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The Impact of a District Supported Mentoring Initiative on Reading Achievement of African American Male Students

Brooke Wray-Fisher Rowe

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THE IMPACT OF A DISTRICT SUPPORTED MENTORING INITIATIVE ON
READING ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Gary and Darlene Fisher: You have not only instilled in me the value of education, but to never give up on my dreams. You have taught me to work hard throughout my life. Throughout this entire experience, you have been there for me and offered your support by whatever means possible.

To my husband, Joseph Rowe: You have kept encouraging me to keep on going, even when it would have been easier to quit. Whenever I needed something, I could always look in your direction. Your love and support has never gone unnoticed.

To my children, Garrett Joseph and Morgan Wray: You are my reason. My reason to keep going. My reason to work hard. I hope my journey has showed you both to NEVER give up on your dreams. No matter the obstacles, you can and will overcome. Never let anything blur your vision. You define you.

Without my support system, I would not be where I am today. Without their love, support and encouragement, this would never have been possible. You have been beside me throughout this entire journey. I am forever grateful.

ABSTRACT

This action research seeks to examine the impact of a district supported mentoring program and its effect on the reading achievement of a group of African American male students. The participants received routine, sustained mentoring during a three-year period of time. All of the schools involved are Title I and within the same county.

The action research involved the collection of various forms of achievement data such as the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) assessment, Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment, and the South Carolina College- and Career- Ready assessment, specifically in the area of reading. These assessments allowed the researcher to assess growth over a three-year period of the students participating in the mentoring program (cohort group) and those not participating in the program (comparison group). The mentoring began during the participants' third grade year and concluded at the end of their fifth grade year.

The goal of this study was to determine what impact a district supported mentoring program would have on African American male reading achievement. It was found that the cohort group of students showed more growth on both the MAP® Reading assessment and the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment, then with the comparison group. However, less growth was shown overall on the SCREADY assessment with the

same cohort group. The ultimate goal was to compare the growth of those students participating in the program to those not participating at the same school sites.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there has been an increased level of accountability on the reading achievement of African American students across the nation. *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 ensures that schools are held to this standard of accountability and that closing the achievement gap is a priority across our nation's schools. As former United States Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2005) once stated, "For the first time ever, we are looking ourselves in the mirror and holding ourselves accountable for educating every child. That means all children, no matter their race or income level or zip code".

While the focus on accountability and the implementation of federal policy have increased awareness of the achievement gap, policies and practices aligned with closing the achievement gap have lagged behind. "Developing effective strategies to address academic achievement gaps between African American males and students from other racial/ethnic and gender groups is problematic in the United States" (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013, p. 387). However, over the past decade school-based mentoring programs have become more relevant in the efforts of addressing needs of students. These programs have been incorporated during the school day and available to assist in working with students on additional tasks directly related to content being learned in the classroom.

The importance of academic success begins with support networks being in place with young students, which can be implemented at the school level. “Mentoring can be one of their pathways to success, helping them successfully navigate the transition from school to work and from childhood to adulthood” (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015, p. 4). Starting this at the elementary level, can provide a vision for young students to develop ambitions for the workforce, after the completion of high school and college years. Providing opportunities through the mentors can assist in guiding these young men to explore various types of career paths, so that each one of them has a direction of their own choosing. Mentoring can help in engagement of this development and provide meaningful learning opportunities, outside of the classroom setting, to assist in future successes.

The National Mentoring Partnership (2015) identified barriers to youth employment that can pose a threat to becoming a productive member of society. Of those barriers, both deficiency in literacy skills and current/potential disconnectedness from school can pose risks. A mentoring program that centers around student achievement in reading, as well as building relationships could potentially work to break down these identified barriers.

Early intervention is the key to changing the outcome for these young men. Excellence Boys Charter School, under the leadership of Jabali Sawicki, structured a framework titled the “Three Pillars of Excellence” (2011), which centers around academics, structure and engagement. With the focus on these three specific areas at the elementary level, he has shown this can be a model for excellence for young African

American males. This model centered the focus on literacy being the key to the success for these students.

This study will explore the impact of a district-sponsored mentoring program on the English language arts (ELA) achievement of African American male participants compared to similar students who did not participate in the program. The overall goal is to determine if there is a significant difference in ELA scores on three literacy-related assessments: 1) Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment, 2) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) formative assessment and 3) the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessment (SCREADY) summative data for those students that have continually participated in this initiative over the past three academic years.

Problem of Practice

Many African American students across the United States do not have their needs met, both academically and emotionally. As Ferguson (2014) stated, "one of our most important responsibilities as adults is to help children find their own unique purposes and prepare to achieve them" (p. 117). The problem with relying solely on the teachers to take on all of these responsibilities can further escalate the problem. Teachers continue to struggle with how to not only meet each individual student's academic needs, but to also find time to develop relationships with every child. This may not be a problem at all schools, but it can be at those schools that have a large population of at-risk students.

There is a critical need for exposure to different opportunities for these young boys. It is "imperative that initiatives be created to attract, encourage, and motivate the African American man who might be a potential college student but needs that extra

support or attention to increase his interest and make him more comfortable with the idea of participating in postsecondary education” (Lavant, Anderson and Tiggs, 1997, pp. 51-52). Career opportunities need to be presented to students throughout the entire course of their educational pathway. This will not only provide them exposure to what is available to them after high school, but may also help them to choose the courses and interests at a young age, so they can begin to set goals for their future. It is important for schools to provide these pathways directly to the students and their families, so all involved stakeholders can work toward assisting in doing what they can to offer continued support to these young men. Promoting a focus on career goals and opportunities provides the student with ambitions for the future. However, schools must also address students’ perceptions of themselves that occur within their environment including schools, which can be a place where students may feel hopeless based on ineffective and discriminatory discipline practices.

“African American males are three times more likely than their White male counterparts to be suspended or expelled in public schools. Changing these odds requires not only addressing disparities in discipline practices, but also lifting up a new narrative of hope, possibility, and brilliance so that young Black men can see and realize their potential” (Chatmon & Gray, 2015, p. 50). It is important for educators to understand the impact they have on all students. This is not limited to just classroom teachers, but to all those involved in the instructional decisions and safety of students.

Purpose of the Study

This study will examine, analyze and identify some of the critical factors impacting African American male reading achievement using the support of a district

mentoring initiative. Through the use of various data points and comparison groups, the level of success in this first cohort of students will be explored. This group of African American young men have been involved in this program from the inception in 2016, which was their third-grade year of education. This particular district has been focusing on closing the achievement gap across all the schools for several years. However, the mentoring program, 100 Voices + Strong, is a way to involve all stakeholders in these efforts and not leave the individual schools trying to accomplish this task in isolation.

Research Question

An overarching research question with one sub-question guides this study. The major research question is what impact does a mentoring program focused on academic and social aspects have on African American male student achievement in reading? The sub-question is how does the growth among those participating in the mentoring program compare to those not participating?

Research Design

This is a quantitative research study focusing on reading achievement of the first cohort of African American students participating in 100 + Strong, a district-level mentoring program. This cohort, comprised of approximately 27 students, has been participating since its inception in the 2016-2017 school year. These students were in third grade at the onset of the initiative in the 2016-17 academic year, and were in fifth grade, in the 2018-19 academic year. These identified students historically were falling short of proficiency on standardized tests and/or reading one grade level below the expectation at the onset of the program.

The district within this area of South Carolina has 735 African American male students out of the approximately 23,000 students that attend the schools across the county. In the initial stage, 134 of these students were identified from third, fourth and fifth grades within six of the nineteen elementary schools and one of the seven middle schools. Each of the seven schools was given a district mentor team to work with the identified students throughout the implementation year continuing through the subsequent years, with those same schools and the third, fourth and fifth grade students meeting the above criteria within the cohort.

The identification process for this program is ongoing at the third-grade level at the start of each school year. This is the entry point for cohort selection at each of the identified schools. Once the students are identified in third grade, they continue in the mentoring program throughout the remainder of their elementary years. This allows continued support and consistent mentor relationships with those on that team. In particular situations, additional fourth and fifth grade students may be added to the cohort, if the team feels that they would benefit from the mentoring program. This would be on a case-by-case basis and is usually only explored if another student moves outside of the school district. However, only the students that remained in the program for all three years are included in this study.

Conceptual Framework

This study examines a district mentoring program that supports African American males in an effort to close the achievement gap, specifically in the area of reading. Through analysis of multiple data points, this study examines if a mentorship program can impact their reading achievement. Benefits, challenges and means of improvement

are also being investigated. The findings of the study provide insight into how elementary schools can establish a more effective collaboration amongst all stakeholders across the school district, with student achievement at the forefront of these efforts.

As described in Figure 1.1, student performance in English Language Arts may be influenced by mentoring programs. The illustration depicts the two types of learning environments of African American students within the seven identified schools. One cohort of African American male students that has participated in the mentoring program for three years is the focus of the research. The comparison group of African American male students is from the same seven schools identified for this study, but did not participate in the mentoring program.

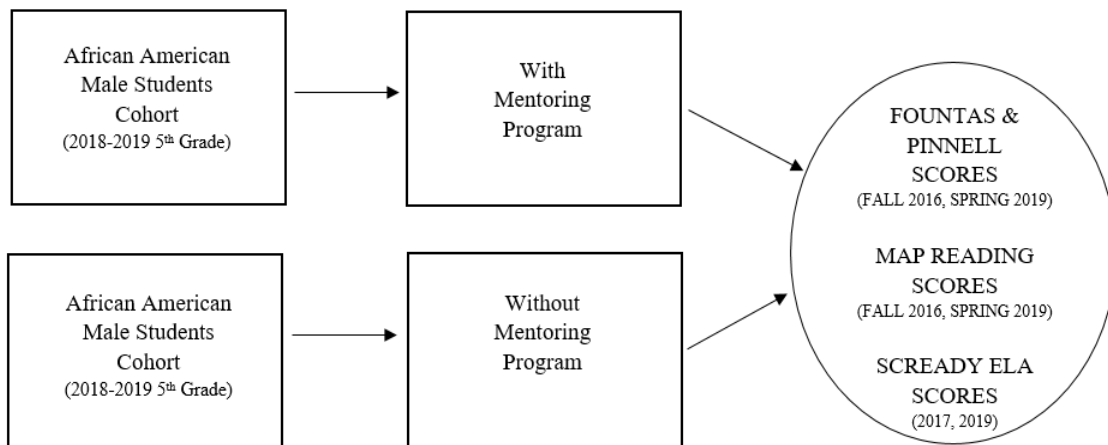


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Significance of the Study

"A national movement for excellence with equity will focus on providing high quality learning experiences from birth through early adulthood for children from every background" (Ferguson, 2014, p. 103). These efforts in this school district are being extended to other school personnel, not solely placing this responsibility on the classroom

teacher. The message that is conveyed from school district officials is that this is an initiative that involves efforts from all stakeholders.

Reading achievement is a critical component in the identification of the students for participation in the program and remains critical to measure the success of the initiative. The United States Department of Education reported that "in a number of large urban districts across the country, Black males *without disabilities* had lower reading scores in grades 4, 8, and 12, and lower grade-level proficiency, than White males *with disabilities*" (NCES, 2012). Even though this study only involves one of those grades mentioned, it is intended to impact all grade levels throughout the continued efforts each year.

The initiative seeks to support these students "with the purpose of giving young people from every background lived experiences to equip them with the skills and dispositions to thrive in this century" (Ferguson, 2014, p.118). Through the 100+ Voices Strong mentoring program, the students have been surrounded and supported with those that are not only part of their school, but the surrounding community as well. This involves field experiences at other locations within the surrounding area, which stress the importance of completing high school and having a vision of career pathways. The mentors are also an important element of these opportunities.

"Perhaps we could rest easier if the site of Black boys' problems were their homes with their parents and siblings, or the streets with the police and law enforcement. But one of the primary places where Black boys' problems appear is in school" (Ladson Billings, 2011, p. 12). Mentoring programs are not something new within the field of education, but instead are a way of having additional support in place to meet the needs

of these young boys. The 100+ Voices Strong mentoring program sheds a different light than many others. This program is conducted with a targeted population and involves district level teams throughout several of the schools across the county. Through this involvement, it showcases that a need is recognized by various individuals and is not being pushed on others, but instead involving all stakeholders in the efforts.

Limitations of the Study

Efforts were made to select elementary schools with similar struggles in reading achievement of African American male students. However, there were limitations in this study that are beyond the control of the researcher. One limitation is that this study focuses on an initiative and efforts of one county in South Carolina; therefore, the gathered data and conclusions generated are applicable to that particular district. The students involved in this study are from seven out of the twenty-six elementary and middle schools across the county, which includes various zip codes and demographics. Another limitation is that the researcher is a part of the initiative, which lends itself to be a convenience study. However, the researcher is not the leader of these efforts, but is involved in the organization of the support groups for all the schools participating in 100+ Voices Strong initiative. The researcher is also part of the team that has been presenting the implementation of this program over the course of the initial year.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study and provides the purpose for and significance of this study. This chapter also presents the statement of problem, the conceptual framework, research questions, hypothesis,

limitations of the study and the definition of terms. Chapter I covers the importance of mentoring students, specifically African American male students in the elementary grades. Chapter I also discusses the importance of understanding the struggles of this group of students as it relates to educational needs. Chapter II includes an extensive review of the literature in the area of mentoring programs, with a strong emphasis on educational needs of the African American male students and what it takes to be successful. Chapter III details the methodology utilized in this study, including a description of the participants, selection and instrumentation. The data analysis of the Fountas and Pinnell scores, Measures of Academic Progress results, and the SCREADY English language arts scores are discussed in Chapter IV. Chapter V summarizes the findings, conclusions and provides recommendations for further study.

Definition of Terms

100+Voices Strong Initiative. This program was developed by a school district in the Lowcountry of South Carolina in an effort to support African American male students in elementary schools. The group contains third, fourth and fifth students that are in need of additional support in the area of reading, as identified based on performance on both Fountas and Pinnell and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) assessment. Mentor teams from the district office are assigned to one of seven schools to support the efforts of the school team in working with these young males.

Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems. This is a tool given to elementary students, both in the Fall and Spring. There is an optional window in the Winter that may be utilized, at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The data captured through the use of this tool are instructional and independent reading levels of students.

This assessment also gives the teacher an opportunity to observe reading behaviors of students, engage in conversations about comprehension of the text and to make informed decisions that make connections to responsive teaching and assessment. It is also used to show student progress in reading through the years and as a means for instruction and small group guidance.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®). This is a formative assessment in both reading and mathematics given to all students in this district from kindergarten through eighth grade. It is utilized three times each year: fall, winter and spring. Teachers use the data to determine where students are currently performing in the classroom and with goal setting for the instructional year. The results of the assessment are also used to differentiate the instruction for students, as well as to assist administration with projections as it relates to the current state assessment.

South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessment (SCREADY). This is a summative assessment in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics given to third through eighth grade students in the state of South Carolina. All students in these grades are required to take this assessment, with the exception of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The test items are aligned to and measure student performance on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for the student's specific grade level. SCREADY test items are constructed to assess knowledge of the specific content and the skills that are described within the academic standards and indicators contained within those standards. The results of this assessment are used for school, district and federal accountability purposes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“In the United States, Black students face more barriers to achievement than their White counterparts and, on average, display comparably poorer educational outcomes” (Wittrup et al., 2016, p. 2). As the Center for Law and Social Policy (2014) states, “There are several points throughout the education pipeline where African American students are lost. Knowing these points of loss presents an opportunity to be strategic and deliberate with our investments in African American children and youth” (p.1). All stakeholders need to have the knowledge of when these windows of opportunities exist for youth.

There are six different opportunities for intervention, with the second opportunity being in third grade. The Center for Law and Social Policy (2014) shared that the main focus within this opportunity is shown to be on reading and numeracy skills for the basis of future learning of content. It has been shown that “too few African American students possess these skills at this point in their education” (p.1). With this point of loss being known, it is important for the educational system to address this issue. Since this mentoring program inception began for this cohort group in third grade, this shows that this school district is addressing this opportunity earlier, then waiting until later.

Mentoring programs offer an opportunity to address academic goals as well as social development. The role of the mentor needs to be on establishing relationships, especially at the onsite of the program. It is important for these mentors to make connections with the students, in order for them to build the foundation of trust. Making these connections can assist in the student understanding their potential in relation to the mentor's experiences. Jarjoura (2003) found the following:

Part of the powerful nature of mentoring initiatives is that, when they are done well, youth are exposed to inspiring adult role models who give the youth hope for their own futures. When a young person can meet an adult who was like them in many ways as teenagers and has grown into a successful productive citizen, it becomes evident to the young person that he/she might also have the potential to do well as an adult. Once young people believe that there is hope for a better future, they are more likely to be open to the kinds of things they might be asked to do as part of a mentoring program. (p. 7)

Problem of Practice Statement

The problem of practice for the present study was identified from the issue of disproportionality related to the reading achievement of African American males. The U.S. Department of Education (2012) reported that “in a number of large urban districts across the country, Black males *without disabilities* had lower reading scores in grades 4, 8, and 12, and lower grade-level proficiency, than White males *with disabilities*” (Howard, p. 13). A Black student who is reading at grade level by the end of third grade is less likely to end up in Special Education classes, drop out of school, live in poverty

during adulthood, or end up in the prison pipeline (Kunjufu, 2005; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012).

Within the diverse school district of the teacher-researcher, there is a higher population of African American students at the school sites in the study, then in the other schools within this same district. This places a high emphasis on making sure these schools are supporting the needs of this population of students. This is a challenge that occurs annually as the district expectation is to work towards closing the achievement gap prior to third grade.

As Gloria Ladson-Billings (2013) has found throughout her research:

The term “achievement gap” has worked its way into most mainstream discussions about scholastic disparities between Black and Brown students and their White, middle class counterparts. To be sure, we are not talking about all Black and Brown students or all White students. Rather, the discourse is about the pattern of underachievement that is extant among these groups of students. The patterns are so regular and so predictable that we have come to expect them. (p. 105)

To close this achievement gap, strategies such as targeted intervention support are used. Mentoring has been among the programs that has been used to support these boys in the area of reading. The National Mentoring Partnership (2014) found the following:

Many youth, especially at-risk youth, report wanting a mentor when prompted to think about their lives in retrospect. Nearly half of all young adults (46 percent) report that now that they are older, looking back, they can think of at least one

time in their lives between the ages of eight and 18 when they wanted a mentor and didn't have one, even if they did have a mentor at some other point in their lives. Likewise, for at-risk youth, 52 percent report that in retrospect they would have benefited from having a mentor. These rates are even higher for respondents with two or more risk factors. Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) say that looking back, they could think of a time between the ages of 8 and 18 when they did not have a mentor but could have benefitted from having one. (p. 29)

Due to the identified need of mentoring programs with these at-risk youth, it is important to identify that area of focus to tailor the support offered. "Research supports that boys of color are in crisis. The National Household Educational Surveys Program by the U.S. Department of Education looked at the early skills of young boys of color and found them lagging in emergent literacy skills" (Zimmerman, 2007, p.7). This provides support in that the focus for this mentoring initiative was placed in the area of greatest need for these young learners.

Research Question

The action research in this study is based on the research question which asks whether a district supported mentoring program has an impact on literacy achievement over a three-year period of time on a targeted population of students. The research question investigated during this action research is: What impact does a mentoring program directly have on African American male student achievement in reading? And consequently: How does the growth among those youth participating in the mentoring program compare to those not participating?

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review is centered around the African American male and the factors that impact him as a learner. Information from those that have worked in the field, specifically with this particular group of learners, assist in describing the theories supporting this topic. Historical perspectives of how to best support the academic success of these learners indicates what has been shown to address their individual needs. The literature review described the challenges that these students may face throughout their educational career, beginning in the early years throughout secondary pathways. The last portion of the literature review includes mentoring programs that have had success over the years in meeting the needs of these young men. The programs researched have been aligned to a particular area of focus, which is shown to have an impact on the achievement of this particular student population. The overall purpose of the literature review is to provide background knowledge and research about the African American male student and understanding how mentoring programs can have an impact on reading achievement in the elementary years.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the literature review is to identify key concepts surrounding the unique needs of African American male students and the impacts of mentoring programs in addressing these needs. The National Mentoring Partnership (2015) found the following:

Mentoring, a proven tool and a needed asset, produces more engaged citizens and stronger leaders, better schools, and healthier and stronger economies and

communities. When integrated into other national initiatives, mentoring strengthens efforts to reduce poverty, truancy, drug abuse and violence while promoting healthy decision-making, positive behaviors, and strong futures.

Already, mentoring has been connected to core outcomes for our country's youth, including educational attainment, poverty alleviation, and juvenile justice. (p. 33)

The resources used within the Literature Review were selected from educational research textbooks, various articles found through the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database and resources included on websites of the community organizations that support mentoring initiatives for African American youth. Since the focus of the research is on the upper elementary school years, it is important to gain insight into the challenges these students face prior to those grades. By examining the struggles that may surface in the early years, it can help in offering some clarity in the current reality of this group of students.

The need for providing equity among these learners is critical to this research. Since this study is focused on African American male reading achievement, it is imperative to provide necessary support to the targeted population. The Council of the Great City Schools (2012) identified challenges that schools often face when planning an effective program in working with African American males that is based around both leadership and communication strategies.

Ultimately, an initiative that is focused on young men and boys of color is about creating real and meaningful pathways to academic opportunity. Equity is built on

the idea of driving additional investments—males of color need additional support and attention to overcome academic and social hurdles. (p.20)

Since the mentoring program in this study is focused on these young males, it of utmost importance to center the focus on the greatest area of need for these students. “The literacy level of young African American boys has become a critical indicator of what is likely to transpire in the future” (Rashid, 2009, p. 353). Throughout the three-year period of time, the mentors involved in this study support these efforts and providing the necessary interventions, based on the individual need of their students. Considering this factor, it allows the program to align the efforts to focus on reading achievement.

Educational Context

Howard (2014) stated that “to better understand some of the predictive factors that are associated with larger life challenges for Black males, it is imperative to examine one of the foundational pillars where many of the challenges begin, which is education” (p. 11). As an educational system, it is critical to ensure we are doing what we can for all learners. In order to be successful as a system, we need to be strategic in how we approach the opportunities we provide for students, both inside and outside the classroom setting. The Center for Law and Social Policy (2014) stated the following:

When African American students feel prepared academically, their self-esteem increases, they have a more positive attitude toward school, their academic achievement increases, and ultimately problem behaviors are minimized. By rallying together to offer supportive services to vulnerable populations, communities help students overcome the effects of growing up in high poverty

and provide a solid foundation for accessing postsecondary education and solid employment. (p. 6)

The concept of this initiative was developed by a team of district level administrators, with considerations vetted through the school level leadership teams. As a means to ensure this particular group of learners has the support in place, the entire community needs to be involved. This is not limited to only the school and parents, but also those other stakeholders in and around these schools. The foundation and driving force behind this district level initiative was identified through the research of John Hattie. As Hattie (2015) stated:

Equity is critical, but it is not equity in terms of all students attaining similar average levels of achievement; rather it is equity in that the possibility of attaining excellence is available to any student regardless of their background, prior achievement or the financial acumen of their parents. We all have the right to aim of excellence and to attain excellence in multiple ways. (p. 26)

The sense of urgency was brought to the attention of this team through a concerned community member, that felt that the achievement gap across the district was not being addressed. Since the district level team was focused on using the work of John Hattie within the Instructional Services Department, those members began to view this concern through the lens of his work. Hattie (2015) found the following:

Collaboration is based on cooperativeness, learning from errors, seeking feedback about progress and enjoying venturing into the ‘pit of not knowing’ together with expert help that provides safety nets and, ultimately, ways out of the pit. Creative

collaboration involves bringing together two or more seemingly unrelated ideas, and this highlights again the importance of having safe and trusting places to explore ideas, to make and learn from errors and to use expertise to maximise [sic] successful learning. (p. 27)

When looking at the facts presented by the community member, the district level team determined that by moving just over one hundred African American male students could drastically improve this gap in literacy, hence the name 100 Voices. It was important for this team to continue to make connections in the focus of their work.

Another connection made to the work of Hattie (2015) was found in the following:

The aim is not aspiring to utopia but scaling up the success already about us. It is expertise, it is reliable judgement, it is passion for making the difference, and it is collaborative sharing of this knowing and doing and caring. This requires the greatest investment, and the benefits for the students will be manifest, powerful and exciting. (p. 27)

The district level team become invested in this work through these connections and began the development of the 100+ Voices Strong initiative. The driving force was grounded through relation of the work and the above references to John Hattie's findings. The team had the basis that this would be a collaborative effort between all stakeholders.

The At-Risk Student

The Federal Government references *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) in terms of defining at risk students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) NCLB Section 1432, the term at risk means "a school aged individual who is at risk of academic

failure, has a drug or alcohol problem, is pregnant or is a parent, has come into contact with the juvenile justice system in the past, is at least one year behind the expected grade level for the age of the individual, has limited English proficiency, is a gang member, has dropped out of school in the past, or has a high absenteeism rate at school.”

Kindlon & Thompson (2002) found that “The average boy faces a special struggle to meet the developmental and academic expectations of an elementary school curriculum that emphasizes reading, writing, and verbal ability-cognitive skills that normally develop more slowly in boys than in girls” (Bailey, 2002, p.155). With this being known, it is important for schools to put tools in place to ensure that these obstacles can be overcome. The most important key is early intervention and having supports in place to ensure success for these young boys in the elementary years.

Building relationships is another key to success in the classroom, as this is a component of a culturally responsive classroom community. It is critical for these young boys to know they have individuals they can trust and provide a safe environment for them. William Pollack (1998), the Director of the Centers for Men and Young Men, found through his work that “how you treat a boy has a powerful impact on who he becomes. He is much a product of nurturing as he is of nature” (Bailey, 2002, p. 91). This is the work that begins at home, so ensuring the school works to bridge those into the school environments is critical.

When positive relationships have been formed within the school setting, this provides a conducive environment for students to feel safe. “A nurturing environment prepares and equips African American boys for career success. Alternatively, the absence

of nurturance (neglect) sets the stage for suboptimal career development and negative outcomes. Four essential factors must be present to nurture the career development of African American boys: (a) expectations, (b) encouragement, (c) education, and (d) experiences” (Grimmett, 2006, p. 96).

By also building a sense of community within the school setting, this allow students to begin to function as a whole. The emphasis needs to be on high expectations and building the foundation of cooperative efforts of learners. Geneva Gay explored how culturally responsive teaching can contribute to educational success of students of various ethnic backgrounds. Gay (2002) found the following:

Many students of color grow up in cultural environments where the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual and where individuals are taught to pool their resources to solve problems. It is not that individuals and their needs are neglected; they are addressed within the context of group functioning. When the group success or falters, so do its individual members. (p. 110)

It is not only important to build relationships with students, but also with their parents. “Viewing and treating Black parents, as allies will require teachers and other school personnel to treat them respectfully, so that the school does not appear to be a hostile and unwelcoming environment for them” (Thompson & Shamberger, 2015, p. 5). As the authors suggest, improving their relationships with these parents can be done through providing them with resources to help in improving their child’s reading skills. By suggesting ways to provide support their children will help in bridging the communication between home and school, while working towards a common goal of

improving the reading achievement of these students. Parent-school partnerships allow both to mutually agree on student expectations in respect to behavior and academic achievement, ensuring this is communicated throughout the child's multiple environments (Hill & Taylor, 2007).

“Parents of black children were more likely to receive negative contact from schools and less likely to receive positive contact” (Sapers, 2012, p. 36). Research has indicated several differences in parents' perceptions of academic beliefs and it is dependent on the socioeconomic status and race of the family. A study that was conducted by Wood, Kaplan and McLoyd in 2007 suggested that parents, as well as teachers, often report lower expectations for African American boys ranging in age from six to sixteen, than they do for girls of the same age and race (Joe & Davis, 2009).

Reading Achievement in African American Boys

Reading achievement among African American boys tends to be an area of concern across many school districts. Risk factors present at the onset of education often compound during the early education years and may lead to achievement gaps in the reading proficiency of African American boys. Husband (2012) used a multi-cultural approach to exploring the issue of African American boys and reading achievement. This considers how both gender and cultural factors can have an impact on performance in reading among this particular group of students.

The issue of reading underachievement in African American boys is linked to multiple factors that span across multiple contexts. As such, teachers and schools can no longer emphasize approaches to combating

this issue that involve classroom strategies exclusively. Teachers must be willing to commit to working beyond the classroom and school context as needed in order to combat this issue of reading underachievement in African American boys. They must be willing to formulate and implement programs and partnerships that respond to underachievement in African American boys in and across curriculum, classroom, and community contexts. Failure to do so will only produce limited progress toward eradicating this achievement disparity as we journey through the 21st century. (p. 19)

Educators need to know how to foster growth among students of various backgrounds. Differentiation of instruction is often stressed in educational preparation coursework, but having an understanding of the application of these means is critical to the success of all students. As Tatum (2005) found that literacy instruction must be planned with the consideration of multiple literacies. Those multiples literacies that teachers should foster are the following:

- Academic literacy—skills and strategies that can be applied independently to handle cognitively demanding tasks.
- Cultural literacy—a consciousness of historical and current events that shape one’s cultural identity as an African American; knowledge of the rich and storied history of African Americans and what this means in present-day situations; a sense of one’s cultural identity.
- Emotional literacy—the ability to manage one’s feelings and beliefs.

- Social literacy—the ability to navigate a variety of settings with people with similar or dissimilar views; being able to communicate in a variety of ways to achieve positive outcomes. (p. 34-35)

An understanding of the influence of both internal and external factors on reading achievement of African-American young males is imperative to identify. With these considerations not only the needs they have within the school setting will be apparent, but also the needs that happen outside of the school setting. Tatum (2012) suggested the need to give attention to multiple vital signs of literacy in an effort to improve reading and writing achievement of these African-American males. The vital signs that Tatum suggested involve the following:

Vital signs of reading: These are designed to improve reading and writing skills and nurture language development. They constitute a necessary minimum for all literacy efforts. The working tools are decoding, self-questioning, using language, monitoring comprehension, summarizing, and other strategies students need to handle and produce text independently. The other vital signs also affect reading outcomes.

Vital signs of readers and educators: These pay attention to students' lived experiences, both in school and outside of school, and are useful for considering ways to improve the human condition.

Vital signs of reading and writing instruction: These are useful for conceptualizing the rationale for literacy teaching. They are intimately related to rescuing and refining the significance of literacy instruction and helping us

conceptualize the rationale for providing it. Educators must focus on quality support, appropriate texts, assessments, and potential uses of technology in order to maximize opportunities to shape rigorous adolescent literacy.

Vital signs of educators' approaches: Teachers need a strong foundational background for teaching geared to the vital signs of reading. Educational contexts must be characterized by competence, commitment, caring, and culpability. Adolescents benefit when they know they belong in the learning community and feel that they are in the presence of an adult advocate who is not going to give up on them. (p.15)

Critical Pedagogy

The groundwork for a mentoring program for these young men is to examine the societal challenges they face. As Hall (2015) determined, “the framework of critical pedagogy is used to better understand the ways in which youth mentoring can be conceived and implemented for African American males” (p. 40). Encouraging them to take control of their personal learning and to examine the opinions of others is a means to introduce this topic to young learners.

“Critical theorists point out in as much as there is a curriculum that is overt—there is a curriculum that is covert, referred to as the hidden curriculum” (Palmer & Marama, p. 440). As a means to alter these thoughts for young learners, teachers need to be intentional in exposing positive portrayals of African American men. Palmer and Marama referenced that “in the context of the hidden curriculum as it relates to society, we think that the media, television, and other forms of propaganda have been used to

continuously cast Blacks, specifically, African American men in a negative light” (p. 444). This can be done through the use of images within the classroom environment, as well as readings that have men of color in a positive context.

Appreciation of one’s own culture, which seeks to provide social development to all students is of importance within the educational setting. “Researchers and practitioners alike have called for culturally responsive interventions that genuinely seek to alleviate the multiple social complexities faced by the African American adolescent males. Mentoring is one intervention that has been widely employed for developing the cultural identity, cognitive aptitude, and the educational competence of this ethnic group” (Hall, 2015, p. 39).

As a way to address this need for these African American males that are struggling readers it is of importance to reshape the trajectory for this particular group. Tatum (2006) believes that “identifying texts that can shape positive life outcome trajectories for African American males—who constitute 7 percent of the school-age population (4 million of 53 million)—is a significant challenge” (p. 3). These experiences impact achievement, particularly in the area of reading, Tatum feels that there are specific features that need to be incorporated into the texts these young learners are exposed to within the classroom setting. He feels this can be achieved by including must-read texts into their daily lessons. This provides students with an opportunity to become engaged in authentic discussions, which can sometimes mirror some of the realities all students face. Teachers are provided with the ability to utilize these discussions through the use of texts. Another critical aspect is making sure the texts incorporate different cultures and make connections to the educational aspect.

Resilience Theory

The National Center for Children in Poverty identified two main models that are used to examine resilience in their Racial Gaps in Early Childhood Report (2011).

The first is the compensatory model, which argues that protective factors counter the impact of negative events on children's lives. In other words, the presence of something good is expected to counterbalance the influence of something bad, and these factors can be combined additively to influence children's outcomes. The second model also assumes a linear relationship between negative and positive life events. However, according to this model, risks and protective factors do not exert the same influence over children's development. Protective factors are assumed to be more important so that exposure to multiple risks has less effect on children's healthy development when children have a significant number of protective factors. Both models have been empirically examined and received support, lending credence to the idea that there is a set of resources from which children can benefit that are related to healthy child development, even in the midst of adversity. (p. 4)

This report also determined that in comparison to other groups, specifically white boys and black girls, African-American boys are more likely to have poor outcomes. The factors centered around the resilience relate to individual factors about the child and their family, as well as the social supports that the families have the ability to access, both in the school and within the community.

Scholar Identity Model

Gilman Whiting is known for the development of the Scholar Identity Model. The basis for this model came from the need for others to understand and to decrease the barriers that Black males face in the areas of identity and achievement. According to Whiting (2006) the follow propositions guide this model:

(a) Black males are more likely to achieve academically when they have a scholar identity; (b) Black males are more likely to be viewed by educators and families as gifted or highly capable if they achieve at higher levels; (c) we cannot close the achievement gap or place Black males at promise for achievement unless we focus on their academic identities; and (d) the earlier we focus on the scholar identities of such males, the more likely we are to develop a future generation of Black male scholars who are in a position to break the vicious cycle of underachievement. (p. 223)

The scholar identity in Black males is comprised of nine characteristics. Through the identification of these constructs, a psychosocial model of achievement is formed. The design of this model was initially created to provide educators with guidance in fostering scholar identities with Black males.

Self-efficacy. This is the foundation for other areas within the model, as a means of assisting the Black male with using resiliency and persistence in the barriers he may face. When a strong sense of this characteristic is in place, a Black male will be confident in his abilities and show a strong sense of responsibility in his skills.

He will not turn away from challenges, but will instead have the belief that he can accomplish the tasks necessary.

Willing to make sacrifices. Those African American males that have a scholar identity have an understanding that they need to sacrifice certain things to reach their goals. This could mean that they are placing a hold on some social aspects of life. “Trials and tribulations are part of the success equation. That is, trials and tribulations are necessary for both short-term and long-term goals” (Whiting, 2006, p. 228).

Internal locus of control. With this characteristic, also comes the ability to be optimistic, have a strong work ethic and put forth best effort into school work. If these young men do not do well on an assignment, they show a willingness to ask for clarification and help, as a means of reflection. The blame is not put on others, but instead a sense of responsibility for own actions exists.

Future oriented. When a person has aspirations, they consider how what they are doing currently can impact their future. Whiting (2006) has noted several theorists in his own research including Dweck, 2002; Graham, 1998; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004 that have linked that staying focused needs to exist in order to positively influence future outcomes. Black males that have these realistic aspirations in place set goals, based on a realistic timeline. They also understand the important of being at school, good grades and the benefit of taking higher level courses to work towards achieving goals.

Self-awareness. With this characteristic comes the knowledge of knowing yourself and your own limitations. Black males that have this understanding do not let their personal weaknesses get in the way of putting forth their best effort at school. They can find alternative ways to compensate for their weak areas and will be an advocate for themselves. They look within and will adjust, but will not allow it to be a distraction.

Need for achievement. Individuals that thrive to achieve often have a desire to do well and constantly try ways to complete their work more effectively. “For Black males who have a scholar identity, the need for achievement is stronger than the need for affiliation, which is consistent with McClland’s (1966) [Need to Achieve] Theory” (Whiting, 2006, p. 229). By having the desire to be successful, these individuals find ways to reach their goals. These males realize that high achievement will take them further in life, then being more social. Ultimately, their learning is at the forefront.

Academic-self-confidence. Black males that encompass this characteristic have an understanding that the amount of effort is as important as the success. They do not feel as though they need to diminish the fact that they are capable and intelligent. Seeking challenges and showing the desire to learn, along with a strong work ethic are evident. The work of Dweck (1999) “demonstrates that students who believe that they are intelligent and capable in school are more likely to be persistent and more likely to persist than other students” (Whiting, 2006, p.229).

Racial identity. Those Black males that possess scholar identity are comfortable with being Black boys. “These Black males seek greater self-understanding as racial beings, but are also aware of the importance of adapting to their environment and being bicultural” (Whiting, p. 226). They are not only comfortable with their race, but show a strong sense of racial pride. As these males become young adults, they will also not succumb to low expectations and will strive to change those perceptions.

Masculinity. Within this characteristic, those Black males that do have scholar identity, they do not view being intelligent as feminine or not manly. Whiting (2006) believes that “without the guidance of caring and responsible adults, young Black males will be forever challenged to reach their potential” (p. 230). There are many resources, including media, that can shape these views, so having this understanding will assist with their perception.

For the Scholar Identity Model and these nine characteristics to become a part of life for these young men, it needs to be present in every aspect. It is through this that Whiting identified four pillars that are critical for encouragement and support outside of the model: home, school, community and mentoring. All individuals involved in these pillars need to understand how this model applies to them, as parents, educators, community resources and mentors.

Middle Childhood

The years in a child’s life from the ages of six through twelve have commonly been referred to as the middle childhood years. These middle childhood years are

influenced by an increasing amount of factors that are occurring outside of the child's home environment. During this period of their lives, children are participating in activities and programs with peers. This is a critical time when they become more self-aware, as well as construct their own beliefs about the world. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development emphasizes how children in this age range become more capable of logical thinking and reasoning, along with problem solving a number of tasks.

From the ages of seven to twelve, children are typically considered to be in the concrete operational stage. Since logical and abstract reasoning are developing throughout this stage, discussions are key to reinforce emerging reading skills. These discussions about reading can involve sequencing skills and making predictions. "To make easy real learning, teachers need to organize their classroom and their curriculum so that students can collaborate, interact, and raise questions of both classmates and the teacher" (Ensar, 2014, p. 35). Through collaboration with peers, students are able to strengthen both comprehension and abstract reasoning skills.

Mentoring in the Elementary Years

Early intervention is a key to success. Excellence Boys Charter School's founding principal Jabali Sawicki, developed an academic mindset in his students that they are college bound. Sawicki states that "schools are the critical lever to change the trajectory of young boys" (ETS, 2011, p. 7). The framework he developed at his school is centered around three principals and he refers to those as the *Three Pillars of Excellence*, as referenced in the ETS Policy Notes (2011).

1. *Academics.* Rigorous and challenging academics form the foundation; students master literacy and computing.
2. *Structure.* High behavior standards become the expectation; students need to be independent and creative thinkers, apt to succeed as they advance to other schools.
3. *Engagement.* Joy leads to engagement—Excellence calls it the “J-Factor.” Schools need to create delight, to become magical places; educators need to make school “cool” while they channel boys’ abundant energies into productive pursuits. (p. 8)

Through the integration of these pillars, the key concept surrounding this work was literacy. In order for student achievement to be at the forefront, the students need to be actively engaged and held to a high level of expectations. When those are both present, the academics will then be able to be provided. The key is providing rigorous opportunities to promote creative thinking, along with independence and productivity in the classroom. This lays the foundational work for success in later years.

Pathway to Secondary Education

As students transition into the secondary years, opportunities for career pathway begin to become prevalent. Students begin to consider career options and opportunities, along with coursework that supplements these decisions. A way to support youth career development is through positive mentoring relationships that allows opportunities to explore various career options, develop their skills, and stay actively engaged. An analysis of 73 independent evaluations of mentoring programs conducted by the National

Mentoring Partnership (2015) showed “that mentoring both prevents negative outcomes and promotes positive ones (p. 5).

Mentors will be able to encourage students to think of the long-term effects of their school career, in order to find a successful pathway into their future plans. By having this provided to students in the earlier years, it will assist them in choosing secondary educational coursework that fits the need of the student. Exposure to these explorations will help in more informed decisions.

Characteristics of Effective Mentoring Programs

The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center (2007) determined outcomes that are critical to put into practices as part of youth mentoring programs. At a minimum, the goal of the program would be to achieve at least one of the following developmental outcomes, as developed through the work of Lerner, Fisher and Weinberg (2000):

- Increase competency in such areas as social development, academic achievement, and life skills (*competence*).
- Improved sense of positive self-worth and belief in the future by offering consistent positive encouragement and reinforcement (*confidence*).
- Development of a positive bond with the mentor and, through that relationship, positive relationships with others—teachers, friends, and family—and increase connections to school and community (*connections*).

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center also included that, depending on relationships formed between mentors and youth, some programs may also work toward the following areas:

- Strengthen character as mentors introduce youth to positive societal and cultural values, hold youth to high expectations of behavior, and model those behaviors (*character*).
- Engage youth in activities that may increase their sense of empathy and caring through others, such as community service projects taken on by matches (*caring and compassion*). (p.1)

Often times mentoring programs have a one-on-one structure, as opposed to a group setting. However, G. Roger Jarjoura (2015) found that “programs identified as promising models are more likely to provide group mentoring structures where one adult or a small number of adults work together with a group of boys” (p. 5). He also noted that the structure of these groups needs to incorporate components of success within the educational environment, the development of career pathways, engagement within the community and have a component of character development for those involved. The main intention is to hold high expectations for these young boys.

There are multiple types of mentoring programs to address aspects important to specific populations or groups of students. Mentoring programs address educational support, leadership building, character building, and civic engagement. Examples of mentoring programs that address these aspects are provided.

Harlem's Children Zone developed a youth development program, *A Cut Above* (ACA), centered around providing educational support to both students and parents. This organization works with middle school students after school hours, on weekends and during the summer to help in the transition to high school, as well as supporting throughout the adolescent years. The students in this program also participate in the *Peacemaker's Boys to Men Leadership* group, which centers on gender specific discussions. The focus is aimed at fostering their social and emotional development by helping them develop both a strong sense of identity and sensitivity to the feelings of their peers (Harlem Children's Zone, 2016). The ultimate goal of the program, as reported by the organization, is keeping the participants on track toward being college ready, which seems to be on the correct trajectory with 96% of high school seniors being accepted to college and 196 high-school students participating in summer program on college campuses.

The most important partner in the vision of Harlem Children's Zone is the parent. They stress the importance of not only getting the students college-ready, but the parents as well. Through this approach, they provide workshops to assist in test preparation, tutoring instruction and assistance with selecting and applying for college. The use of workshops tailored directly to parents is evident in the transitional years: to middle school, to high school and to college.

100 Black Men of America, Inc. is a mentoring model that was developed in 1963 by a group of African American men that had a vision for improving learning outcomes within their community. The social, cultural and emotional needs of youth, to be more specific African American males, are addressed through one-to-one and group mentoring

relationships. The motto “What They See Is What They’ll Be” (n.d.) showcases that participants are exposed to various leaders and career exploration, as well as development of leadership skills. The Four for the Future encompasses the leadership components for the program: mentoring, education, economic empowerment and health/wellness. The 100 Black Men of America, Inc. (n.d.) has published that “since inception the vision has materialized to be shared by more than 10,000 members reaching over 125,000 underserved, underrepresented minority youth annually”.

REAL (Respect, Excellence, Attitude and Leadership) is a school-based mentoring program for elementary and secondary boys of color developed in 2000 focused on character building. The premise for the program began out of finding more effective ways to engage high-risk minority youth in the educational setting. Key components of the Chicago-based program include reflective writing, conflict resolution and art-based activities, through cultural awareness. “REAL understands the importance of helping young people find a voice and perceiving themselves, as well as others, as fully human with an innate ability to be viable change agents in their respective communities and in their own lives” (REAL Youth Program, 2005).

As defined by the REAL Youth Program (2005), their work utilizes the following four concepts to inform, arouse, awaken and empower young folks from all locations and backgrounds:

- Respect: Understanding the meaning and importance of respect for myself, my family, my peers and my community.

- Excellence: Striving for achievement and personal excellence both in and out of school.
- Attitude: Keeping a positive attitude in the face of challenging and adverse situations.
- Leadership: Learning to be a leader, as well as a team player. I am the definition of success. (REAL Youth Program, 2005)

Since its beginning, REAL has gradually developed into a well-established youth program in the Chicago-land area. The program partners with other local area schools, youth programs, and literacy and social justice organizations. In spite of its growth, the mission of the program continues to be focused on three areas that include: allowing students freedom of expression, development of positive growth using dialogue and critical thinking skills; and exposure to the world through networking.

The O.K. Program is a mentoring program focused on civic engagement that was developed in 1990 to assist in meeting the needs of African American males from the ages of twelve to eighteen. Donald Northcross from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department was concerned by the troubling fate of many of the young African American males in the urban community. The program has been centered around bringing together the boys with a team of adult African-American male mentors, as well as improving the relationships of these youth with local law enforcement. The sessions held on Saturdays have the goal of "discussing topical-and often challenging-issues and sharing life experiences that will positively impact academic achievement, build respect for self and

others, and emphasize the importance of community engagement” (O.K. Program, 2016). Another important component of the program is that the mentors are in place in the school setting, partnering with the teacher to ensure that the students are getting the educational support they need to be successful in the classroom.

The O.K. Program has partnered with school districts and has since become the longest established mentorship program focused on African American boys. Through this work, it has since expanded to six cities, as efforts are in place to continually recruit African American men as mentors for the young men. The National OK Program Report (n.d.), shows the following outcomes for the 2016-2017 school year: 79.1% of O.K. boys had a 2.0 GPA or higher, 88.1% of O.K. boys avoided suspension and 98.5% avoided arrest.

Many of the mentoring programs focus on improving outcomes for the focus population, and some organizations have sought data to better understand the needs of African American males. The National Mentoring Partnership (2015) published statistics to represent the African American male labor force. In comparison to White men, African-American men from the ages of 18-34 have twice the rate of underemployment and are more likely to hold part-time employment. “African-Americans overall represent 12 percent of the labor force, but 27 percent of those have given up looking for work and 23 percent are “marginally attached” workers who are clinging to employment” (p. 3).

Mentoring programs have been found to help in playing a critical role in supporting these young men with exposure to career pathways. Mentors can play an active role in the exposure of these options, as well as development of the necessary skills. Through

the intentional integration of these pathways, these young men can begin to make informed decisions for future coursework and postsecondary options, if applicable.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the factors and factors that impact the African American male as a learner. This study is significant because of the achievement gap that is evidenced not only in this particular district, but across the nation. Reading is the central focus of the achievement measured.

This literature review also introduces the elements of mentoring programs that have proved effective with African American males. It the specific programs and highlights the focuses that have been in place to assist in the success of those involved. The importance of the components is detailed, as a means to connect with academic achievement. This action research seeks to examine the effect of a district supported mentoring program on the reading achievement of African American males over a three-year period of time.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Overview of the Study

This quantitative action research study investigated the impact of a district sponsored mentoring program on the student achievement and growth of African American male elementary students. The southeastern school district where this study took place has historically had a substantial achievement gap between African American student achievement data, in comparison to all other subgroups. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2017) published that 85% of Black students in South Carolina were performing at either Basic or Below Basic in grade 4 reading. District-level reporting broken down into ethnicity and shared with building administrators indicated the differences in achievement between subgroups of students. The African American subgroup, specifically male, has been one that this district has chosen to closely support. It was determined that targeting this particular population could drastically impact the overall achievement levels of the African American subgroup, which was identified as an area of need based on South Carolina reporting. The program is designed to mentor students related to academic and social emotional domains focused on narrowing achievement gaps, specifically in the area of reading.

Based on the program focus area, English Language Arts achievement of the targeted African American male population was explored. Growth was closely examined to determine if more growth occurred among participants in the program compared to non-participants. “Research supports that boys of color are in crisis. The National Household Educational Surveys Program by the U.S. Department of Education looked at the early skills of young boys of color and found them lagging in emergent literacy skills” (Zimmerman, 2007, p. 7).

The purpose of this action research is to determine the effect of a district sponsored mentoring program has on a subpopulation of learners, specifically third through fifth grade African American male students. The two research questions that guide this study are: (1) What impact does a mentoring program directly have on African American male student achievement in reading; and (2) How does the growth among those youth participating in the mentoring program compare to those not participating. These research questions were examined throughout the course of this study and through the data collection. Data were collected and analyzed, so that future initiatives can be improved upon when targeting this particular group of students.

Research Design and Intervention

The quantitative research approach was objective, concerned with measurable data and a sample that represents a defined population, with a specific emphasis on a treatment and comparison group. Creswell (2003) stated “experimental research seeks to determine if a specific treatment influences an outcome. The researcher assesses this by providing a specific treatment to one group and withholding it from another and then determining how both groups scored on an outcome” (p. 42). The nature of this research

was based on comparative research to investigate if there was any significant difference in the reading achievement of students who participated in a mentoring initiative and those that did not. In this action research, the specific treatment was the mentoring program and the outcome was student growth on the instruments selected for this study. The effect on academic achievement was gathered and analyzed. Data were retrieved from various sources throughout the study.

The district team supporting the initiative is comprised of members from the Instructional Services Department. Each of the seven schools received two to four mentors from the Instructional Services department depending on the population size. The teams included directors and coordinators from the department. Those mentors were in place for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. Their responsibility was to meet with the students on a weekly basis, while providing support on an as needed basis to the schools. In the 2018-2019 school year, a Behavior Management Specialist oversaw the support at the school, while being supported by one district level mentor. This helped in aligning the goals of the mentoring program throughout the year.

Each of the three years had different levels of focus. With those identified areas comes different experiences for the young men in the program. In the implementation year (2016-17), the main focus was on college and career pathways. The participants had exposure to different careers and visited both a military base and college campus. The second year (2017-18) incorporated parental support and their involvement in the educational process, specifically in the area of reading. This occurred through incorporation of parent nights and book author visits. The third year (2018-19) had a

focus on behaviors and strategies to be successful in the classroom. Many schools offered this support through before school meetings with the participants.

The identified and stated Problem of Practice (PoP) is the lack of reading achievement with a targeted group of students, African American males. This group of learners come to school with various experiences and different types of needs. Not only are they in need of academic support in reading, but with social and emotional needs as well. Variables, such as gender and ethnicity, have been eliminated, as this study has a focus on a concise group of learners.

A handbook was developed and provided to stakeholders to communicate the roles of each member, as well as developing a timeline of expectations (see Appendix C). The reasoning for providing support in reading were outlined. By providing guidelines to district staff, the intention is to decrease the influence of the variables that might affect the outcomes.

The action researcher was instrumental in supporting the program at the district level. The researcher's role throughout implementation was to support one of the grade levels within one of the identified schools, during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. In 2018-19, the researcher was available to one of the particular sites, but was not as involved with other sites, as the focus has shifted more to the behavior aspect as a means to focus on the social emotional needs of the students. As a member of the Instructional Services Department, the researcher is involved in supporting the teachers and administration across all schools. The researcher works more directly with teachers and school level administration, than with the students. The only exception is in the first two years of the program with a small group of students at one particular site.

Participants

The target population for this comparative study consisted of twenty-seven fifth grade elementary students representing six of the nineteen elementary schools and one of the seven middle schools within the county. The middle school included in the study contains the fifth grade students for that particular section of the county. Each of the school sites were among the schools chosen to participate in this mentoring program, as the target population is the majority at these sites. All participants were notified of their selection in the mentoring program (see Appendix A). Convenience sampling was chosen because of the accessibility of the schools to the action researcher.

The selection of the participants was done at the district level and then vetted through the school sites. Literacy data points were examined, which included both MAP® and Fountas and Pinnell scores. The main focus was to identify students that were not receiving any other areas of support and not performing on grade level, as measured by the norms from both assessments.

The district within this area of South Carolina has approximately 40% white students, 26% black students, 28% Hispanic and 6% other across all of the thirty-six schools. Approximately 56% of the students across the county are eligible for free or reduced lunch, as retrieved from the Community Report Card that is published annually to stakeholders.

All of the schools represented in this study are Title I schools. As the South Carolina Department of Education (n.d.) states, “the purpose of Title 1, Part A of Public Law 107-110 is to enable schools to provide opportunities for children served to acquire

the knowledge and skills contained in the challenging state content standards and to meet the challenging state performance standard developed for all children.” (para. 1)

Data Collection Measures, Instruments and Tools

Data Collection Measures. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Data were collected from participating fifth grade students and non-participating fifth grade students at the same school. The sample includes African American male students who participated in the mentoring program, from the inception (third grade) until the 2018-19 academic year (fifth grade). The comparison group includes other African American male students in those grade levels from those schools that did not participate in the mentoring program. These two cohorts from their third grade year until fifth grade year will be analyzed, based on growth over time.

Instruments and Tools. The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP®) were one of the instruments used to determine growth over the period of time. This formative assessment is used across the district to help in tracking student achievement and growth, as well as in instructional decision making and monitoring. This assessment is nationally normed, which allows comparison of student performance to grade level peers, at both the local and national level.

MAP® Growth is a computer adaptive test—which means every student gets a unique set of test questions based on responses to previous questions. As the student answers correctly, questions get harder. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions get easier. By the end of the test, most students will answer about half the questions correctly, as is common on adaptive tests. The purpose of

MAP® Growth is to determine what the student knows and is ready to learn next.

MAP® Growth can track students' individual growth over time – wherever they are starting from and regardless of the grade they are in. (NWEA, 2017)

The MAP® assessment scores of the participants were used to measure growth in the area of English Language Arts over time. The instructional areas assessed are the following: Literary Text: Language, Craft, Structure; Literary Text: Meaning and Context; Informational Text: Language, Craft, Structure; Informational Text: Meaning and Context; Vocabulary: Determine, Clarify Word Meaning. At the completion, a score is determined in each of the instructional areas and then an overall score is calculated. This is called the RIT score.

MAP® Growth uses the RIT (Rausch Unit) scale to help you measure and compare academic growth. Specifically, the scale measures levels in academic difficulty. The RIT scale extends equally across all grades, making it possible to compare a student's score at various points throughout his or her education. [The RIT score] represents the level where a student is ready to learn, also known as the Zone of Proximal Development. The test finds that level by pinpointing where a student would just as likely answer incorrectly as correctly, the point between knowing and not knowing answers. (NWEA, n.d.)

Another instrument used to measure student achievement is the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessments (SCREADY). Every student in third through eighth grade is required to take this statewide assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics, with the exception of those students with significant cognitive disabilities that would take the South Carolina Alternative Assessment instead. This summative

assessment is aligned to the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards, which specify the expectations of what students are to learn in each grade level. The ELA test is a computer-based assessment that contains questions with varying degrees of difficulty. The assessment also consists of selected response and evidence-based selected response items, in addition to a Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) item. The TDA item consists of a passage that is accompanied by a writing task that is related to the passage. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020)

The South Carolina READY assessment is reported by overall performance levels. The Score Report User's Guide (2019) outlines the following explanation to understanding the performance levels.

For the South Carolina READY assessment (SCREADY), educators have developed four performance levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in the South Carolina College- and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS). Most students have at least some knowledge of the information described in the content standards; however, performance levels concisely describe the extent to which students have demonstrated mastery of the knowledge and skills expressed in the SCCRCS. Performance levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level. (p. 4)

The manual provides descriptions of the various levels of student performances. Performance is categorized within four distinct levels. The Score Report User's Guide (2019) identifies these as the following:

Does Not Meet Expectations – The student does not meet expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.

Approaches Expectations – The student approaches expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.

Meets Expectations – The student meets expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.

Exceeds Expectations – The student exceeds expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.

A student who does not meet expectations in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level of learning, as defined by the grade-level content standards, *needs substantial academic support* to be prepared for the next grade level and to be on track for college and career readiness.

A student who approaches expectations in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level of learning, as defined by the grade-level content standards, *needs additional academic support* to be prepared for the next grade level and to be on track for college and career readiness.

A student who meets expectations in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level of learning, as defined by the grade-level content

standards, *is prepared* for the next grade level and is on track for college and career readiness.

A student who exceeds expectations in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level of learning, as defined by the grade-level content standards, *is well prepared* for the next grade level and is well prepared for college and career readiness. (p. 4)

The final instrument in this study, which is used to determine student reading levels, is the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. The school district in this study uses this assessment throughout the year to assist in determining both instructional and independent reading levels for students. However, only two data entry windows exist, one in the Fall and one in Spring of each academic year.

The three parts of the assessment are described in The Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System: Third Edition At A Glance (n.d., p. 2). The first part is based on oral reading ability of the student. The teachers use the Recording Form (see Appendix B) to transcribe information based on the observations and codes while the student reads aloud. This particular part measures several different components, including accuracy, self-correction, fluency and rate of oral reading. Part two involves a conversation with the teacher regarding the text. The conversation is centered around comprehension and involves thinking within, beyond and about the text. The last part is optional and involves writing about the reading. This involves having the student write or draw about one of the book that they have read. Completing this part of the assessment will help in providing concrete evidence of their understanding and how they

think. Through the information gathered by the teacher, using the parts described above, an instructional reading level is determined for the student.

Research Procedure

When conducting research in a school district, it is important to obtain permission to collect data from the school district. The researcher obtained written permission from the district's Chief Instructional Officer. Written letters were given to the Chief Instructional Officer to obtain approval to use the assessment data for the schools in the study. Once permission was granted for the researcher to move forward, the research process began. Upon completion of the study, the researcher destroyed all data received from the district, as to protect the confidentiality of all involved.

Treatment, Processing and Analysis of Data

All student data was collected and reported using generic names for students and schools (ex: School A, Student 1). This ensured that confidentiality is maintained for participants in the study. All data collection was done with the intention of evaluating if the mentoring program had a positive impact on ELA achievement for those participants. The findings will not be used in any way to evaluate or document individuals or schools.

In order to analyze the quantitative data, information was collected, including the following: MAP®, SCREADY and Fountas and Pinnell assessment data. Student assessment results by school (n=6) and students (n=27) were collected and growth represented on a graph. Data was summarized by each assessment and compared to growth of the comparison group (n=86). Reading MAP® assessment data is based on the overall RIT score, percentile and an overall amount of growth per school. SCREADY

assessment data is based on comparison of the number of students at each of the performance levels, from the first to third year of participation in the mentoring program. Fountas and Pinnell data is based on the text level of each student from the implementation of the mentoring program until the end of the third year.

Summary

Chapter III defines the details of the design and methodology that were utilized for this action research. Through using various academic data points over the three-year period, the researcher justified whether this proved successful with this group of learners. This study provided some strategies that this school district utilized within the context of the mentoring program. Additionally, this research helps in identifying some procedures that could be replicated in the future for additional investigation and research. This action research targets a need that is recognized throughout the educational system, the achievement gap.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Overview of the Study

This action research was conducted to determine the effect of a district supported mentoring program on the reading achievement of a targeted group of African American male elementary students. The action research investigated a defined Problem of Practice, which acknowledges achievement gaps that exists between students from differing economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds within our educational system. The action researcher recognizes that additional layers of support are necessary to support the schools in the efforts of the mentoring program.

The research was conducted in one school district that administered a mentoring program in six schools. These sites in which the study was conducted have over 50% of African American students among each of the school populations, except for one school site. However, that particular school site was chosen, due to it being within the same geographic location and filtering into the same middle school as the other schools receiving this program. It is critical that staff have awareness of how to support these learners in the school environment. The findings of this action research can be used to help in strengthening the mentoring program in future years, as well as identify needs

based on achievement data. This study explored data over a three-year period of time, as a way to determine the effectiveness of the program components on the reading achievement of participants.

The data that was compared involved two different groups of students. The study sample included twenty-seven fifth grade students in classrooms throughout six elementary schools and one middle school. All of the identified students were African American male students and were participants of the mentoring program, since its inception in third grade. The comparison group included eighty-six fifth grade students attending the same schools as the study sample. These students were also African American males, however they did not participate in the mentoring program at any point.

The mentoring program used in this study consisted of district level administrators that supported the students at each of the sites. Each school was assigned a team of mentors that remained as consistent as possible throughout the course of the three-year period. Due to some personnel changes, some of the schools may have seen a change in the third year, which involved the Behavior Management Specialist taking more of a lead at the school site to carry out the program expectations.

Intervention/Strategy

District mentors were placed in schools to not only meet with those identified students, but to also support instruction in reading. This was done in various formats, which included, but was not limited to book studies, shared reading, writing exercises and involvement in small group work. The mentors worked with the students in isolation and within the classroom setting. This was left to the discretion of the school, as to how best

the mentors could support the students involved in the program. The main goal was to support each student in whatever way the team determined necessary.

Each school site determined the structure of the support. As defined as part of the Roles and Responsibilities within the Handbook (see APPENDIX C, p. 3), it was expected that each mentor would meet with the principal at their assigned site to establish both a schedule and expectations for visits. The main focus for the following visits was to work on building relationships with the students.

Along with instructional supports, other interventions in this action research were provided for students, which included goal setting and data discussions. The team members had monthly expectations in place to have conversations with individual students centered around current grades, behavior and attendance data. This was used to assist the mentors in goal setting with students.

Core values were used each month to guide the actions of all teams and for student-centered activity planning. This ensured that each site had the same core value being addressed throughout the course of the study. Each month a new core value was the focus for the mentoring groups, as summarized below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Core Values

Month	Focus
September	Acceptance
October	Courage
November	Respect/Gratitude

December	Compassion
January	Perseverance
February	Honesty/Integrity
March	Self-Control
April	Forgiveness
May	Responsibility/Cooperation

In addition, opportunities for parents to become involved in the educational process were presented to those that participated in the mentoring program. The sessions for students, involved exposure to different college and career pathways, as well as literacy informational sessions for families. Table 4.2 outlines the focus of each of the experiences provided, as well as the targeted audience addressed through that session.

Table 4.2 Summary of Experiences

Session	Focus	Targeted Audience
1	Site Based Overview of Program Led by district level team. Opportunity for parents and students to meet mentors and ask questions	Students and families
2	Pathway to Careers at Military base Learning about various careers: Aviation, Military Police/Dog Handlers, Crash, Fire & Rescue	Students

3	Pathway to Careers at college campus Learning about various careers: Health Science/Biology, Business Technology, Industrial Technology, Cosmetology	Students
4	Parent and Student Night Sessions Rotating sessions that focused on presentation from a former NFL player that attended one of the schools, how to read aloud texts for meaning as a parent, conversations to keep families strong.	Students and families
5	Parent and Student Night Meet & Greet Information session from a guest children's book author. Copies of her books were signed and given to all attendees.	Students and families

General Findings/Results

Quantitative results were analyzed and summarized. The results are organized to assist in answering the question of whether the mentoring program impacts the reading achievement of an identified group of African American male students, as well as their growth in comparison to similar peers at the same sites. Quantitative findings include various assessment data collected throughout the three-year period of time, in which the mentoring program was implemented to the cohort group. Comparison group data was also collected to assist in determining growth for a similar group that did not participate in the mentoring program. Both groups contained African American male students and their achievement in the area of reading.

The MAP® Reading assessment provided data used to analyze the research questions of the impact on student achievement and growth in the area of reading with the cohort and comparison groups. The Fall 2016 data was the beginning of third grade year to the Spring 2019 data, which would be the end of the fifth grade year for all participants.

The researcher explored the data overall and at the school level using mean scores on the MAP® Reading assessment from the Fall 2016 term to the Spring 2019 term for the cohort group (n=27) and the comparison group (n=86). The overall RIT score from the cohort and comparison groups were compared to determine the growth among those two groups. Three of the six schools showed more growth in the cohort group than the comparison group. The remaining three sites showed more growth among comparison group. Overall, more growth was made in the cohort group of students than in the comparison group.

Using the 2015 Reading Student Status Norms from NWEA, norm growth from a beginning of year third grader to an end of the year fifth grader would be 23.5 RIT points (See Appendix D). The cohort group showed more growth (25.59), then typical growth as reflected in the student status norms. On the other hand, the comparison group showed less growth (23.40), then the norm growth.

While growth and learning are expected across time as the students' progress through third, fourth, and fifth grade, the researcher was focused on the amount of growth among the two groups and the differences in those groups and across schools. Full results are detailed within Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 and Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 summarize these key data points.

Table 4.3 Cohort Group MAP® Reading RIT Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	2016 Fall MAP Reading > Average > RIT Score	2019 Spring MAP® Reading > Average > RIT Score	Difference > Average > RIT Score
All	27	180.56	206.15	25.59
A	3	185.00	194.33	9.33
B	4	185.25	206.75	21.50
C	4	181.25	209.75	28.50
D	2	177.50	190.50	13.00
E	5	191.60	214.80	23.20
F	9	171.22	206.89	35.67

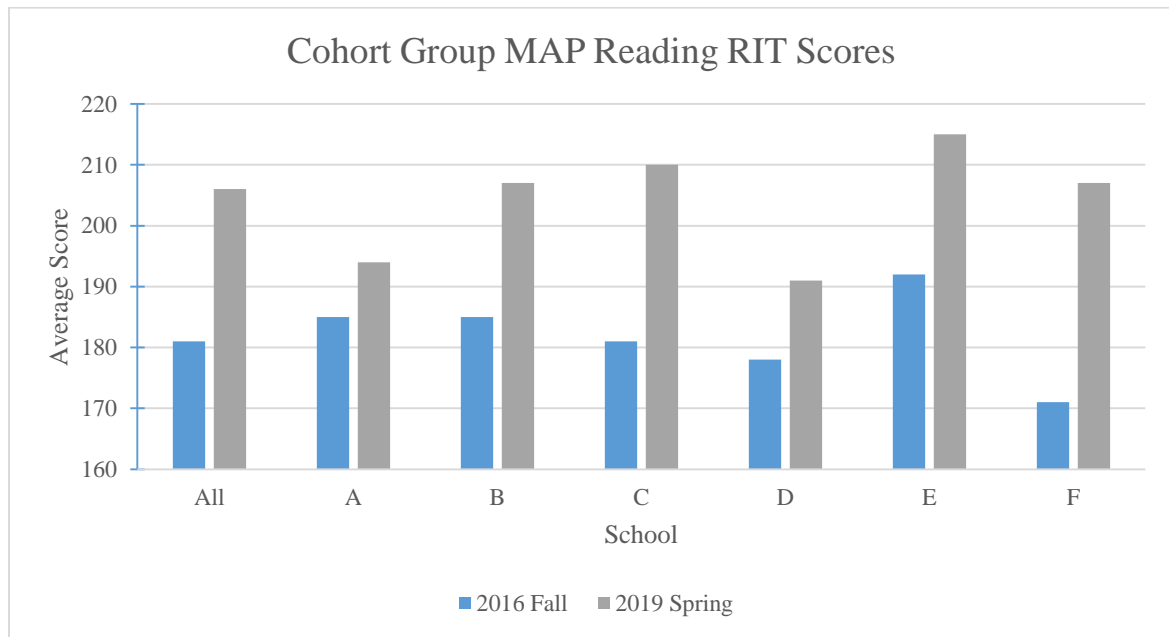


Figure 4.1 Cohort Group MAP® Reading RIT Scores

Table 4.4 Comparison Group MAP® Reading RIT Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	2016 Fall MAP® Reading > Average > RIT Score	2019 Spring MAP® Reading > Average > RIT Score	Difference > Average > RIT Score
All	86	176.12	199.52	23.40
A	7	178.29	206.00	27.71
B	11	182.64	204.00	21.36
C	9	173.00	196.44	23.44
D	10	184.44	207.20	22.76
E	24	172.83	198.46	25.63
F	25	173.71	194.80	21.09

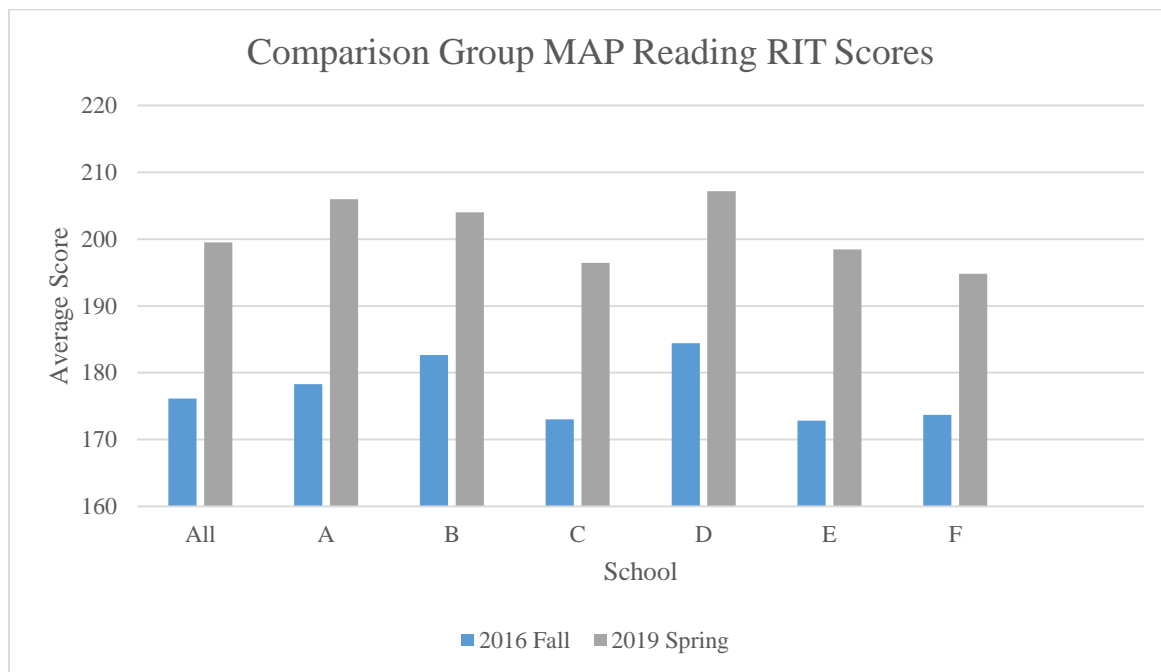


Figure 4.2 Comparison Group MAP® Reading RIT Scores

Table 4.5 Differences Between Cohort and Comparison Group in MAP® RIT Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	Cohort Group> Difference> Average> RIT Score	Comparison Group> Difference> Average> RIT Score
All	113	25.59	23.40
A	10	9.33	27.71
B	15	21.50	21.36
C	13	28.50	23.44
D	12	13.00	22.76
E	29	23.20	25.63
F	34	35.67	21.09

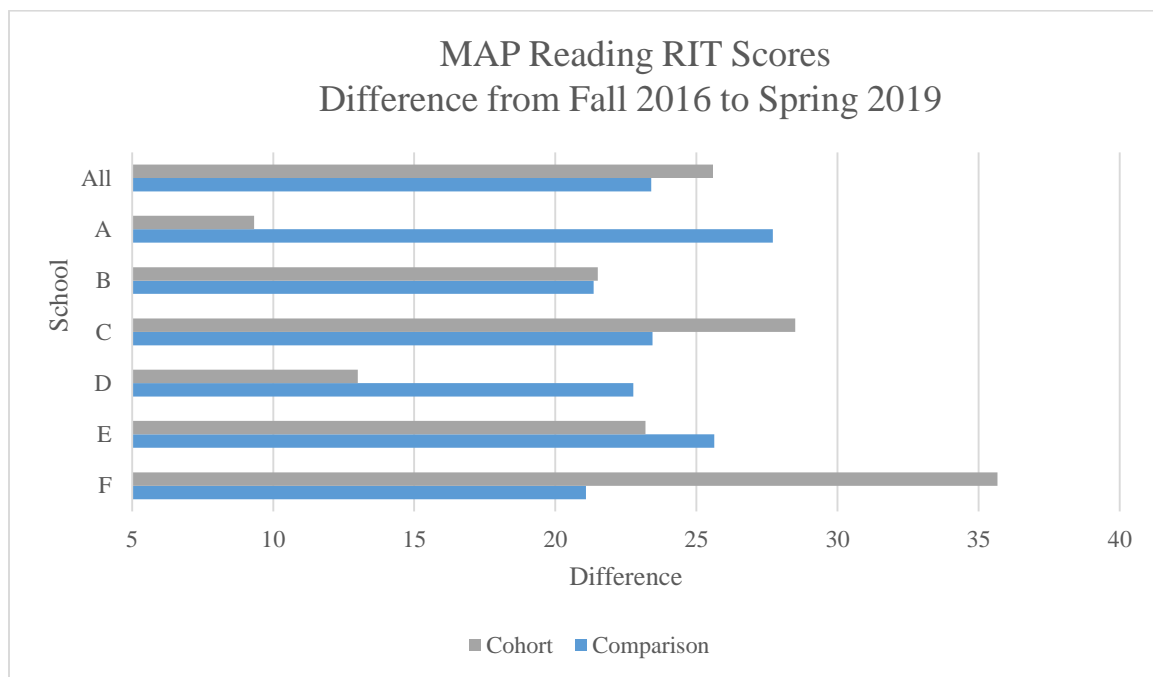


Figure 4.3 Differences Between Cohort and Comparison Group in MAP® RIT Scores

The SCREADY assessment was another source used to provide data to analyze the research questions on the impact of student achievement and growth in the area of reading with the cohort and comparison groups. The 2017 data was the end of third grade year to the Spring 2019 data, which would be the end of the fifth grade year for all participants. The Tables 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 and Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 summarize these key data points.

The mean scale scores from the six schools on the South Carolina READY ELA assessment from the Spring 2017 term to the Spring 2019 term were analyzed. The overall scale scores from the cohort and comparison groups were compared to determine the growth among those two groups. Four of the six schools showed more growth in the cohort group, however all six schools showed positive gains in both groups. Overall, more growth was made in the comparison group of students.

The reportable category is used for reporting to schools and parents. Five out of the six schools showed enough growth over time in the cohort group to keep them within the same reportable category (ie. Does Not Meet, Approaches). The average growth of the cohort group was enough to keep them within the Approaches category from third grade to fifth grade (See Appendix E).

Table 4.6 Cohort Group SCREADY ELA Scale Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	2017 SCREADY > Scale Score	2019 SCREADY > Scale Score	Difference > Scale Score
All	27	370.64	453.42	82.78
A	3	370.00	399.00	29.00
B	4	399.75	471.75	72.00
C	4	370.25	488.50	118.25
D	2	319.00	388.00	69.00
E	5	406.80	518.40	111.60
F	9	347.00	422.88	75.88

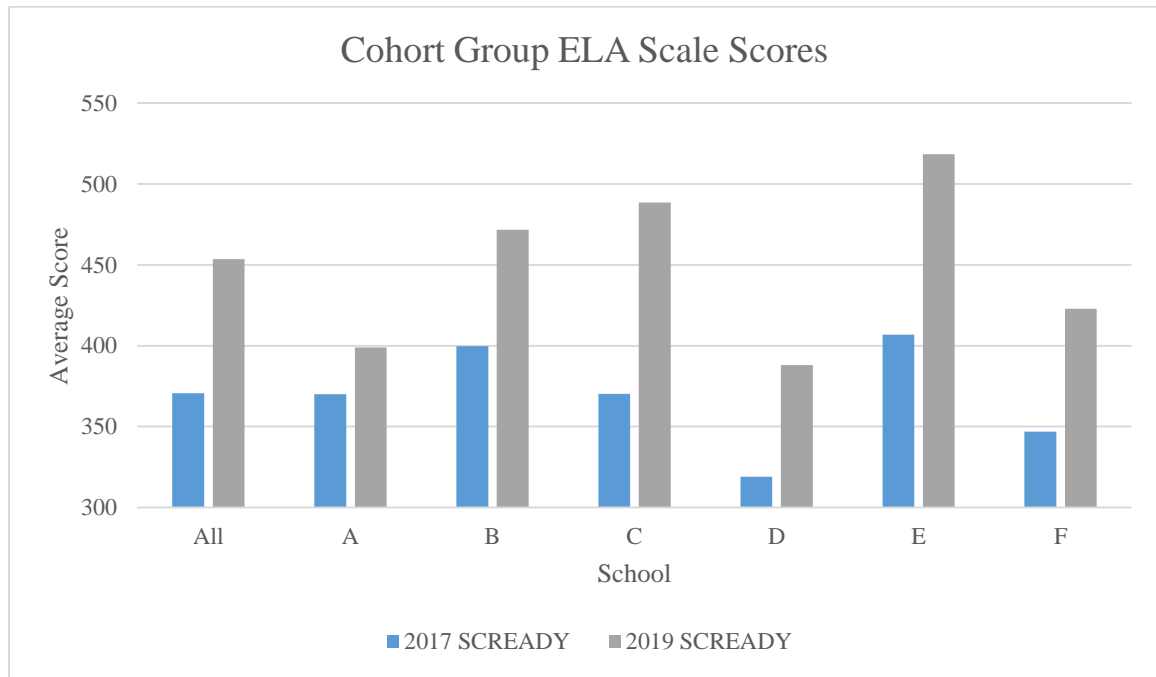


Figure 4.4 Cohort Group SCREADY ELA Scale Scores

Table 4.7 Comparison Group SCREADY ELA Scale Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	2017 SCREADY > Scale Score	2019 SCREADY > Scale Score	Difference > Scale Score
All	86	352.63	438.18	85.55
A	7	365.85	477.14	111.29
B	11	385.89	442.78	56.89
C	9	325.11	413.78	88.67
D	10	365.89	490.30	124.41
E	24	342.33	424.46	82.13
F	25	351.86	425.74	73.88

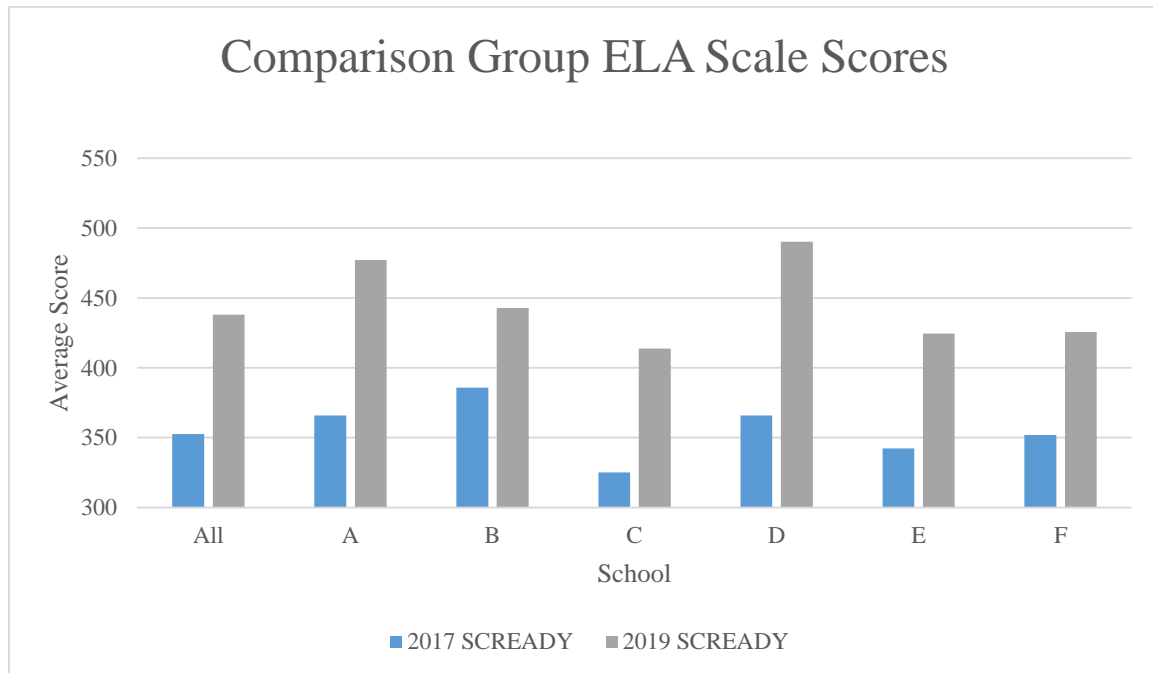


Figure 4.5 Comparison Group SCREADY ELA Scale Scores

Table 4.8 Differences Between Cohort and Comparison Group in SCREADY Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	Cohort Group> Difference> Scale Score	Comparison Group> Difference> Scale Score
All	113	82.78	85.55
A	10	29.00	111.29
B	15	72.00	56.89
C	13	118.25	88.67
D	12	69.00	124.41
E	29	111.60	82.13
F	34	75.88	73.88

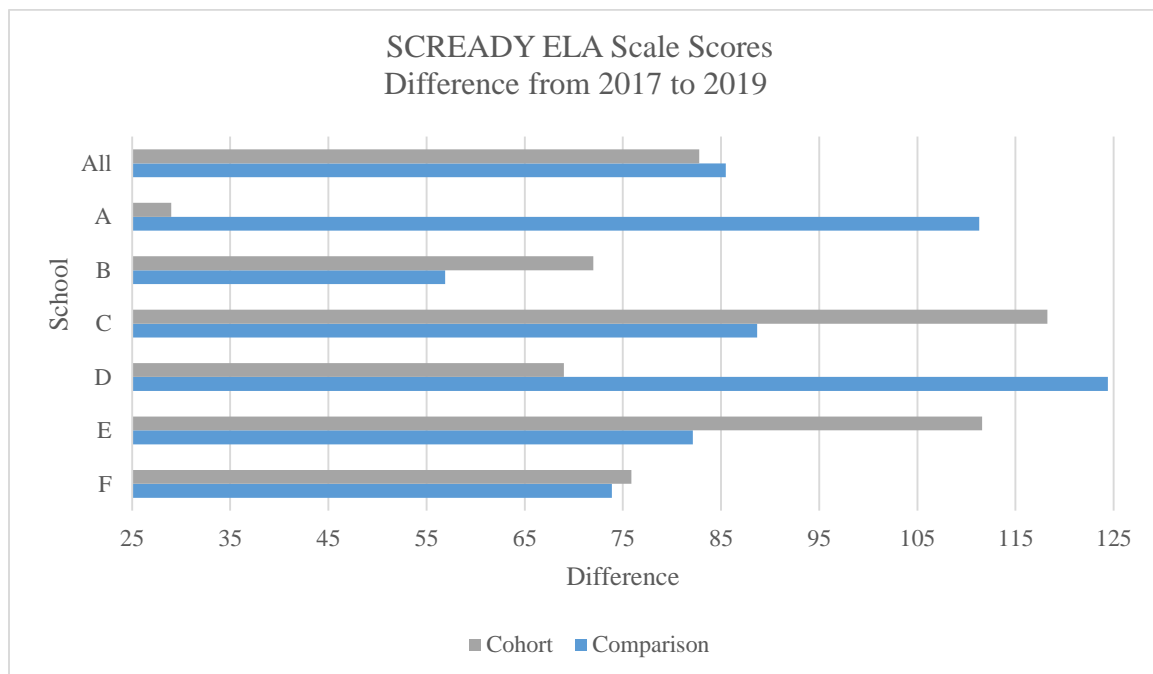


Figure 4.6 Differences Between Cohort and Comparison Group in SCREADY Scores

The final data source used to analyze the research questions of the impact on student achievement and growth in the area of reading with the cohort and comparison groups was the Fountas and Pinnell assessment. The Fall 2016 data was the beginning of third grade year to the Spring 2019 data, which would be the end of the fifth grade year for all participants. The Tables 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11 and Figures 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 summarize these key data points.

Over the three-year period of time, the growth in overall reading levels was explored. Four of the six schools showed more growth among the cohort group of students. Overall, more growth was shown in the cohort group of students.

Using the Fountas and Pinnell Instructional Level Expectations for Reading Chart, it can be determined that typical growth for a beginning of the year third grader (M/N) to an end of the year fifth grader (V/W) to meet expectations would be nine levels (See APPENDIX F). The average number of levels in both the cohort and comparison groups were compared to determine the growth among those two groups. Neither the cohort or the comparison group showed average or above average growth, based on the Instructional Level Expectations Chart.

Table 4.9 Cohort Group Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	Average Number of Levels> Fall 2016 to Spring 2019
All	27	7.19
A	3	8.00
B	4	8.00
C	4	7.25
D	2	5.50
E	5	7.80
F	9	6.50

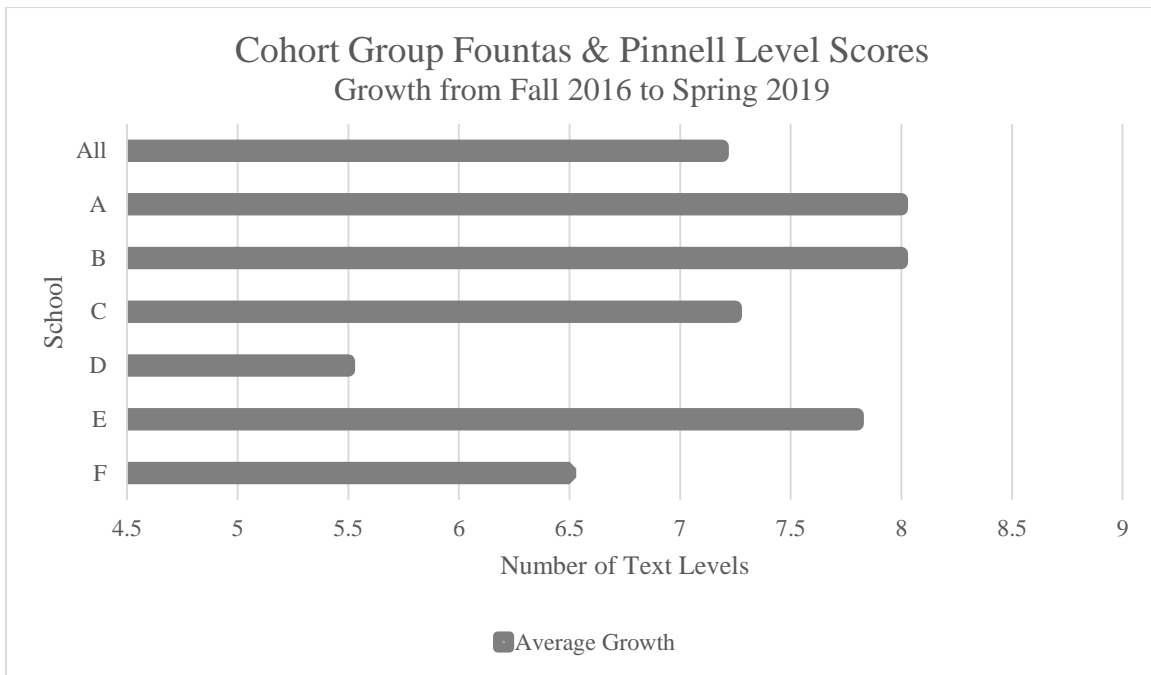


Figure 4.7 Cohort Group Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

Table 4.10 Comparison Group Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	Average Number of Levels> Fall 2016 to Spring 2019
All	86	6.88
A	7	8.57
B	11	7.11
C	9	6.00
D	10	4.80
E	24	7.29
F	25	7.09

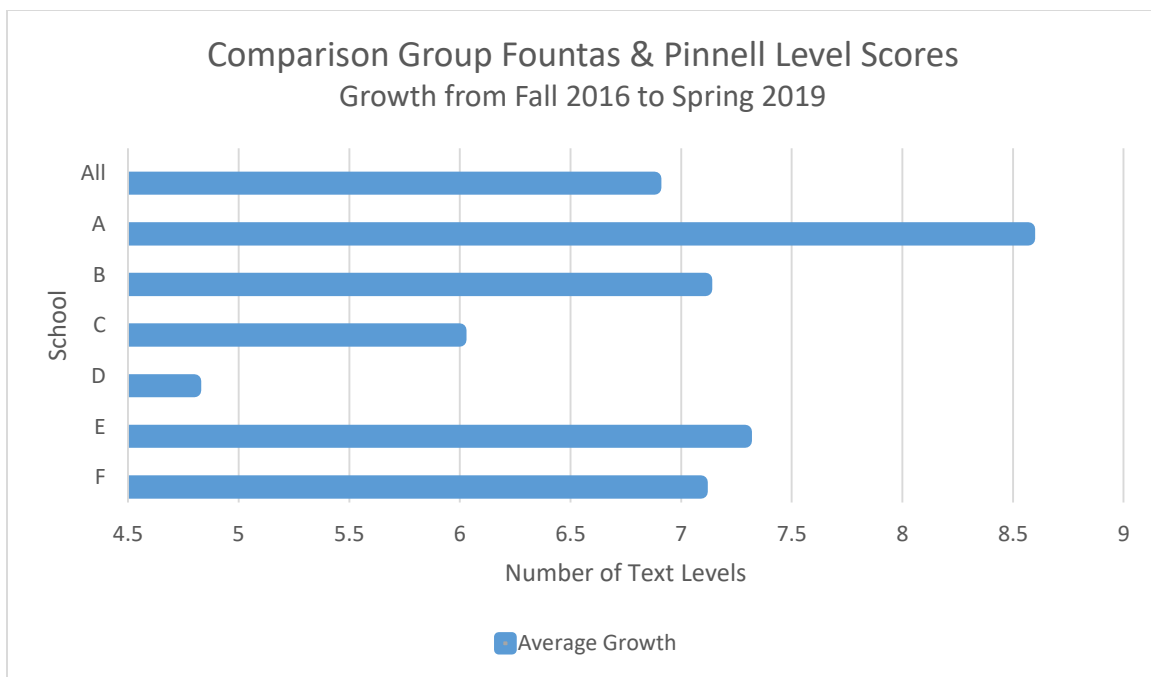


Figure 4.8 Comparison Group Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

Table 4.11 Growth Comparison of Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

School	Number of Students (n)	Cohort Group> Average Number of Levels> Fall 2016 to Spring 2019	Comparison Group> Average Number of Levels> Fall 2016 to Spring 2019
All	113	7.19	6.88
A	10	8.00	8.57
B	15	8.00	7.11
C	13	7.25	6.00
D	12	5.50	4.80
E	29	7.80	7.29
F	34	6.50	7.09

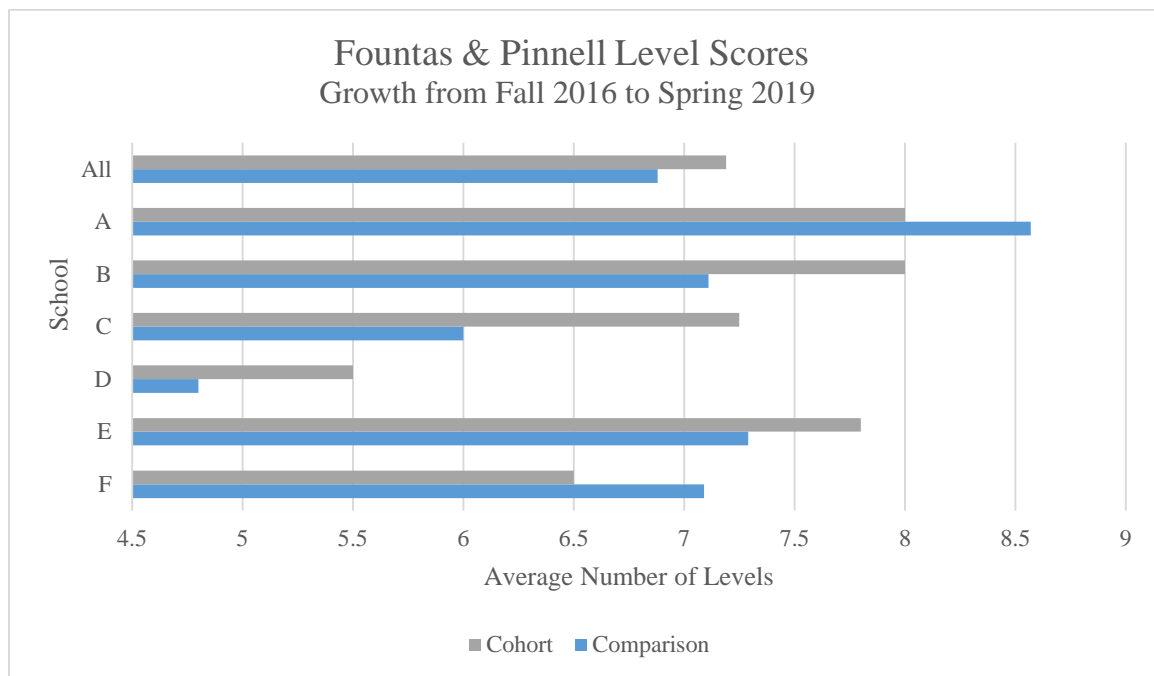


Figure 4.9 Growth Comparison of Fountas & Pinnell Level Scores

Analysis of Data

When examining the various data used within this study, some trends can be noted, as well as some areas for further investigation. It is important to look at each set of data and the growth shown for both group, as well as comparing it to the norm growth for the given assessments. Data analysis should also include what is deemed the norm for the particular group of students, in not only performance, but growth as well.

Both the MAP® Reading and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessments provided data that showed more growth in the cohort group of students. These assessments are given multiple times throughout the school year and provide formative feedback to teachers for use in the classroom. The MAP® Reading assessment is given on the computer three times each year. The Fountas and Pinnell assessment is administered individually to the student by a teacher and is required a minimum of two times each school year (fall and spring), but teachers can give throughout if they choose as a checkpoint.

In contrast, the SCREADY ELA assessment showed more growth in the comparison group, than with those students in the cohort. This summative assessment is given at the end of the school year, to determine mastery of grade level content, in grades three through eight. Students have transitioned over the past year to take the assessment on a computer; whereas in this group of students, they would have taken SCREADY using paper and pencil format during their third-grade year. Results of this assessment are provided to districts over the summer months.

When examining the amount of growth in each of the assessments, some key points were noted. On the MAP® Reading assessment, the cohort group of students showed more growth than what is typical, based on the Northwest Evaluation Association Student Status Norms. This is a point of celebration, since continued successes like these are what can assist in closing achievement gaps. On the SCREADY assessment, there was enough growth for the average scale score for the cohort group to remain in the Approaches category. This shows that the growth they maintained was comparable to the norm growth, since they did not regress or improve categories. On the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark, the growth among the cohort group was higher than the comparison group. However, neither of the growth for the group averages were what is deemed expected for those grade levels.

Supplemental Analysis of Data

During the study, experiences were provided to not only the students involved in the cohort, but also the families. A summary of those experiences was shared in Table 4.2.

- Three of the five experiences were provided to families;
- Two of the five experiences presented options of career pathways to the students;
- Two of the five experiences involved guest speakers that have used literacy skills within their profession;
- Two of the five experiences provided families with an opportunity to learn more about literacy expectations and home involvement.

The experiences that were provided to students and families were done over the three-year period of involvement in the mentoring program. These opportunities were only provided to the cohort group of students. This information was used to provide clarity of those options.

Summary

Chapter IV presented an analysis of the findings for this action research. The purpose of this study was to determine if a district supported mentoring program had an effect on African American male student achievement, specifically in the area of reading. The data examined the cohort group of students that participated in this program from their third grade school year through fifth grade. The comparison group of students also involved the same criteria as cohort group, however the only difference is those did not receive the mentoring program. Data collection strategies were analyzed and discussed. Overall out of the three assessments analyzed, the study showed more growth in both the MAP® Reading and Fountas and Pinnell assessments with the cohort group. The comparison group showed more growth in the SCREADY reading assessment. This information, not used in isolation, indicates the need for further investigation on the impact of a district supported mentoring program in order to support African American male reading achievement

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this action research was to determine the effect of a mentoring program on a cohort group of African American male students. The research questions that guided this study were (1) What impact does a mentoring program focused on academic and social aspects have on African American male student achievement in reading? and (2) How does the growth among those participating in the mentoring program compare to those not participating? Based on the data, the cohort group of students showed more growth on two of the three assessments, than the comparison group. The cohort group surpassed the expected norm growth on one of the assessments. Each source of assessment data showed growth at each of the school sites over the course of the study, with some of those sites exceeding the growth of the comparison group.

Results Related to Existing Literature

This action research study is grounded on the impact of mentoring programs with African American boys, along with the components that have proved successful in other settings. “Early and positive community interaction with our Black boys is critical to their success” (Goings et. al, p. 60). Throughout the course of this study, district level

mentors were provided to each school setting to support these young learners. Since these mentors were unfamiliar with those involved, it was critical for them to focus on building positive relationships.

The mentoring program included long-term, regular work between the participants and the mentor within six schools. Results indicated that at some schools, overall performance on formative assessments, in particular, improved at a higher rate on average for the cohort students than their counterparts (comparison students). This aligns with several of the effective characteristics of mentoring programs that was highlighted throughout the course of this study.

The mentoring program was structured in a setting that promoted one adult with a small group of boys. Jarjoura (2015) recommended this to be a more promising model for educational success, instead of a larger group setting. Throughout the three-year time period, each mentor was responsible for a specific grade level group of boys and would transition with them throughout the following years to assist in building consistent relationships.

It is of the utmost of importance to continue to work towards closing the achievement gap. This is not something that can be done solely at the district level, but would involve all stakeholders. Ladson-Billings (2007) states:

When we speak of an education debt we move to a discourse that holds us all accountable. It reminds us that we have accumulated this problem as a result of centuries of neglect and denial of education to entire groups of students. It reminds us that we have consistently under-funded schools in poor communities

where education is needed most. It reminds us what we have, for large periods of our history, excluded groups of people from the political process where they might have a say in democratically determining what education should look like in their communities. And, it reminds us that what we are engaged as we reflect on our unethical and immoral treatment of our underserved populations. (p. 321)

The 100+ Voices Strong mentoring initiative also incorporated a large part of family involvement. There were several opportunities for collaboration, both during and outside of the school day. Those experiences focused on literacy while also incorporating other important information that was vital for families to understand. For instance, presenters shared how to read aloud texts with your child at home. This provided parents also with an opportunity to ask more detailed questions about the reading program used across the district. This helps in preparing parents to know the expectations for their child, as a means of working to improve instructional practices. The guest speakers that were involved in the family sessions were carefully selected, so that the students would see African American individuals that may have come from similar backgrounds. This was an opportunity to bring forth cultural awareness to not only the students, but to all stakeholders.

The Pathway to Careers experiences provided the students with an opportunity to explore options for the future. This was achieved not only by visits to college campuses, but also by visiting the programs offered throughout the high schools. This opportunity presented the students with the ability to begin thinking of the pathway they may want to pursue, as they continue into secondary education. As Whiting (2006) suggested through

his work with the Scholar Identity Model, black males need to be future oriented, as a means of staying on task.

Since this mentoring initiative involved district leadership, consistency was key. Members of each team established with the school leadership the days they would be visiting on a weekly basis. Through this consistency, connections were able to be formed between the mentors and these young men. Positive relationships have proved to be a critical part of effective mentoring programs found through the review of literature. As Goings, Smith, Harris, Wilson, & Lancaster (2015) suggested:

“Having mentorship opportunities with community members can help bridge the gap between Black boys and the educational, mentorship, and positive reinforcement services they need during their pursuit of educational and lifelong success. As the colloquial saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. When applies to Black boys, it definitely takes a village to change the narrative on how we perceive, talk about, and invest in their future” (p. 61).

Practice Recommendations

Though not all assessment data showed positive growth with the cohort group, both formative assessments yielded more growth. After completion of this study, the formative results have shown more of a positive impact in the cohort group. Goal setting and expectations are conversations that teachers should have with both students and parents. Since MAP® and Fountas and Pinnell assessments are ongoing throughout the school year, this would be an opportune time to have discussions with both students and

parents. Making sure these expectations are communicated can assist in assessment knowledge.

Opportunities for families to be involved in educational experiences is a recommendation from this study. It is critical for them to have knowledge of the career pathways that are provided throughout the area. Since many of the families in this particular county stay for generations, the schools are a central point to provide exposure to what is available to these students. Hattie (2015) states:

We must stop allowing teachers to work alone, behind closed doors and in isolation in the staffrooms and instead shift to a professional ethic that emphasises [*sic*] collaboration. We need communities within and across schools that work collaboratively to diagnose what teachers need to do, plan programmes [*sic*] and teaching interventions and evaluate the success of the interventions. We need communities that promote and share professional development aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and expertise, that devise performance ‘dashboards’ to show success in learning and achievement and that build a collation of the successful. (p.23)

Continuation of the mentoring groups through the middle school level is recommended upon completion of this study. “The transition to middle school is a period of vulnerability for many children, but can present even greater challenges for African American children. It is a time when an existing achievement gap often widens” (FPG Child Development Institute, 2007, p.17). By continuing to offer a mentoring program that is focused on literacy, the additional intervention and support could assist in positively impacting the growth of these students throughout these critical years.

Limitations

The sample of students was limited to fifth grade students that were involved in the program over a three-year period. The total number of participants that was consistent throughout the study in its entirety was 27 students. The number of students was impacted at some schools, due to being a relatively transient school district. It was imperative that those involved in the study needed to be in the program throughout the length of the program. No student was brought into the study after the initial inception of the program in third grade.

The impact of the mentoring program examined within the study was from the beginning to the end of one cohort group's participation. There was no ongoing examination of effectiveness completed during the three-year cycle. This study only looked at where the one group of students started to where they ended at the end of the mentoring program.

This study focused on overall scores in reading of the students; however, examining the individual domain level areas, such as comprehension or accuracy levels could show more specific areas of focus. Since each data tool used has individual breakdowns into the area of reading, this could provide insight for the mentors to use during their visits. The structure of the work and support they offer could mirror the needs of each individual student. This would make the work they do with students more strategic and aligned to specific need for each student participating in the program.

Some school-based factors may have an impact on the success of the students. The particular school district in the study does offer school choice as an option for

families. These choices may contribute to some of the experiences that the students receive at the individual school sites. Transitions in both school leadership and teachers may also have an impact, as some of the schools have consistent changes in those positions annually. This results in new learning and expectations for those new to the learning environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research can be conducted at different school sites, to see the impact of the mentoring program at other locations. This study focused on schools with a larger African American male population, so examining the impact at a school or district with a different size subgroup could yield different results. A larger sample consisting of participants from different locations, even across a state, could show more accurate results. It may also be beneficial to examine if certain school choices at the different sites could have of an impact on the results.

Future studies could also be done to examine the impact of male compared to female mentors with this participation population of students. Due to size of the Instructional Services Department and the number of schools that were supported, mentors were divided and placed with no consideration on gender or ethnicity of those members. Furthermore, examining the impact of relationships and how those different genders could influence African American male students may have an impact on the achievement results.

The central focus of the program differed throughout the three-year implementation. Each year had a focus in place for the mentors to follow with included

building relationships and career pathways during the first year; family involvement in the educational process during the second year and social and emotional needs in the final year. Another area to examine could be the growth of the students in each of those years to determine if these centralized areas of focus may have had an impact on their reading achievement.

The impact of the mentoring program examined within the study was from the beginning to the end of one group's participation. This study only looked at where the one group of students started to where they ended at the end of the mentoring program. It could be beneficial to track and follow the students throughout the middle school years to determine if there is a long lasting effect on their reading achievement. This would allow for more data analysis of both the formative and summative assessments used with the students. Since both MAP® and SCREADY are used in this particular district through grade 8, this might help in determining if growth continues, since discrepancies were identified in the two assessments through the findings in this study. More student data in these assessments could lend itself to look more closely at growth and achievement over time.

Another area to consider for future study would be the effectiveness of the implementation. There was no ongoing examination of effectiveness completed during the three-year cycle. This could help in shedding light on if some schools may be using the mentors differently. Since a handbook was established and set for the stakeholders involved, determine how those processes can be effectively monitored. The handbook provided guidance on the focus of the core values and the data collection requirements. Since there was flexibility in how the mentors were used initially, setting those

parameters may help in setting more accountability to the model if all mentors structure their work the same.

Summary

The reason for choosing this action reach was to explore how the implementation of a district supported mentoring program, which this researcher has been involved with and supports, makes a difference in the reading achievement of those participants.

Though the use of mentors incorporating core values and literacy support into their work with students, positive impacts were shown on student achievement data. Student growth over a three-year period of time was closely examined, for the cohort and comparison groups, and demonstrated more overall growth across both formative assessments with the cohort group. However, since this study was a small sample, it cannot be used to justify any concrete conclusions.

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APPENDIX A

100+ VOICES STRONG LETTER

[School logo]

[Date]

Dear Parents,

Your son was selected to be a part of the **100+ Voices Strong Initiative** for [REDACTED]. We will be recognizing your son for his continued effort to becoming proficient by the end of 2016-17 school year.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), has acknowledged that the issues of racial disproportionality, as it relates to African American males and the achievement gap, have existed for many years. This assertion is reflected in [REDACTED] subgroup data. The **100+ Voices Strong Initiative** is an effort to close the achievement gaps.

Because of this, [REDACTED] is focused on closing performance gaps within our district as it relates to our African American male subgroup.

Your son has proven that he has **GREAT** potential to be proficient by the end of the 2016-17 school year. To ensure that your son is successful, [REDACTED] Instructional Office Staff has partnered up with *school name* to help provide an individualized approach to success. Members of the team will work to build strong relationships, provide academic support, and various resources throughout the school year.

We know that with the right support, your son will be successful. We are excited and eager to start working closely with him. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact *principal's name*, school principal, for more information.

APPENDIX B

FOUNTAS AND PINNELL RECORDING FORM

RECORDING : ORMS

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Recording Form **Part One: Oral Reading**

Accuracy Rate	Errors	13 or more	11-12	9-10	6-8	4-5	1-3	0
	%	Below 95%	95%	96%	97%	98%	99%	100%

Self-Corrections _____

Fluency Score	0 1 2 3	<p>Fluency Scoring Key</p> <p>0 Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate.</p> <p>1 Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four-word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress, with slow rate most of the time.</p> <p>2 Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns.</p> <p>3 Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.</p>
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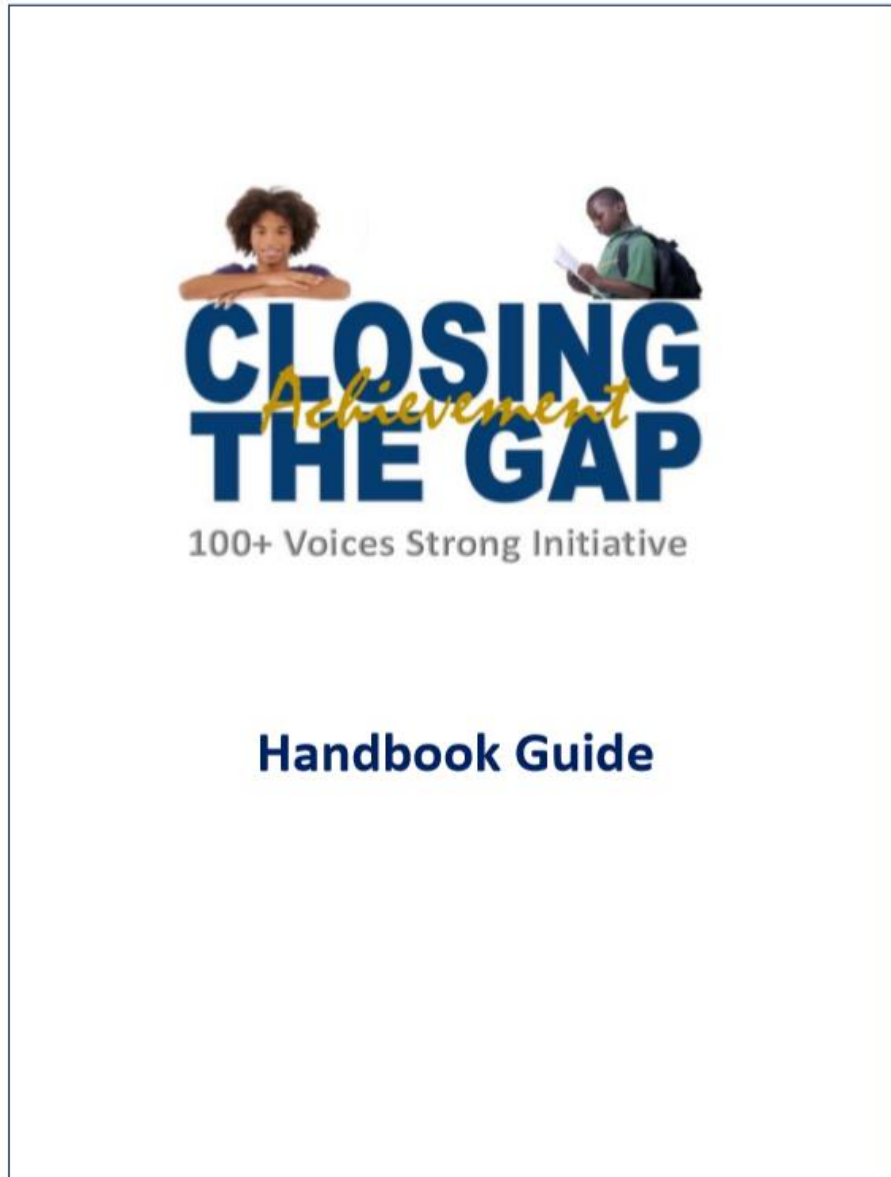
Reading Rate	<p>End Time: _____ min. _____ sec.</p> <p>Start Time: _____ min. _____ sec.</p> <p>Total Time: _____ min. _____ sec.</p> <p>Total Seconds: _____</p> <p>$(RW \times 60) \div \text{Total Seconds} = \text{Words Per Minute (WPM)}$</p> <p>$13,440 \div \text{_____} = \text{_____ WPM}$</p>
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APPENDIX C

100+ VOICES STRONG HANDBOOK GUIDE



Problem Statement



██████████ has acknowledged the issues of racial disproportionality, as it relates to African American boys, has existed for many years. This assertion is reflected in the district's subgroup data. ██████████ 100 Voices Initiative seeks to shed light on some of the challenges that exists for our African American male students in their pursuit of academic success.

100+ Voices Strong School Teams

Roles and Responsibility of each district mentor:

- All district mentors loop with their 100 Voices students to the next grade level. (If you are assigned to 5th grade, you will work with the 3rd graders next year.)
- On the first visit, meet with the principal to establish expectations for the 100+ Voices Strong Initiative. Establish a schedule for visiting students throughout the school year.
- Verify that you can take pictures and videos of students.
- By the second school visit, begin building the STRONG relationships with students, explain to students that you are there to ensure they are successful. *"Get to know your students"* (See September for specific data)

Roles and Responsibility of each principal:

- Principals should provide any additional information on each 100 Voices Strong Students.
- Principal should establish a school team to support the 100 Voices Strong Initiative.
- Principals should meet monthly with school team to discuss the progress of the 100 Voices Strong Students.
- Principals should also provide a calendar of events pertaining to 100 Voices Strong Students (i.e. dates for award ceremonies, RTI meetings, field trips, extra-curricular events, etc.)

Roles and Responsibility of each student:

- Be a role model for peers
- Set academic goals
- Participate in kick-off meeting, community events, and field trips
- Read and write daily
- Adhere to the nine Core Values (See page 6)

Roles and Responsibility of each parent:

- Attend kick-off event
- Sign permission slips for participation in 100 Voices Strong
- Read with your child regularly
- Attend parent workshops

Core Values

A core value is a central belief deeply understood and shared by every member of a team. Core values guide the actions of everyone on the team. This year, 100 Voices Strong students will focus on nine core values. Mentors are encouraged to emphasize on the corresponding core value for each month with the 100 Voices Strong students. Activities should be student-centered.

Some helpful websites include:

<https://kidsgrowingstrong.org/core-values>

<http://leftbrainbuddha.com/10-ways-teach-mindfulness-to-kids>

<http://www.publicprep.org/page.cfm?p=785>

September	Acceptance
October	Courage
November	Respect/Gratitude
December	Compassion
January	Perseverance
February	Honesty/Integrity
March	Self-Control
April	Forgiveness
May	Responsibility/Cooperation

October - Core Value: Courage

Collect these data points in the month of October:

- Fall MAP Scores
- F & P Levels
- Report Card
- Behavior Data
- Attendance Data
- Interest and Reading Inventories (See appendix)
- Learning Goals sheet (See appendix)

On the second visit, you should have Fall MAP and F&P levels for each student. Use this information to begin goal setting for the school year. The essential question: Ask the students "Why is goal setting so important?"

All district mentors will reconvene in October to discuss findings, points of celebrations, and/or concerns from the previous meetings. At this meeting, we will receive an overview training on the following: Enrich, PowerSchool, Educators' Handbook, etc.

November - Core Value: Respect/Gratitude

Collect the Fall Writing Sample in the month of November.

Topic: "What are you thankful for?" (At least 200 words)

Parent Workshop: *Ensuring Success for All*

Location and time (TBD)

December- Core Value: Compassion

Self-Reflection on progress (via video)

Scheduled Mid-Year Field Trip (TBD)

All district mentors and principals will meet in December to discuss successes, challenges, and projections for meeting end of the year goals.

January - Core Value: Perseverance

Collect these data points in the month of January:

- Report Card Data (Honor Roll, BUGS, etc)
- Behavior Data
- Attendance Data

February - Core Value: Honesty/Integrity

Collect these data points in the month of February:

- Winter MAP
- F & P Levels

March - Core Value: Self-Control

Collect these data points in the month of March:

- Report Card Data (Honor Roll, BUGS, etc)
- Behavior Data
- Attendance Data

Guest Speakers: High School Juniors and Seniors (AA males)

Suggested Parent Night at each 100 Voice Strong Schools (Coordinate with Principal)

Suggested Topics to cover:

- Test taking strategies
- Reading at home
- Planning for the future
- Expectations for middle school

April - Core Value: Forgiveness

- Spring Writing Sample
- Self-Reflection on progress (via video)

May-Core Value: Responsibility/Cooperation

Collect these data points in the month of May:

- Report Card
- Behavior Data
- Attendance Data
- F & P Levels

Scheduled End of the Year Field Trip (TBD)

Suggested Resources:

District Literacy Plan

District RTI Plan

Brain Breaks Activities: Pure Edge Resources

Closing the Achievement Gap Institute: Harvard University

Dr. Anthony Broughton (Professor at Claflin University)

E₃ (Educational Exposure and Experiences) Dr. Gregory McCord

Goal Setting: Starting the Conversation about Academic Goal Setting

[http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-](http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-hanson.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01)

[hanson.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01](http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-hanson.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01)

Goal Setting: Teach Goal Setting to Help Students Take Ownership of Learning

[http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-](http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-aymett.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01)

[aymett.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01](http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol12/1201-aymett.aspx?utm_source=ascdexpress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Express-12-01)

Howard, Tyrone C. *Black Male(d)*

Jon Saphier *High Expectations Teaching*

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. (Kappa League)

Mindful Movement: Pure Edge Resources

Mr. Clarence Stephens, Community Member (African American Pilot)

Mrs. Tarea Kennedy, Literacy Coach at St. Helena Elementary School

USCB Call Me MISTERS

Video Resources for Trauma Informed/Compassionate Schools:

How the Brain Works and Ways to Self-Regulate When Stressed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm9CJJ74Qxw> (2:31) Dr. Dan Siegel – Model of the Brain– Shared by Pete Hall and Kristin Souers during their session at Summer Institute

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_dxnYhdyuY (4:25) Hand model of the Brain for Kids – Kid-friendly explanation of Dr. Siegel’s model of the brain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he-fW9_3egw (4:12) Don’t Flip Your Lid (Rap) – Elementary students describe parts of the brain and using mindfulness to self-regulate when in their “downstairs” or “lower” brain. (This was shared at the Compassionate Schools training at USC-Upstate in Spartanburg this past summer.)

Being Trauma-Informed/Compassionate Schools – helping students learn appropriate coping strategies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6y-47cA5hU> (3:00) 21st Century Health and Wellness

Approach Jefferson County Public Schools/University of VA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47YuGeZW7s> (5:13) Trauma Sensitive Schools, Therapy Dogs for reading, PBIS – Independence School District

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ijW0oDDpao> (4:43) Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools – understanding and responding to children's challenging behaviors in schools

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFdn9479U3s> (12:22) Ted-Talk – Trauma Informed Care/Approach, Dr. Vicky Kelly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HG8H4n2j9I> (9:58) Ted-Talk – Making Childhood Trauma Person – Dr. Allison Jackson – good description of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the importance making connections with young people to help them move forward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9Pq4K1ZKws> (28:01) Ted-Talk - The Effects of Trauma on the Brain and How It Affects Behaviors - Dr. John Rigg – Neuroscientist and Physician who works with soldiers at Ft. Gordon, GA. I found this insightful considering the number of military-impacted students we serve. (The end is surprising and impressive!)

Appendix A.

Burke Reading Interview
by Carolyn Burke (1987)

Name _____ Date _____

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?
2. Do you ever do anything else?
3. Who do you know who is a good reader?
4. What makes him/her a good reader?
5. Do you think she/he ever comes to something she/he doesn't know when reading?

If your answer is yes, what do you think he/she does about it?

6. What do you think is the best way to help someone who doesn't read well?
7. How did you learn to read? What do you remember? What helped you to learn?
8. What would you like to do better as a reader?
9. Describe yourself as a reader.
10. Using a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being a terrific reader, what overall rating would you give yourself as a reader ?

Appendix B.



Learning Goals

Name _____

Week of _____

My personal goal this week:			
My learning goal this week:			
How am I doing? When I think about how hard I worked to learn, how well I behaved, and how well I worked with others: 1 - I did not do well. 2 - I could have done better. 3 - I did okay. 4 - I did GREAT!	I rated myself with this number because.....	What are my next steps? What actions will I take? How will I know I have been successful?	
Practicing skills to be a better reader	1 2 3 4		
Practicing skills to be a better writer	1 2 3 4		
Researching about an interest	1 2 3 4		
What I can tell others I learned about this topic	1 2 3 4		
I feel good about:			
I feel challenged by:			
I want to change:			

APPENDIX D

NWEA STUDENT STATUS NORMS

The norms in the tables below have a very straightforward interpretation. For example, in the status norms for reading, grade 2 students in the middle of the "begin-year" period had a mean score of 174.7 and a standard deviation of 15.5. To get a sense of how much dispersion there was, the SD 15.5 can be

subtracted from the mean and added to the mean to produce a range of about 159-190. Since the norms are based on the bell curve, we know that 68% of all scores are expected to fall between in this range.

2015 READING Student Status Norms						
Grade	Begin-Year		Mid-Year		End-Year	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
K	141.0	13.54	151.3	12.73	158.1	12.85
1	160.7	13.08	171.5	13.54	177.5	14.54
2	174.7	15.52	184.2	14.98	188.7	15.21
3	188.3	15.85	195.6	15.14	198.6	15.10
4	198.2	15.53	203.6	14.96	205.9	14.92
5	205.7	15.13	209.8	14.65	211.8	14.72
6	211.0	14.94	214.2	14.53	215.8	14.66
7	214.4	15.31	216.9	14.98	218.2	15.14
8	217.2	15.72	219.1	15.37	220.1	15.73
9	220.2	15.68	221.3	15.54	221.9	16.21
10	220.4	16.85	221.0	16.70	221.2	17.48
11	222.6	16.75	222.7	16.53	222.3	17.68

2015 MATHEMATICS Student Status Norms						
Grade	Begin-Year		Mid-Year		End-Year	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
K	140.0	15.06	151.5	13.95	159.1	13.69
1	162.4	12.87	173.8	12.96	180.8	13.63
2	176.9	13.22	186.4	13.11	192.1	13.54
3	190.4	13.10	198.2	13.29	203.4	13.81
4	201.9	13.76	208.7	14.27	213.5	14.97
5	211.4	14.68	217.2	15.33	221.4	16.18
6	217.6	15.53	222.1	16.00	225.3	16.71
7	222.6	16.59	226.1	17.07	228.6	17.72
8	226.3	17.85	229.1	18.31	230.9	19.11
9	230.3	18.13	232.2	18.62	233.4	19.52
10	230.1	19.60	231.5	20.01	232.4	20.96
11	233.3	19.95	234.4	20.18	235.0	21.30

2015 LANGUAGE USAGE Student Status Norms						
Grade	Begin-Year		Mid-Year		End-Year	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
2	174.5	16.58	184.9	15.34	189.7	15.47
3	189.4	15.20	196.8	14.24	200.0	14.11
4	198.8	14.66	204.4	13.83	206.7	13.64
5	205.6	13.87	209.7	13.23	211.5	13.19
6	210.7	13.79	213.9	13.30	215.3	13.38
7	214.0	13.82	216.5	13.52	217.6	13.70
8	216.2	14.17	218.1	13.92	219.0	14.26
9	218.4	14.15	219.7	13.98	220.4	14.50
10	218.9	15.04	219.7	14.99	220.1	15.74
11	221.5	14.96	222.1	14.85	222.1	15.80

2015 GENERAL SCIENCE Student Status Norms						
Grade	Begin-Year		Mid-Year		End-Year	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
3	187.5	11.74	192.6	10.92	195.4	11.01
4	194.6	11.16	198.7	10.75	201.0	10.92
5	200.2	11.06	203.7	10.80	205.7	11.07
6	204.3	11.54	207.1	11.40	208.6	11.73
7	207.2	11.92	209.5	11.87	210.9	12.23
8	210.3	12.28	212.3	12.19	213.5	12.63
9*	212.4	12.83	213.9	12.78	214.8	13.32
10*	213.4	13.76	214.5	13.72	215	14.29

*Only status norms are provided for grades 9 and 10 general science. These status norms describe the distributions of achievement in general science academic skills and content knowledge for the relevant student populations for these grades and are useful for screening and placement purposes. Test results should not be used to evaluate performance where science content is more specialized, such as in typically differentiated high school science courses (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics).

APPENDIX E

SCREADY VERTICAL SCALE SCORE RANGES

VERTICAL SCALE SCORES

SC READY assessment scores moved to a new, vertical scale in 2016–17. The tests continue to report scale scores; the scores are reported on the new, vertically scaled metric. The four performance levels (Does Not Meet Expectations, Approaches Expectations, Meets Expectations, Exceeds Expectations) are unchanged (that is, the same degree of achievement is required to be placed in each performance level as was required in 2015–16). However, as grades three through eight have been placed on a common, vertical scale, the values of the reported scores are different from 2015–16.

A vertical scale is one in which a given scale score value shows the same amount of achievement, regardless of the grade level in which the student is tested. However, that scale score must be interpreted in light of the cut scores for a particular grade. For example, students in grades three, five, and seven could all receive a math scale score of 550. That would indicate that the three students had about the same degree of achievement in math. However, that score would be classified as ‘Exceeds Expectations’ for a third-grade student, ‘Meets Expectations’ for a fifth-grade student, and ‘Approaches Expectations’ for a seventh-grade student.

A separate reading subscore is reported for ELA. The reading subscore is reported on the same scale, with the same performance levels, as the total ELA score. Other ELA and all math subscores are reported as one of three categories (Low, Middle, High), as they were in 2015–16.

Tables of the scale-score cuts for each subject, grade, and performance level, along with their associated lowest obtainable scale score (LOSS) and highest obtainable scale score (HOSS), are given below. The LOSS and HOSS are the theoretical minimum and maximum scale scores on each SC READY test. However, these theoretical minimum and maximum scores are not always obtainable in practice. For any particular grade, for example, the obtainable maximum scale score can be, and often is, less than the HOSS. Regardless of the obtainable minimum and maximum scale scores, the LOSS and HOSS will be the lowest and highest points on the Individual Student Report (ISR).

ELA Vertical Scale Score Ranges by Grade

Grade	LOSS	Does Not Meet	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	HOSS
3	100	100–358	359–451	452–539	540–825	825
4	100	100–418	419–508	509–592	593–850	850
5	100	100–449	450–557	558–652	653–875	875
6	100	100–454	455–575	576–667	668–900	900
7	100	100–511	512–614	615–704	705–925	925
8	100	100–537	538–642	643–737	738–950	950

Mathematics Vertical Scale Score Ranges by Grade

Grade	LOSS	Does Not Meet	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	HOSS
3	100	100–359	360–437	438–543	544–825	825
4	100	100–401	402–481	482–562	563–850	850
5	100	100–447	448–535	536–621	622–875	875
6	100	100–453	454–542	543–627	628–900	900
7	100	100–487	488–577	578–649	650–925	925
8	100	100–526	527–614	615–683	684–950	950

APPENDIX F

FOUNTAS AND PINNELL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR READING

	Beginning of Year (Aug–Sept.)	1st Interval of Year (Nov.–Dec.)	2nd Interval of Year (Feb.–Mar.)	End of Year (May–June)
Grade K		C+	D+	E+
		B	C	D / E
		A	B	C
				Below C
Grade 1	E+	G+	I+	K+
	D / E	F	H	J / K
	C	E	G	I
	Below C	Below E	Below G	Below I
Grade 2	K+	L+	M+	N+
	J / K	K	L	M / N
	I	J	K	L
	Below I	Below J	Below K	Below L
Grade 3	N+	O+	P+	Q+
	M / N	N	O	P / Q
	L	M	N	O
	Below L	Below M	Below N	Below O
Grade 4	Q+	R+	S+	T+
	P / Q	Q	R	S / T
	O	P	Q	R
	Below O	Below P	Below Q	Below R
Grade 5	T+	U+	V+	W+
	S / T	T	U	V / W
	R	S	T	U
	Below R	Below S	Below T	Below U
Grade 6	W+	X+	Y+	Z
	V / W	W	X	Y
	U	V	W	X
	Below U	Below V	Below W	Below X
Grade 7	Z	Z	Z+	Z+
	Y	Y	Z	Z
	X	X	Y	Y
	Below X	Below X	Below Y	Below Y
Grade 8+	Z+	Z+	Z+	Z+
	Z	Z	Z	Z
	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Below Y	Below Y	Below Y	Below Y

KEY

Exceeds Expectations
Meets Expectations
Approaches Expectations: Needs Short-Term Intervention
Does Not Meet Expectations: Needs Intensive Intervention

The Instructional Level Expectations for Reading chart is intended to provide general guidelines for grade-level goals, which should be adjusted based on school/district requirements and professional teacher judgement.