Word Sounds Fluency (LWSF) Phoneme Segmentation (PS)
	Spring	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Letter Word Sounds Fluency (LWSF) Phoneme Segmentation (PS) Word Reading Fluency (WRF)
First Grade	Fall	Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Letter Word Sounds Fluency (LWSF) Phoneme Segmentation (PS) Word Reading Fluency (WRF) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
	Winter	Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Word Reading Fluency (WRF) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
	Spring	Auditory Vocabulary (AV) Word Reading Fluency (WRF) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
Second- Fifth Grade	Fall	Vocabulary (VO) Reading Comprehension (RC) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
	Winter	Vocabulary (VO) Reading Comprehension (RC) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
	Spring	Vocabulary (VO) Reading Comprehension (RC) Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

APPENDIX E

INTERVENTION PLAN FORM

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Progress Monitoring</b>	<b>ESOL/ Intervention Teacher/Resource Teacher</b>	<b>Research Based Intervention</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>
Student A	3	Weekly			

## APPENDIX F

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS

Adapted from Project Read (2016)

VKAT Strategies	VKAT strategies are visual, kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory strategies that support recall and sound/symbol memory.
Segmenting	Finger spelling is used to segment words for decoding and encoding.
Finger Spelling	This strategy supports a child in sequencing the sounds in a word specifically for encoding
Decoding	The ability to unlock a word for the pronunciation of a single or multisyllabic word.
Blending	Sequencing sounds in a word to build a word.
Application of Letter Sounds	Project Read introduces vowels and consonants using body language for memory and retrieval.
Common Irregular Words	Identified as red words. These are words that are phonetically irregular words. This strategy involves arm tapping for auditory/tactile memory of phonetically irregular words.
Shared Reading	an interactive reading experience which occurs when students share the reading of books or texts while the teacher provides guidance and support
Oral Reading	Fluency reflects the ability of the reader to read smoothly, which includes paying attention to punctuation, grouping words into meaningful chunks, and using intonations that reflect appropriate meaning of text
Partner Reading	cooperative learning strategy in which two students work together to read a text assigned by the teacher
Choral Reading	reading aloud in unison with a whole class or group of students and helps build fluency, self-confidence, and motivation.
Arm Tapping	Arm tapping is an auditory/tactile strategy used for the purpose of memorizing and recalling red words.
Skywriting	Skywriting is a visual, auditory and kinesthetic strategy for sound/symbol memory.



“catch the word”	Students catch a word in their non-dominant and and release the sounds while writing the word with their dominant hand.
“unlock the word”	A strategy that has a student release sounds one sound at a time
Kinesthetic	tactile learning is a learning style in which learning takes place by the students carrying out physical activities
Tactile	Tactile learners remember things better when they can use their fine motor skills to make or handle relevant materials while learning new or difficult work.
Scaffolding	The design of each Project Read lesson includes a Teach to Transfer component which follows direct instruction of a specific concept. The direct instruction followed by the Teach to Transfer allows for scaffolded support of a concept.
S-blends/L-blends	taught for the purpose of sound production and the student has to segment the blend into two segmented sounds