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Evaluating Project L.I.F.T and Its Impact on Reducing the Elementary Literacy Gap through Teacher Professional Development

Quinetta Hall
Gardner-Webb University

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Evaluating Project L.I.F.T and Its Impact on Reducing the Elementary Literacy Gap
through Teacher Professional Development

By
Quinetta Hall

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Quinetta Hall under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

A. Doug Eury, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

Date

Steve Laws, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Jeff Hamilton, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Jeffrey Rogers, Ph.D.
Dean of the Gayle Bolt Price School
of Graduate Studies

Date

Abstract

Evaluating Project L.I.F.T and Its Impact on Reducing the Elementary Literacy Gap through Teacher Professional Development. Hall, Quinetta, 2014: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Literacy/Achievement Gap/Reading Comprehension/Professional Development

This dissertation was designed to evaluate Project L.I.F.T and its plan to reduce the student achievement gap. A 5-year plan was proposed by investment researchers who recognized the importance of increasing student achievement and closing barriers in education. Trends in research data indicate that literacy significantly falls behind math on many state tests. Despite teacher professional development, innovative literacy practices, and interventions, there has not been an increase in literacy scores among minority subgroups such as African Americans and Hispanics. There is also a trend in achievement gaps among males and females.

Project L.I.F.T was granted \$55 million to be innovative in its plans to reduce the student achievement gap and restructure the west corridor of the school district. The researcher examined the project's inputs, outputs, and outcomes to determine how teacher professional development (output) will be implemented in the quest to reduce the literacy gap. Various data collection instruments were utilized to gather teacher responses.

An analysis of the data revealed whether or not innovative plans used by Project L.I.F.T aided the zone in establishing teacher professional development plans that significantly reduced the literacy achievement gap among elementary age students. The data should also help the district establish the same innovative practices in other zones to improve sustainability of practices developed by Project L.I.F.T regarding teacher professional development.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is an apparent literacy achievement gap in education among secondary students (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). Research has been conducted addressing the achievement gap since 2001 when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation purpose was to enhance reading instruction, raise reading achievement for all students, and provide targeted support for the teaching of reading to most economically challenged schools (Teale et al., 2007). There are disparities that exist such as economic factors, testing requirements, and curriculum issues which could limit educators from closing the literacy gap.

According to Anderson, Medrich, and Fowler (2007), the achievement gap can be defined as the differences in achievement scores between White and African-American students based on national tests such as the SAT. However, Anderson et al. distinguished that the achievement gap can also be split between internal and external differences. The internal gap is the average differences between racial and ethnic groups and the external gap is the average differences between aggregate school scores for student subgroups and aggregate scores for White students across the state (Anderson et al.).

Literacy development begins in elementary school starting in kindergarten. Elementary educators focus on teaching students how to read and use skills to promote learning from the text (Teale et al., 2007). However, many secondary students lack the strategies they need to comprehend the demanding content used in classrooms (Ness, 2007). Academic demands increase as students are promoted from one grade level to the next. Therefore, in order for students to become proficient, teachers have the task of arming students with a variety of comprehension strategies (Ness, 2007). These strategies are used to teach students reading comprehension skills to improve their scores

on standardized tests. Over the course of the 2005-2006 school year, Ness (2007) set out to examine the extent to which teachers use reading comprehension strategies in regular classroom instruction. After collecting 2,400 minutes of classroom observation, Ness determined that less than 3% of instructional time was devoted to reading comprehension. Ness acted as a nonparticipant observer in classrooms where she coded the instruction she observed and judged the instruction based on the level of comprehension. Ness concluded that teachers emphasize breadth over depth and are concerned with the preparation for state tests. It was also suggested that reading comprehension is one more time-consuming burden, and literacy integration takes a back seat to delivering the content.

Statement of the Problem

The literacy achievement gap is an ongoing issue affecting students at the elementary level. Elementary years are critical in the acquisition of literacy skills to be successful in the classroom. With demands of state testing and school policies, teachers are often overwhelmed with tasks at hand. Despite all the major educational reforms, literacy continues to be a major concern. These concerns are evident in secondary schools where reading problems exist among many students and are undetected for many years. Schools are failing to teach reading effectively to large numbers of students who progress through school without having achieved a working competency of basic reading skills (Shuman, 2006). Once in high school, these students drop out of school and eventually cannot survive in any academic setting. Far too often, as Shuman (2006) described, this is a cycle of failure where the student will now draw from society more than he/she contributes to it.

However, looking back at the problem in the schools, most of the burden of

reading instruction has fallen upon the English teachers, many of whom are not equipped to teach reading (Shuman, 2006). Teaching one to read involves a process that most teachers consider themselves inadequate to deal with according to Shuman (2006). With this devastating issue, all stakeholders in the school district have to get involved to look for solutions. Shuman suggested that some solutions to the reading disparities would involve evaluating reading competency, diagnosing reading difficulties, and promoting enriched reading opportunities. Evaluating reading competency would involve content area teachers giving brief tests in reading comprehension (Shuman). Diagnosing reading difficulties employs teachers using the *cloze procedure*. Shuman suggested that the cloze procedure involves teachers omitting every tenth word from a passage. This procedure would determine student difficulties in sentence complexity and incidence of word usage.

In secondary schools, reading material is oftentimes too complicated for a student to grasp, and they do not know techniques to understand what they are reading (Shuman, 2006). When teachers ask students to read, some are not checking for clarity or comprehension (Shuman, 2006). Students are not allowed to think about what they are reading, have contrasts to look for, or have a possible list of vocabulary words that might cause problems (Shuman, 2006).

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are one of the causes of reading problems, reading delays, and reading deficits in elementary age children (Ergul, 2012). Reading difficulties are the most frequent learning problems among students and are the main reasons for academic failure (Chall, 1996, as cited Ergul, 2012). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007) reported that 34% of students had reading difficulties and their performance fell behind their peers (as cited in Ergul, 2012). Juel (1988) completed

a longitudinal study and found that 88% of students who are poor readers at the end of first grade remain poor readers in the fourth grade (as cited in Ergul, 2012). And lastly, 68-80% of boys were found to be poorer readers than girls (Bingol, 2003, as cited in Ergul, 2012). These facts illustrate the existing literacy gap and reading problems that are among our secondary students.

Early diagnosis and intervention is important for struggling readers and one way for educators to be preventive. Ergul (2012) conducted a study to gain an understanding of the learning disabilities associated with reading delays. Frequency of third-grade students who have not acquired the grade-level reading skills were examined and their reading skills evaluated in terms of their risk for having learning disabilities (Ergul). Three groups were used to test for reading disabilities. The first group included students who could not read correctly, experienced difficulties in the first phase of reading development, made many errors, and read slowly due to phonological deficits (Ergul). The second group included students who could read correctly and acquire fluency in their reading; these students experienced difficulties and their reading rates were at least 1.5 years behind their reading level (Ergul). The third group was an independent group. Ergul predicted that a reading fluency assessment was an effective method in identifying learning disabilities because in crowded classrooms, teachers cannot find enough time to deliver the curriculum, monitor their students' reading skills development, or provide supplemental instruction.

Participants in the study were 113 third graders from 13 elementary schools. Measures used were a teacher interview and the measure of reading fluency developed by the researcher. Assessments of students were completely individually in a quiet room in their school (Ergul, 2012). In the conclusion of the study, Ergul (2012) found that the

relationship between the frequency of reading difficulties and the total number of students in the classroom indicated no correlation. Therefore, class size was not relevant to a child learning the fundamentals of reading. All three test groups were below the norm of the third-grade level which indicated that the groups were behind in their reading development and could not recognize words accurately and read at a slow pace (Ergul). Results from the study pointed out the students in the groups began to feel failure and made mistakes in reading which consequently ended with a student's difficulty in reading comprehension. Ergul indicated that students in the groups experienced difficulties because of the underlying issue of learning disabilities, and class size was not an issue.

Students with learning disabilities have more of a negative attitude towards reading than a student who is labeled as a poor reader. A student's learning disability at times limits his/her academic success and reading becomes secondary. Students who are diagnosed with learning disabilities harbor more negative attitudes towards reading than their nondisabled counterparts (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000). Lazarus and Callahan's (2000) study employed the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) to describe the attitudes toward reading of students diagnosed with learning disabilities and compared their attitudes with those expressed by their nondisabled peers. Participants in the study were 39 learning disabled certified teachers who administered the above-mentioned survey to 522 randomly selected students diagnosed with learning disabilities. Composition of the population was 75% males to 25% female, which is a composition of the learning disabled population in a school (Lazarus & Callahan).

Findings from the study indicated that students who were diagnosed with a learning disability expressed attitudes that were similar to their nondisabled peers. Therefore, a child's learning disability was not a factor in his/her attitude towards

reading. The learning disability did not limit the student from wanting to learn how to read which is important in the nation's effort to reduce the literacy gap among students.

Reading Attitudes/Deficiencies in Evidence

There are not many research studies that answer the question as to why the nation's literacy achievement gap is growing. As a result, Lazarus and Callahan (2000) conducted a study to address the literacy problem and sum it up in a child's attitude toward reading. A child's attitude toward reading affects his or her achievement. Although reading attitude plays a pivotal role in the development and use of lifelong reading skills, the student's attitude is a central factor affecting his/her reading performance (Lazarus & Callahan). Limited research has linked reading attitude with ability and reported that poor and remedial readers express more negative attitudes than better readers (Askov & Fishback, 1972, as cited in Lazarus & Callahan). This fact is obvious: Students with low reading ability will have a negative attitude towards reading because they simply cannot read. Students who are capable of reading and understanding what they read will enjoy reading more than a student who is weaker in that area.

Lazarus and Callahan (2000) included a national sample in their study that examined 18,185 students in Grades 1-6 where first and second graders expressed positive attitudes toward academic and recreational reading. However, all students' overall reading attitudes gradually declined across elementary school years; the low-ability student attitudes toward recreational reading yielded the sharpest decline across the grade level (Lazarus & Callahan). Determining the reasons for the sharp decline in positive attitudes and the contributing factors towards reading problems are questions that arise with the limited research that is available (Lazarus & Callahan).

Purpose of the Study

African-American students are a subgroup that attains poorer academic outcomes on all educational levels and domains than their White counterparts (Jencks & Phillips, 1998, as cited in Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010). Although there is an achievement gap among African-American students, there is an emerging gender gap among African-American children. Researchers have found that girls tend to outperform boys regardless of academic domain (Coley, 2001, as cited in Matthews et al., 2010). However, African-American boys warrant special attention due to low motivation and poor achievement level.

Early difficulties in literacy affect a child's academic performance, and Christian et al. (2000) found that children who develop strong literacy-related skills early in life become better readers and show greater gains in math and science (as cited in Matthews et al., 2010). When African-American males enter kindergarten, they tend to perform poorer on reading assessments; thus, literacy research suggests that African-American boys are at risk for experiencing difficulties with reading and writing skills development very early in their academic careers (Matthews et al., 2010). These troubling trends in the academic development of African-American males led Matthews et al. (2010) to research and evaluate the racial and gender gaps in literacy, with a special focus on literacy development of African-American boys and the influential role of classroom social, regulatory, and learning-related skills.

As a response to the literacy disparities, Project L.I.F.T is a program that was developed to close the achievement gap among African-American students and address the academic difficulties in reading development. Located in the west corridor of the town, students come from families that face economic hardship, low literacy skills, and

negative behaviors (Project L.I.F.T strategic plan, 2012). These influences are some of the main contributors to the underachievement of African-American students. Matthews et al. (2010) stated that the role of socioeconomic status, externalizing behaviors, and home literacy environment widens the disparity and differences among high and low performing students. Research has a tendency to identify the literacy gap, but it is important to explain the gaps. In Matthews et al.'s study, they explained learning-related skills and how these social skills facilitate active and efficient learning. However, their study found that there was a higher prevalence of behavior problems than positive social and emotional abilities. Teachers reported that African-American boys rated higher on externalizing behaviors and lower on learning-related skills. Matthews et al. revealed that academic persistence, organization, and learning independence may be important for the literacy growth among African-American students. With this information, the purpose of the study was to evaluate Project L.I.F.T's ability to reduce the literacy achievement gap among elementary African-American students.

Project L.I.F.T

An investment study group in a large urban school district created Project L.I.F.T to address the achievement gap in the west corridor of a North Carolina city. This corridor is populated with families with low socioeconomic backgrounds and the schools have a history of low performance. The group of community leaders raised needed funds from corporate foundations to help support the project over a 5-year period. Some of the investment groups include the Belk Foundation, Foundations for the Carolinas, Wells Fargo Foundation, Duke Energy Foundation, Bank of America, C.D. Spangler Foundation, and the Levine Foundation. These groups each contributed an amount totaling \$55 million to assist in closing the achievement gap. A collaboration agreement

between the large district and Project L.I.F.T became effective January 10, 2012, and will end January 9, 2017. The project will focus on enhanced teacher and leadership quality, more time spent on task (including extended day, out of school time, and prekindergarten programs), access to technology, and policy changes that will allow school leadership more freedom (CMS Collaboration Agreement, 2012). Another focus will be increasing student achievement and the graduation rate. Four interventions will be used in the implementation of the project which include talent (teacher development), time, technology, and invested parent and community support. These interventions are aligned with the project's focus.

There are five prekindergarten through eighth-grade schools, two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in the project. Schools are overseen by one area superintendent and an executive director. The area superintendent is mandated to follow operating principles for the nine schools listed above. The area superintendent is employed to do the following: (1) implement innovative, best practice, and research-based programs; (2) request immediate reassignment of any school employee not aligned with the mutual goals; (3) approve selection of all staff recommended by principals for employment; (4) implement research-based school turnaround strategies; (5) implement extended learning strategies; (6) utilize federal, state, and local dollars to support the project's plan; and (7) develop a comprehensive human resources strategy to recruit, select, and compensate employees (CMS Collaboration Agreement, 2012).

Project L.I.F.T has distinguished expected outcomes for the 7,000 students participating in the project. District and community leaders expect a 90% graduation cohort rate at the high school, 90% composite proficiency rate at all Project L.I.F.T schools, 90% of students achieving a year's worth of academic growth, and 90% of

teachers and leaders meeting standards to be highly effective (Project L.I.F.T strategic plan, 2012).

The study group decided to use a Logic Model to depict a theory of change and policy reform. The Logic Model is comprised of inputs, strategies, outputs, and outcomes that would detail how the project is designed to address the achievement gap in the school district. Inputs of the project are the investment groups that have devoted time, money, and energy. Partnerships were created giving key stakeholders buy-in, freedom, and flexibility in staffing, budgets, and programs. The interventions discussed (time, talent, technology, and community support) will be used as strategies to effectively close the achievement gap in the west corridor of the city. These interventions will lead to positive school climates that focus on achievement, accountability, and rewarding success. Lastly, the impact on schools, communities, and individuals would remove the thought of educational disparities, build healthier communities, and gain greater social capital replicating the model to close the achievement gap nationwide.

Definition of Terms

In regards to closing the literacy achievement gap, it is important to understand the vocabulary associated with literacy. Reading skills and reading strategies are two terms which are used in a variety of ways and can confuse readers with their usage. However, it is important to recognize the meaning so as not to confuse students and teachers and render instruction less effective (Afflerbach, Pearson, Paris, 2008). Reading skills and strategies have been used by teachers and the education community to describe what teachers teach and what children learn. Historical clues point to the inconsistency of the terms across time and disciplines (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Authors point out that the term *skills* has been used for 100 years in both psychology and education, but the

term refers to many types of behaviors and cognitions. The term *strategies* became popular in psychology with the advent of information-processing models. Afflerbach et al. (2008) wanted to reduce the confusion and give an analysis of each term and highlight the commonalities and distinctiveness. They suggested the following:

Reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text. Reading skills are automatic actions that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency and fluency and usually occur without awareness of the components or control involved. Being strategic allows the reader to examine the strategy, to monitor its effectiveness and to revise goals if necessary. Reading skills operate without the reader's deliberate control or conscious awareness (Afflerbach et al., p. 368).

Reading skills and strategies are not always successful; teachers have to provide a foundation for students to perform and practice. Metacognitive instruction about how and why to use strategies can be quite effective (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, as cited in Afflerbach et al.). Practice allows students to use actions in reading that increase skills such as decoding, word recognition, and understanding the text. Teachers can explain, model, and use reading strategies to break down reading into different parts in order for a learner to become aware of the parts and understand how they work together. Vygotsky (1978) referred to this cognitive disassembly as *defossilizing* (Afflerbach et al.). Below are definitions of terms used throughout this study.

Definitions

Literacy achievement gap. The observed and persistent disparity between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. It can be observed on a variety of measures including standardized tests, grade point averages, and dropout rates.

Reading comprehension. Level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Reading comprehension depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly.

Reading strategies. Plans or methods that can be used or taught to facilitate reading proficiency; purposeful cognitive actions that students take when reading to help them construct and maintain meaning.

Reading to learn methodology. Learning that occurs through tiers of reading tasks which has to be completed successfully for learning to occur.

Cloze passage. Selected words are omitted from a passage and replaced with a line or a space (Kessler, 2010). Readers use context clues to place words in the omitted areas to increase reading comprehension.

Learning disabilities. Classification in which a person has difficulty learning in a typical manner caused by unknown factors. There are significant problems in academic areas such as reading, mathematics, and writing.

Intervention. Proven strategies used to interfere with the outcome of targeted deficiencies in literacy.

Pedagogic activities. Activities to educate or instruct; activities that impart knowledge or skill through methods of literacy instruction.

Balanced literacy. A curricular methodology that integrates various modalities of literacy instruction. Assessment-based planning is at the core of this model, characterized by explicit skill instruction and use of authentic texts. Responsibility is gradually shifted from teachers to students.

Professional development. Skills and knowledge attained for both personal and career advancement. Variety of approaches to professional development includes consultation, coaching, mentoring, and reflective supervision.

Response to intervention (RTI). Method of academic intervention used in Project L.I.F.T to provide early systematic assistance to children who are having difficulty learning. RTI seeks to prevent academic failure for children who are having difficulty.

Content literacy continuum (CLC). Framework for organizing school-wide literacy reforms that were developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research. It emphasizes the importance of infusing literacy instruction throughout the curriculum (Ehren, Deshler, & Graner, 2010).

Extended day model. Tutoring students after school hours to enhance their performance with reading comprehension and math.

My teaching partner (MTP). Teacher professional development program designed to improve the quality of literacy development. Teachers are provided with supports and resources to deliver effective literacy instruction (Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, Justice, & Pianta, 2010).

Logic model. A model that uses inputs, outputs, and outcomes to detail how various systems will impact a business or school district.

Project L.I.F.T. A plan that was developed by a school district to reduce the

achievement gap among African-American students. Nine schools are identified, and stakeholders will focus on enhanced teacher and leadership quality.

Summary

Literacy is the anchor leg of education. The effectiveness of all subjects is dependent upon student reading comprehension and literacy achievement. It is important for educators to promote literacy education for secondary students beginning in kindergarten. Literacy is the ability to communicate, write, understand, and interpret the written language. Students need these basic components of literacy to be competent citizens raising families and having knowledge of the global society. As students are educated as 21st century learners, it is important for literacy to be the foundation of teaching.

However, the emerging achievement gap could affect that foundation if it is not properly addressed. Learning disabilities and reading attitudes among African-American students contribute to the literacy achievement gap and in turn Project L.I.F.T was developed to reduce those disparities. This study evaluated the talent (teacher development) portion of Project L.I.F.T to determine how teacher professional development impacted the literacy achievement gap in the school district.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review examines solutions and topics that contribute to literacy development. Topics to be included are as follows: the balanced literacy program that Project L.I.F.T implemented to reduce reading problems, intervention strategies that teachers can employ, and professional development approaches that would enable teachers to become better equipped in teaching students literacy concepts. The research below focuses on elementary age students and their academic development.

Foster and Miller (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of kindergarten through third-grade literacy. In the study, 52% of students were identified with a reading disability. Problems that were stated in this research indicated that reading disabilities in later grades can be predicted by kindergarten literacy skills, treatment of literacy problems in early grades reduce or eliminate the need for reading intervention in later years, and students identified and treated in later years have a poor chance of catching up to their developing peers (Foster & Miller).

The purpose of the study was to explain the developmental trajectory for phonics and comprehension skill development for students. Foster and Miller (2007) discussed Chall (1983) who explained the literacy development of children. Chall's stages began with a prereading stage (ages 0 to 6 years) where children learn that speech is made up of sounds and some words have the same beginning or ending sounds. From stage one to stage three, children are linking sounds to letters, decoding words, and developing from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* which occurs in ages 8 to 14 years.

Data were collected in the fall and spring of students' kindergarten years which totaled 12,621 students. Measures included a literacy assessment which was designed to assess basic literacy skills and reading comprehension. Other measures determined

student socioeconomic status and parental educational status (Foster & Miller, 2007). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for the phonics and text comprehension scores, and a regression analysis was performed to determine the contribution of school readiness, poverty status, and parent educational level (Foster & Miller, 2007). These measures allowed researchers to understand that students enter school at various literacy readiness levels. Although students will go through stages of development in literacy, students who enter school already prepared to engage in phonics will transition through Chall's (1983) stages with ease (Foster & Miller, 2007). The data also supported previous research findings regarding negative effects of poverty on literacy development and found children who stem from families that are better equipped to support literacy development have children who are more likely to enter kindergarten with literacy readiness skills (Foster & Miller, 2007).

Another similar study promoted teacher use of evidence-based literacy practices at the elementary school level. Greenwood, Tapia, Abbott, and Walton (2003) investigated the multiyear effects of a school-wide implementation of evidence-based literacy practices and a program to prevent early reading failure in one elementary school. As in the previous study, there was a gap in literacy development. Authors discussed challenges of promoting literacy practices in the classroom. First, changing teacher practices is far from easy (Boudah, Logan, & Greenwood, 2001; Simmons, Kuykendall, King, Cornachione, & Kameenui, 2000, as cited in Greenwood et al., 2003). Secondly, changing literacy instruction to an evidence-based approach is hampered by a lack of knowledge regarding exactly how to combine multiple effective practices into a literacy program (Greenwood et al., 2003). The study used 350 students from an elementary school along with 16 teachers. Measures that were applied in the study included strategy

implementation, observations of student behavior, and curriculum-based measurements or CBM reading fluency probes (Greenwood et al., 2003). According to the results, teachers implemented new evidence-based practices in the classroom in collaboration with researchers. Another important conclusion was the 3-year linear growth rate in CBM reading fluency. The entire working sample in instruction level material learned 3.1 new words per month, ranging from 3.7 for low risk students and 2.7 for high risk students (Greenwood et al., 2003). Implications of the study supported professional development practices in order to sustain teacher classroom practice of literacy-based practices.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is an important factor in closing the literacy achievement gap. Many students lack reading comprehension skills to accurately read and understand passages. Reading comprehension is a complex task that depends on many different automatic and strategic processes (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004, as cited in Kolic-Vehovec & Bajsanski, 2006). The comprehension of text also includes the use of reading strategies and monitoring of comprehension. Comprehension monitoring is an aspect of metacognition and Wagner (1983) defined it as an executive function that is essential for competent reading as he/she strives to make sense of incoming information (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajsanski, 2006). Monitoring allows the reader to detect inconsistencies in passages and sentences. However, many studies show that readers and listeners fail to detect inconsistencies during story comprehension. Markman (1979) showed that young children failed to detect inconsistencies as they listened to stories and realized their lack of understanding only when they tried to explain the story (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajsanski, 2006). Several studies found developmental improvement in comprehension monitoring

during elementary school, so Pazzaglia, De Beni, and Caccio (1999) investigated the relationship between metacognition and reading comprehension on a sample of children ages 8 to 13 years (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajanski, 2006). These studies explained that a student's elementary school years are a critical period for reading comprehension.

Kolic-Vehovec and Bajanski's (2006) first aim of their study was to explore developmental differences in comprehension monitoring, the perceived use of reading strategies and reading comprehension in elementary school students from fifth to eighth grade. The second aim was to explore the effects of comprehension monitoring and the use of reading strategies as predictors of reading comprehension. Participants in the study were students aged 11 to 14 in three elementary schools in Rijeka, Croatia. The measures used were as follows: reading comprehension was assessed on a 750 word narrative passage followed by 11 open-ended questions. Comprehension monitoring was assessed by monitoring questions using a metacomprehension test. Six monitoring items examined the students' abilities to detect and correct semantic errors in sentences. An example of one item required students to correct wrong punctuation in a short passage. Reading strategies was assessed by the strategic reading questionnaire (SRQ) which consists of 31 items. All items refer to statements about the use of different reading strategies, including various aspects of active comprehension and comprehension monitoring during reading (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajanski, 2006). The three subscales used to test comprehension were active reading strategies, comprehension monitoring, and inference generation.

Results from the study indicated that there were developmental improvements of comprehension monitoring during elementary, and significant transition happens after fifth grade (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajanski, 2006). Fifth-grade students used reading

strategies at a higher rate than eighth-grade students. This was the case for active comprehension and comprehension monitoring, but there were no difference for inference generation. Kolic-Vehovec and Bajanski (2006) explained that with these results, younger students do not accurately assess their actual reading strategy use or they use these strategies inadequately or inefficiently. Fifth graders inadequately use their metacognitive ability because their knowledge bases are still developing. The study commented on the effects of hormones, brain anatomy, and sociocultural factors which are influences in a student's reading ability. Elementary is a period when reading skills have to be developed, monitored, and maintained for the efficiency in reading.

Minority students as well as many students with English being their second language have difficulties in the areas of literacy, especially those from nondominant groups (McKeown & Beck, 2006, as cited in Kesler, 2010). These students need support with comprehending language which is a major source of academic achievement. Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, and Stoolmiller (2004), as cited in Kesler (2010), concluded that teaching word meanings within the context of shared reading is an effective method for increasing the vocabulary of young children at risk for reading difficulties. Kesler gathered research from a high needs urban school which had a large population of immigrant children. The four approaches used to promote literacy during shared reading were possible sentences, the use of context clues, repeated readings, and body language. Possible sentences encourage strategic thinking before, during, and after reading (Manzo & Manzo, 2008, as cited in Kesler). Talking, thinking, or even brainstorming before reading a passage is a strategic approach to stimulate the usage and comprehension of vocabulary. The next approach is the use of context clues during shared reading. Kesler cited Blachowicz and Fisher (2010) and explained,

In a cloze passage, selected words are omitted from the text and replaced with a line or space. Reading a cloze passage requires readers to use their knowledge of context to supply appropriate words and concepts to create a meaningful passage.

(p. 37)

Students have to use vocabulary built from their prior knowledge to be able to finish incomplete passages in order to bring meaning to the passage. Strategies such as using context clues enhance reading comprehension. In shared reading, Kesler also used repeated readings to develop a student's fluency. The repeated readings that were used with the students enabled the students to give quick and accurate processing of the text which led to more reading over time and more meaningful phrasing (Rasinski, 2003, as cited in Kesler). Students would then spend less time attempting to decode sentences or passages and place more attention on comprehending the text.

The last approach is using body language as a way to deliver understanding. Tactile and kinesthetic activities provide other modes in expressing language. Every student has a different learning style, and for some young students, this body language approach would be helpful in engaging students and helping students envision the text. English language learners would also benefit from this approach to aid in understanding language. From his research, Kesler (2010) concluded that students were engaged in each approach that was introduced. They were thoughtful, actively collaborated, and had meaningful social interactions that expanded their vocabulary and deepened their reading comprehension.

Researchers have often wondered if memory is related to literacy issues among children with and without reading disabilities (Berninger et al., 2010). Oftentimes, young students are referred to a specialist because of their language disabilities, but Berninger et

al. (2010) stated that different levels of reading should be assessed by the written language and related working memory mechanisms that support learning. Berninger et al.'s study addressed the issue of whether word-level or syntactic-level working memory measures for both oral and written language explain the variance in children's reading and writing skills. In the study, word-level working memory tasks were appropriate for assessing reading and spelling, while sentence-level working memory tasks were appropriate for assessing reading comprehension and composition. The rationale for this study is best understood in reference to existing research findings about the role of working memory in reading and writing in children with typical development and children with specific learning disabilities (Berninger et al.). Many would ask the relevance of working memory and reading comprehension, but in fact a large body of research has found that phonological working memory is an important source of individual differences in learning to read (Ehri, 2004, as cited in Berninger et al.).

Working memory has three different units that contribute to the storage and processing of literacy and learning to read. The units are phonological (spoken words), orthographic (written words), and morphological (word structures). Putting these three word forms into memory and analyzing and coordinating them contributes to the reading and writing of children (Berninger et al., 2010). Phonological word form storage requires a higher level of brain functioning than auditory processing, and children with impairments in this form typically have problems in reading. Children with impairments in orthographic word forms have difficulties processing written words, and students with impairments in morphological word forms have problems with oral language (Berninger et al., 2010). It is important to differentiate these three forms to identify which word form a child has difficulties in to better assist them with reading comprehension.

Differentiation is important because many schools were overemphasizing phonological skills without sufficient emphasis on other language skills and not incorporating evidence-based instruction for overcoming working memory inefficiencies (Berninger et al., 2010).

Children were recruited from a large urban school from all levels of socioeconomic statuses and ethnic groups. Kindergarten and second-grade children were invited to participate in the 5-year longitudinal study. Of 124 students, 69 were girls and 55 were boys. Parents had to bring their children to a nearby university for 5 years to complete testing during the second, third, or fourth month of the school year (Berninger et al., 2010). Some of the measures that were employed were the Woodcock Johnson-Revised, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing for phonological word storage, the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-Second Edition for oral reading accuracy, and a reading comprehension test (Berninger et al., 2010).

Results of the study found that the levels of language in working memory are differentially related to reading and writing outcomes, and the relationships change across grade levels (Berninger et al., 2010). Word level-working memory (WL-WM) predicted word-level decoding and text-level reading comprehension in second graders as being consistent with past research showing the importance of word-level decoding in the beginning stages of reading (Gough & Hillinger, 1980, as cited in Berninger et al., 2010). The word-level component of working memory may play an important role in both reading and writing development during elementary; therefore, once children evolve and become skilled in both word-level storage and processing, reading comprehension levels are increased (Berninger et al., 2010). Change of environment and instructional experiences could also have an effect on improved working memory and a student's

literacy development (Siegel, 1994, as cited in Berninger et al., 2010).

Rose (2011) argued for a designed approach to teaching that integrates the curriculum with language and literacy skills where language is a social activity and literacy a subset. Rose believed that effective literacy teaching requires both an understanding of how language works and the social contexts of literacy in order to build a pedagogic genre. Rose emphasized Bernstein's (2000) model as a configuration of learning activities, social relations, and modalities. Pedagogic activities include learning by doing and learning by studying (Rose). These activities place a child on a hierarchy where their knowledge is constantly reinforced by written tasks and classroom interactions. Nevertheless, students enter school at varying levels of literacy development.

In the study, Rose (2011) introduced the Reading to Learn methodology which can be applied to any educational context. A basic assumption of the model is that all learning occurs through the accomplishment of learning tasks and the task must be completed successfully for the learning to occur (Rose). Therefore, students are prepared to complete the learning task which would open up the learner's ability to elaborate on the task with a higher level of understanding. These phases come together to complete the scaffolding learning cycle (Rose). For the complexity of language, Rose stated that each level of the phase requires a detailed understanding of the learning task. The word, sentence, and text are important in the Reading to Learn methodology. The word is not just a string of letters but organized in syllables, and the sentence is not just a string of words but includes groups of words expressing meanings.

Lastly, the text does not just consist of a string of sentences but includes phases of meanings that are expressed as paragraphs in writing (Rose, 2011). Readers must be able

to process all three levels and patterns in order to complete the phases of the scaffolding learning cycle. This model of language forms a basis for reinterpreting language teaching practices that are familiar to teachers which is considered a balanced approach to literacy (Rose, 2011).

A three-tier model of learning activities has been established in the Reading to Learn methodology. It begins with preparing before reading which includes building the background knowledge of the reader in order to set the stage for reading comprehension. Detailed reading is the first tier of support that is focused on patterns of language within and between sentences. Another tier is classroom interactions that support the engagement of all students to use knowledge about language to assessment criteria. The last tier is intensive strategies that are provided for sentence making, spelling, and sentence writing.

Balanced Literacy

Balanced literacy is a program that has been implemented in the Project L.I.F.T schools. Balanced literacy is a philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments in which teachers use various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control (Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005). The term *balanced literacy* originated in California in 1996 in response to low reading scores on state tests (California Department of Education, 1996). They developed this new curriculum to address the ever-growing literacy concerns that are found in secondary schools. Balanced literacy programs should include parents, community, a collaborative school environment, and supported teacher and student learning in order to be effective. In classrooms, teachers have to implement structured settings where activities such as

read alouds, guided reading, and shared reading are key components to the success of balanced literacy. Educational researchers argue that a successful balanced literacy program must combine a balanced teacher-directed instruction and student-centered activities (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997, as cited in Frey et al., 2005). To achieve the goal teachers and administrators are striving for (increased student achievement in literacy), four components must be applied:

Teachers should (a) emphasize reading, writing and literature by providing long uninterrupted periods of successful reading every day; (b) create a positive, reinforced, cooperative environment in the classroom; (c) set high but realistic expectations for all students; and (d) integrate reading and writing thoroughly across the curriculum (Asselin, 1999; Pressley & Allington, 1998, as cited in Frey et al., 2005, p. 273).

Frey et al. (2005) conducted a study to examine an urban school district's attempt to implement balanced literacy in the first year. Data were collected from students in Grades K-5 in 32 elementary schools in a high poverty urban metropolitan area. The school district housed approximately 43% White, 42% Black, 10% Latino, and 5% other ethnic groups. Most students in the participant schools received free or reduced lunch. Prior to the study, the state department had placed the district on probationary accreditation because the students were not making adequate progress on state end-of-year assessments (Frey et al.). During the study, all teachers were mandated to integrate the balanced literacy program in a 90-minute class block. Frey et al. collected data from classroom observations, classroom physical environment checklist of literacy components, physical building environment checklists, teacher surveys, and student group interviews. Results of the data collection indicated that teacher surveys, classroom

observations, student interviews, and independent activities occurred at a high frequency (Frey et al.). Teacher-directed instruction was used less often than any other activities. Researchers gave a reason for the limited teacher-directed activities and found that teachers used seatwork as a classroom management technique (Lee, Tollefson, & Kibler 2002, as cited in Frey et al.). When students are seated, this can be conveyed as good classroom management and order because of the importance in urban classrooms with the use of independent reading and writing activities (Frey et al.). Researchers suggest that implementing balanced literacy programs takes time and all components of the programs must be implemented with fidelity and support.

Intervention

Tiers of interventions have been implemented to address the problem of literacy in secondary schools. O'Connor, Harty, and Fulmer (2005) examined the problem and decided to study the effects of intervention in reading for a cohort of children in Grades K-3 to determine whether the severity of reading disabilities could be significantly reduced. For the study, the researchers selected two schools that agreed to a 4-year commitment to participate. Participants were 20 teachers and approximately 100 students in Grades K-3 at each grade level. In the two schools, 45% of students received free or reduced lunch, 68% of children were European American, and 98% of the students spoke English as their first language (O'Connor et al.). Levels of interventions began with professional development as tier one. Teachers received professional development on an ongoing basis that focused on the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) and information on how to interpret assessment data. Tier two was small-group instruction (3 days per week). Small group instruction focused on phoneme awareness and letter knowledge. Research personnel provided instruction to these students in small groups of

two to three students for 10-15 minutes three times per week which allowed for more practice opportunities for struggling students (Ehren et al., 2010). Tier three was intensified interventions that students received daily by small-group individual instruction for 30 minutes 5 days a week. This tier resembled special education due to the intensity of instruction.

Ehren et al. (2010) stated that the data collection in the study allowed researchers to compare students with disabilities in a control group at the end of third grade with students who participated in a three-tiered approach to intervention on the incidence and severity of a reading disability. Researchers found that the rate of placement in special education averaged 15%; however, during the study, the rate of placement was 8%. The study proved that literacy problems can be identified in kindergarten and interventions implemented to improve literacy. Students who were identified as learning disabled would need continued support with reading tasks throughout the school years.

Programs and assessments have been implemented in a variety of school settings to combat the literacy gap. In 2005, the University of Kansas Center for Research developed a CLC to provide a framework for organizing school-wide literacy efforts and implementing RTI in secondary schools (Lenz et al., 2005). RTI rests upon scientifically based interventions for instruction and utilizes data-driven decisions for academics (Ehren et al., 2010). CLC emphasizes the importance of infusing literacy instruction and RTI throughout the curriculum to narrow the achievement gaps in regards to literacy proficiency (Ehren et al., 2010). It is designed from research-validated intervention for literacy practices. Level 1 addresses the mastery of critical content in academic subjects. Tools such as graphic organizers, structured reviews, and guided discussions are used at this level to organize the curriculum content (Ehren et al., 2010). Level 2 focuses on

student use of the content to acquire, manipulate, and demonstrate knowledge of the subject area. At this level, teachers are teaching students how to construct meaning from the text. Level 3 is intended for students who need more intensive strategies to master independent use of content literacy (Ehren et al., 2010). In this level, a specialist or tutor teaches students effective comprehension strategies. Level 4 is more intensive in that educators teach foundational skills. The instruction is targeted in reading decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills. Students at this level of intervention are normally below a fourth-grade reading level. Level 5 focuses on students with language disabilities that would cause a problem in comprehending language. Secondary schools that are having problems with literacy should consider embracing RTI and CLC as a school improvement framework due to the strong focus on core instruction with opportunities for intervention (Ehren et al., 2010).

Another intervention many schools explore is the extended day model. The extended day model is designed so students can receive additional instruction in core academic areas after school hours. In the Levittown School District, kindergarten teachers implemented an extended day program to enhance the academic and social development of their students (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). The program was supported through motor skills development and a teacher collaborative model. Teacher collaboration and student achievement were explored in the school district to determine if the extended day program would be successful. A balanced literacy approach was utilized and sustained by a designated block of time for literacy engagement and motor development. Hannaford (1995) stated that movement (motor) stimulates the necessary neurons that allow children to absorb information and learn more effectively (as cited in Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). Blaydes (2000) noted when children raise their heart rates, it

oxygenates their brain and supplies it with glucose which is crucial for learning (as cited in Hendler & Nakelski, 2008); therefore, movement is essential to the development of literacy.

With this information, the Levittown School District attempted to make a connection between collaboration, motor development, and the increase in learning by giving additional time in the school day (extended day). Collaboration in the school district with teachers, administrators, and support personnel provided staff members with the opportunity to develop professional strategies geared to increasing student achievement. According to Perez-Katz (2007), the most effective professional development occurs when educators have common preparation time allotted to discuss their teaching practices and make decisions to meet the needs of their students (as cited in Hendler & Nakelski, 2008).

The literacy and motor skills program was implemented in the district by dividing three groups of students into clusters that received instruction for daily 42-minute sessions. Physical educators developed the motor skill activities while teachers facilitated the literacy component. Students were scheduled for blocks of time daily totaling 140 minutes per section that incorporated 60 minutes of thematic literacy instruction. Teachers chose a balanced literacy approach that allowed them to lead flexible guided reading groups, listening centers, read leveled texts independently, and complete graphic organizers (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). Teachers also engaged in sharing activities and curriculum groups that utilized student resources (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). In the district, teachers noted that with the program students increased their toolkit of reading strategies, sight word recognition, and their awareness of print and phonics (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). Overall, teachers felt that creating an extended day

for kindergarten was successful due to the implementation of the literacy and motor skills program.

Professional Development

Linek, Fleener, Fazio, Raine, and Klakamp (2003) conducted a 5-year study in which a university worked collaboratively with a public school district, consisting of three schools, to redesign teacher education and professional development in order to raise student achievement. Darling-Hammond (1997) stated that no other intervention can make a difference like a trained and skilled teacher can make. Key components in increasing teacher professional development included collaborative planning, collaborative implementation, and ongoing collaborative assessment (Linek et al.). Background for this study began in 1993 with the Center for Professional Development and Technology (CPDT). Goals of the CPDT were to collaborate to redesign preservice teacher education programs, collaborate to design relevant field-based professional development, and collaborate to better meet the diverse needs of prekindergarten through Grade 12 learners (Linek et al.).

Data were collected from three targeted campuses because of the low performance ratings and the high percentages of students who were economically challenged. Data were analyzed from interviews, observations, and artifacts using a constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Linek et al., 2003). Results indicated that the key characteristics for success include valuing all participants, giving all participants a voice, teaming, employing administrators who are willing to empower their faculty members, and focusing on public school students and learning (Linek et al., 2003). After the study, teachers felt well prepared to enter the classroom to improve student achievement.

An additional teacher professional development study was from researchers at the University of New England. They developed an electronic module designed to introduce the elements of phonics to primary teachers (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). This new approach was designed to prepare education teachers to effectively teach phonics in the school setting. The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005) reported that direct systematic instruction in phonics during the early years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read. It also acknowledged the challenge of teacher education institutions to teach literacy skills. However, Buckland and Fraser (2008) offered a response to that challenge by researching the electronic module. Current teacher education programs had been overburdened with added curriculum, whereas teaching phonics had been reduced in lines with pedagogical trends. Therefore, the electronic module had been designed to reintroduce phonics as one part of a balanced approach to literacy, in which meaning-based and social aspects of literacy are strongly acknowledged rather than simply reviving an outdated approach to literacy teaching (Buckland & Fraser). New introduction of the module helped student teachers gain an understanding of the role of phonemic awareness in literacy acquisition.

Stainthorp's (2003) study, as cited in Buckland and Fraser (2008), found that the average, well-educated graduate is neither an expert nor confident about the sound and structure of words. The study was conducted using a group of 38 graduate students at the beginning of their primary teacher training in order to assess their untutored phonological awareness. In the study, it was discovered that students were competent in identifying alliteration and rhyme; however, they performed poorly in tasks involving phoneme recognition and counting. Results left researchers to believe that educated graduates need to reestablish training in phonemic awareness in order to effectively teach literacy.

Stainthorp's (2003) module that was designed was called Teaching Foundational Literacy. It is divided into four topics as it begins by establishing a balanced approach to literacy and placing traditional concepts (reading, writing, spelling, and phonics) within this larger conceptual frame (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). The module is constructed to move through a student's prior knowledge, content knowledge, and learned concepts from literacy teaching. Topic one is literacy and spelling, topic two is phonemic awareness, and topics three and four focus on phonics and beyond. Each topic describes the skill and provides examples of how student teachers can deliver each concept. Strength of this module provides contemporary and engaging means through which teacher education students can acquire essential knowledge of how language functions and how it relates to classroom application (Buckland & Fraser, 2008).

In educational reform policies, continuous professional development that enhances teacher qualifications is vital to the success of students. Onchwari and Keengwe (2010) examined the effectiveness of a nation-wide mentor-coach initiative towards enhancing teacher pedagogy and its effect on children literacy performance. Mentoring in teacher training is especially useful for supporting teachers in keeping up with the constant demands of new educational reforms that require teachers to adopt new practices (Weaver, 2004, as cited in Onchwari & Keengwe). With the evolution of common core, teachers who are experienced in its implementation and delivery will have the opportunity to mentor novice teachers in developing strategies and classroom lessons to effectively reach students. Professional development given would have to provide ongoing on-to-one guidance and support to allowing experienced teachers to be matched to the needs of developing teachers. According to the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE, 1999),

Mentoring could give new and inexperienced teachers access to the accumulated instructional knowledge and expertise of their colleagues in ways that contribute to academic success of children. However, to achieve this, schools must move from the notion of supervision in schools, where teachers are supervising trainees in the application of skills, to the notion of mentoring, which is an active process where teachers, as practitioners, have an active role in the training process (Maynard & Furlong, 1993, as cited in Onchwari & Keengwe, p. 312).

Mentors have to teach beginning teachers how to be reflective in their practice and positive in building skills and teacher relationships. Mentoring provides more benefits than workshops that stage one-time situations that seldom have lasting effects (Onchwari & Keengwe). Therefore, professional development should be more personalized and encourage novice teachers to be receptive to new ideas and teaching styles.

In 2002, President Bush initiated the Good Start, Grow Smart program that led to the implementation of Head Start programs geared to preparing students for academic achievement. Onchwari and Keengwe (2010) reviewed the Strategic Teacher Education Program (STEP) professional development model that was aimed at training teachers on research-based literacy practices. STEP training focused on appropriate literacy environments, phonological awareness, written expression, and language development (Zorn, Marx, Sullivan, & Bowe, 2003, as cited in Onchwari & Keengwe). Training the mentor-coaches received required them to provide support to two or more teachers in their programs. The study consisted of 44 teachers in 40 Head Start programs across two midwestern states. Teachers who received mentoring from the mentor-coaches were the target sample. In the study, there were several assessment instruments used such as the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation toolkit (ELLCO) which was used to

collect data on teacher literacy practices. The second assessment tool was the Classroom Observation and Teacher Interview which examined literacy instruction. The third tool was the Literacy Activity Rating Scale which recorded the literacy activities observed. Onchwari and Keengwe discovered in their study that comparisons among the two groups of children with mentored and nonmentored teachers indicated significant differences in reading and writing. Results determined that reading and writing scores were significantly higher when teachers participated in the mentor-coach initiative. These results suggest students with mentored teachers show significant improvement in academics. There is also a need for intensive ongoing mentor-coach relationships if teacher practices are to be continuously sustained (Onchwari & Keengwe).

Lastly, MTP is a teacher professional development program designed to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in prekindergarten classrooms and children language and literacy development (Mashburn et al., 2010). Researchers in this study examined impacts of MTP and literacy development of 1,165 children during prekindergarten years. Public programs have been established in many states to improve school readiness and educational outcomes of children who are growing up in disadvantaged circumstances (Mashburn et al., 2010). However, researchers discovered that these Head Start programs do not contribute to a child's literacy achievement. Recent studies now show that a teacher's effective implementation of instruction and their training contributes to a child's literacy achievement. A framework for effective teacher professional development is described in No Child Left Behind and states that in order to improve teaching and learning, professional development must be intensive, sustained, and classroom-focused (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, as cited in Mashburn et al., 2010). Currently, the shift has moved from teachers sitting in training

centers learning teaching strategies to more of an active, collaborative, and coaching/mentoring approach.

MTP was developed to provide teachers with a package of integrated supports for delivering effective language and literacy instruction (Mashburn et al., 2010). MTP is a web-based professional development for teachers comprised of language/literacy activities and resources to support teacher effective implementation of literacy activities. The language/literacy component was designed to focus on high quality instructional targets and transferring these targets into classroom settings. Instructional targets encompassed six language and literacy domains: phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, vocabulary concepts, narrative, and social communication/pragmatics (Mashburn et al., 2010).

MTP allows teachers to engage in observation of high quality instruction, skills training and identifying how to respond to a student's cue, and individualized feedback and support to improve how they interact with children. The MTP website provided teachers with 10 dimensions of high quality teacher-child interactions: positive climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for student perspectives, behavior management, productivity, instructional learning formats, concept development, quality of feedback, language modeling, and literacy focus (Mashburn et al., 2010). A video library is also provided for educators to observe examples of teachers demonstrating each dimension in their classrooms. Mashburn et al. (2010) specified that the more intensive form of professional development support was MTP consultancy. This support was designed to provide teachers with ongoing, practice-focused support and feedback regarding their interactions with children. Consultation provides one-on-one facilitation via the web and allows teachers to build their skills by observing their own interactions and practices.

Mashburn et al. (2010) conducted an experimental study within prekindergarten classrooms during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years to evaluate the impacts of MTP on improving classroom literacy instruction. Teachers were randomly assigned to three study conditions: one group received language/literacy activities; the second group received language/literacy activities and access to the video library; and the third group received language/literacy activities, access to the video library, and consultancy (Mashburn et al.). Participants were 134 prekindergarten teachers who participated for 2 years in the program. Results of the study indicated that the MTP consultancy study group had students who experienced greater literacy development than students whose teachers did not participate. Results also indicated that the use of web-based resources of the MTP program was not associated with a student's development of literacy skills.

Summary

In this literature review, topics were examined that focused on literacy development and strategies to reduce the achievement gap. Researchers determined that reading comprehension occurs when background knowledge is established and working memory addressed. Working memory plays a role in the storage and processing element of reading and writing development throughout elementary.

Balanced literacy was another researched subject. Project L.I.F.T utilized balanced literacy in an attempt to address literacy. Studies suggested that when components of balanced literacy were implemented with fidelity, reading development increased. Project L.I.F.T also employed interventions such as RTI and extended day programs to reduce the literacy achievement gap.

The above factors mentioned are essential in the study of the topic, teacher professional development. Researchers indicated that teacher education programs have

been consumed with teaching curriculum and not considering a teacher's understanding of phonemic awareness in literacy acquisition (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). Study results left researchers to believe that teacher professional development should be reestablished to effectively teach literacy. In the end, mentors, coaches, and revamped professional development models will lead to effective teachers in the classroom.

Recognizing reading development, balanced literacy, interventions, and teacher professional development as they relates to the literacy gap will be vital in evaluating Project L.I.F.T and its impact on reducing literacy concerns in elementary students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the components of Project L.I.F.T and determine its impact on reducing the literacy achievement gap for students at the elementary level as it relates to teacher dispositions. The study examined the correlation between professional development, literacy development, and cultural changes. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the perceived impact of teacher professional development on decreasing low level reading skills for identified schools?
2. What is the impact of teacher professional development on teacher disposition for teaching literacy?
3. What is the impact of Project L.I.F.T on the cultural and environmental changes of identified schools?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the study was to analyze Project L.I.F.T to determine how the literacy achievement gap will be addressed by examining teacher dispositions and professional development practices. The evaluation of Project L.I.F.T will allow for a better understanding of how to address literacy by empowering teachers professionally and examining existing and future data.

Initially, a group of community leaders raised needed funds from corporate foundations to help support Project L.I.F.T over a 5-year period. Some of the investment groups were the Belk Foundation, Foundations for the Carolinas, Wells Fargo Foundation, Duke Energy Foundation, Bank of America, C.D. Spangler Foundation, and the Levine Foundation. These groups each contributed an amount totaling \$55 million to assist in closing the achievement gap. Project L.I.F.T was designed to address the achievement gap in the west corridor of the city. This corridor is populated with families with low socioeconomic backgrounds, and the schools have a history of low literacy performance. There were seven elementary schools, six middle schools, and one high school that participated in this project, including five prekindergarten through eighth-grade schools that were a new introduction to the large urban school district.

The project has distinguished expected outcomes for the 7,000 students participating in the project. District and community leaders expect a 90% graduation cohort rate at the high school level, 90% composite proficiency rate at all Project L.I.F.T schools, 90% of students achieving a year's worth of academic growth, and 90% of teachers and leaders meeting standards to be highly effective (Project L.I.F.T strategic plan, 2012).

However, to produce the change the investment group was looking for, an effort

was made to choose excellent principals and effective teachers in all schools (talent). Project L.I.F.T, in turn, developed a strategic plan (2012) and proposed legislation and regulatory changes calling for extended learning time opportunities for students and teachers that included either an extended day or year-round school model (time). Also, access to technology was included in the project's framework as well as a plan for parents, mentors, and community leaders to be involved in the goal of reducing the achievement gap. Therefore, talent, time, and access to technology are important features of the program to solicit change over the 5-year period.

In analyzing the change effort, a program evaluation was utilized to assess Project L.I.F.T and the program's intentions to decrease the literacy achievement gap. Due to the number of variables that affect student growth and achievement, this study focused on teacher dispositions and professional development (talent) by the use of the Logic Model. The Logic Model was designed to address the outcomes and the impact of a program. The model determines inputs, which are the investments of the program for the district. Those key inputs were identified and determined to be talent, time, technology, and community support. However, for the sake of this study, the focus was on the investment of staff/talent as it relates to professional development.

Outputs in the Logic Model were activities created and implemented to reduce the achievement gap. Project L.I.F.T's Logic Model produced output-related questions that asked about professional opportunities for teachers and the frequency of the professional development sessions. Outcomes of the Logic Model will be the effect of the program implementing the inputs as well as producing the outputs to establish the short-term and long-term goals. The impact is related to the results of the program and how individuals are changed in the process. Some outcome-related questions asked about the change of

teachers' behaviors/attitudes, the impact of the community, and sustainability.

Participants

In this study, teachers and students at three elementary schools were the target population. Samples from teachers at School A (school outside the Project L.I.F.T Zone), School B, and School C were the target population. For comparison purposes, School A was subject to the same research questions and investigations. Table 1 represents Schools A, B, and C teacher demographics (2011-2012) and Table 2 represents 2011-2012 reading performance data.

Table 1

Schools A, B, C Teacher Demographics 2011-2012

	School A	School B	School C
Number of teachers	45	29	25
Fully licensed Teachers	98%	100%	94%
Male	8	2	2
Female	37	27	23
Highly qualified	100%	96%	100%
Advanced degrees	43%	55%	31%
National board Certified	6	8	2
Years of experience 0-3 years	27%	17%	43%
Years of Experience 4-10 years	29%	48%	26%
Years of Experience 10+ years	45%	35%	32%

Table 2

Schools A, B, C Reading Performance Data 2011-2012

	School A	School B	School C
Number of students	754	438	579
Average class size	20	18	20
African-American % proficient	37.6%	27.7%	48.6%
Hispanic % proficient	44.7%	20%	66.7%
Caucasian % proficient	33.3%	No data	57.1%
Males % proficient	36%	31%	45.3%
Females % proficient	45.3%	23.5%	58.9%
Overall proficient	44.6%	49%	55.1%

School B has 29 total teachers who are certified and 100% fully licensed in kindergarten through sixth grade. Twenty-seven females and two males make up the staff of teachers. Ninety-six percent of those teachers are highly qualified to teach their subject areas. The percentage of teachers who have completed an advanced degree is at 55% with eight nationally board certified teachers. Years of experience are as follows: 17% of teachers have 0-3 years of experience, 48% of teachers have 4-10 years of experience, and 35% of teachers have 10+ years of experience. Labeled a Title I school, School B has 438 total students with average class sizes averaging 18 students per teacher. Overall, 49% of students tested were proficient in reading from the 2011-2012 test data. Performance of each group on the 2011-2012 state tests indicate that 27.7% of African-American students were proficient, 20% of Hispanics were proficient, 31% of males were proficient, and 23.5% of females were proficient. Caucasian students were a subgroup that did not have enough students to be included in the testing data for the school. School B was designated as a Priority School which means that less than 50% of students are at grade level. (All data gathered from NC School Report Card, 2012).

At School C, there are 25 total teachers certified and 94% fully licensed in kindergarten through sixth grade. Twenty-three teachers are female and two are males. One hundred percent of teachers were highly qualified to teach subjects in the 2011-2012 school year. The percentage of teachers who have completed advanced degrees is 31%, with two teachers being nationally board certified. Years of teaching experience are as follows: 43% have 0-3 years of experience, 26% have 4-10 years of experience, and 32% have 10+ years of experience. School C is labeled a Title I school, and students performed 55.1% overall proficient in reading in state reading tests given in the 2011-2012 school year. There were 579 total students with class sizes averaging 20 students per class. African Americans were 48.6% proficient, Hispanics were 66.7% proficient, Caucasian students were 57.1% proficient, males were 45.3% proficient, and females were 58.9% proficient. School C was also labeled as a Priority School with 50-60% of students at grade level. (All data gathered from NC School Report Card, 2012).

School A is a similar school in comparison with the schools in the Project L.I.F.T zone. School A resides outside the zone. This school was used to determine the effectiveness of Project L.I.F.T schools and their professional development procedures. At School A, there are 45 total teachers certified and 98% fully licensed in kindergarten through sixth grade. Thirty-seven teachers are female and eight are males. One hundred percent of teachers were highly qualified to teach subjects in the 2011-2012 school year. The percentage of teachers who have completed advanced degrees is 43%, with six teachers nationally board certified. Years of teaching experience are as follows: 27% have 0-3 years of experience, 29% have 4-10 years of experience, and 45% have 10+ years of experience. School A is labeled a Title I school, and students performed 44.6% overall proficient in reading in state reading tests given in the 2011-2012 school year.

There were 754 total students with class sizes averaging 20 students per class. African Americans were 37.6% proficient, Hispanics were 44.7% proficient, Caucasian students were 33.3% proficient, males were 36% proficient, and females were 45.3% proficient. School A was also labeled with No Recognition because 60-100% of their students were at grade level. (All data gathered from NC School Report Card, 2012). Students' reading test scores/data were used from the prior school year and the current school year to determine growth and effort to close the literacy achievement gap.

A sample was selected based on responses from language arts teachers in each selected school. Various data collection methods were employed to gather responses.

Data Collection

Surveys were given to each teacher online to assess their professional development knowledge. These online surveys took each participant approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey was sent out electronically to teacher participants, and there was a 5-day deadline to complete the survey online.

The researcher used focus groups as another form of qualitative data collection. It is defined as a method of collecting data in a safe environment from one or more individuals at a time regarding a specified area (Krueger & Casey, 2000, as cited in Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2010). Focus groups were used for decades because they are economical, low cost to researchers, data can be collected faster, and using focus groups may increase the number of participants in the study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Focus groups are normally conducted for 1-2 hours, and it is recommended that the size is between six to 12 participants so that the group is small enough for all members to share their thoughts but large enough to create a diverse group (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). For this study, a focus group of six participating teachers was gathered from each

school to discuss questions from the professional development activities attended and to discuss cultural and environmental changes of identified schools as they relate to Project L.I.F.T.

Data Organization and Display

After data were collected from teacher participants, data were coded based on similarities and differences in key words/phrases and relationships between one or more codes. These data are displayed in frequency tables and organized by themes. These themes would be recurrent words, phrases, or sentences most commonly used by teachers during the interviews and focus groups. Frequency tables are displayed prioritizing the most occurring and strongest themes in order to organize the data. Themes from the qualitative study distinguish between positive and negative percentages and the strongest or weakest correlation between the themes.

Instruments

Instruments used in the study examined teacher professional development, teacher attitudes, and teacher dispositions. One teacher attitude survey that was given was developed by NSF: Teacher Enhancement (ESIE). The purpose of this instrument is to assess teacher attitudes toward literacy teaching. Initially, the scale was used to assess teacher attitudes towards science teaching; however, a modified version was adapted to target teacher attitudes towards reading. The instrument covered the topics of instructional practices, instructional preferences, perceptions, and self-assessment. The format/length is 25 closed-ended items. Each statement is on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Below are sample items from the scale.

Table 3

Teacher Attitudes towards Literacy Sample Items

Scale	Sample Items
SA = Strongly Agree	“When a student does better than usual in reading, it is often because the teacher exerted a little effort.”
A = Agree	“I am continually finding better ways to teach reading.”
UN = Uncertain	“Even when I try very hard, I do not teach reading as well as I do most subjects.”
D = Disagree	
SD = Strongly Disagree	

The other instrument was the Missouri Professional Development Guidelines for Student Success. This guide provides surveys examining the effective design, program content, and organizational context of professional development activities. This particular instrument has 10 questions on a 5-point Likert scale. A sample is provided below.

Table 4

Missouri Professional Development Surveys

Scale	Sample Items
Strong Agree = 5	“There is research to suggest that the content of the staff development programs will increase student learning.”
Agree = 4	“The program leader is knowledgeable and has credibility with the participants.”
Somewhat Agree = 3	
Disagree = 2	
Strongly Disagree = 1	

Procedures

The researcher applied a qualitative approach to collect data. Surveys were given to teachers in each school to assess teacher knowledge of professional development

activities. The surveys also reflected material to determine if there was a behavior change from teachers and concepts implemented in a classroom setting.

Interviews were developed to gather in-depth personal information. Interviews allowed the researcher to capture the perspectives of participants associated with the project (www.nsf.gov). Key words identified were also analyzed in each interview. All interviewees were given the same interview questions to ensure reliability of questions. If the researcher was not successful in collecting data due to conflict in schedules, a web-based questionnaire was employed to gather the needed data. The questionnaires had the same questions and opportunities to provide open-ended and closed-ended responses.

Lastly, in focus groups, six teachers were open to speak freely about advantages and disadvantages of professional development sessions attended and how they correlate with cultural sustainability.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, data from the surveys and focus groups were analyzed. Analysis consisted of determining the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of themes from the data. Data were included in frequency and distribution tables to display for further analysis. This was done for each school to look for trends and interpret the effectiveness of professional development activities given to teachers. The analysis of the data revealed the next steps and further interventions to be employed to help teachers become valuable in a child's education. Project L.I.F.T's Logic Model was also influential in the data analysis piece to establish the project's ability to educate teachers regarding literacy in order to increase the talent piece, which is one of Project L.I.F.T's focuses.

Limitations

There are many limitations in qualitative research. Some barriers that could be projected were the amount of time spent on observations and interviews. It was time consuming to collect data from the listed instruments which could have hindered any set time frame. Another barrier would be teacher participants responding to the online interviews. From working in the school system, there is an understanding that teachers are consumed with their students throughout the day as well as completing paperwork. This factor could have limited teachers from completing interviews due to their time constraints. However, one solution to this limitation was to be endorsed by school principals from the study in order to gain the valuable data needed to complete the research.

Qualitative research also has limits due to the generalization of results, validity, and reliability. This type of research is totally dependent upon the interpretation of results by the researcher. Readers are relying on the researcher's knowledge and ability to accurately represent the data. It was the mission of the researcher to ensure that validity and reliability were achieved in order to dispose of any misinterpretation of the data.

Summary

For the program evaluation of Project L.I.F.T, data were collected to answer three research study questions with an emphasis on teacher professional development as it relates to literacy. Three schools were the focus of the study, with one school located outside the Project L.I.F.T zone and two schools within that zone. Each school averages 35 teachers with a majority of female teachers who are, on average, 98% highly qualified. To gather information from these teachers, interviews and focus groups were employed.

Data collected were then organized, displayed, and analyzed. This methodology section is important because it details the process to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher professional development. Gathering teacher responses aided in determining the dispositions of teachers and how literacy development was presented to note if Project L.I.F.T was innovative in their approach. This analysis will help other zones in the school district become better equipped to coach teachers in literacy, thus reducing the achievement gap.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the study was to analyze Project L.I.F.T to determine how the literacy achievement gap will be addressed by examining teacher dispositions and professional development practices. The evaluation of Project L.I.F.T and teacher dispositions will allow for a better understanding of how to address literacy. In this study, teachers and students at three elementary schools were the target population. However, due to the low number of teacher responses from comparison School A (school outside of Project L.I.F.T), the data were considered outliers and were not included in the study. Therefore Schools B and C (both Project L.I.F.T schools) were the only schools used in the study addressing teacher dispositions and professional development practices.

Participants

Reported in this chapter are findings from online interviews as well as focus groups from 30 participants from School B and School C from Project L.I.F.T. School B had 15 total teachers who participated who were certified and 100% fully licensed in kindergarten through sixth grade. Labeled a Title I school, School B had 438 total students, with average class sizes averaging 18 students per teacher. School B was designated as a Priority School which means that less than 50% of students were at grade level. (All data gathered from NC School Report Card, 2012).

At School C, 15 total teachers participated in the study, and 94% of those teachers were fully licensed in kindergarten through sixth grade. School C was labeled a Title I school and students performed 55.1% overall proficient in reading in state reading tests given in the 2011-2012 school year. There were 579 total students with class sizes averaging 20 students per class. School C was also labeled as a Priority School with 50-60% of students at grade level. (All data gathered from NC School Report Card, 2012).

All 30 teachers participated in the first distribution of the Teacher Attitude Survey that was given. This first survey was sent by an email invitation. The study was described to the participants and each had to respond to the email stating their interest to be involved in the study. After the teachers responded, an informed consent was sent to each teacher with a link to the online survey (Appendix A). This process took 30 days because not all teachers responded quickly, and a second invitation had to be sent to teachers who did not respond to the initial request. School A (school outside of Project L.I.F.T) had less than five participants; therefore, those participants were not included in the study. Of the 30 teachers who participated, 10 teachers participated in the first distribution of the Missouri Professional Development Guidelines Survey that was sent after the Teacher Attitude Survey (Appendix B). The first distribution of the survey was sent by email followed by an additional email that was sent 7 days later which solicited the responses of 10 more teachers. This generated a total of 20 respondents for the Missouri Teacher Professional Development Survey.

The informed consent that was sent to teachers included a statement indicating their willingness to participate in a focus group. Only 10 teachers agreed to participate in the focus group with stipulations. A majority of the teachers could not meet off campus due to their workload and other personal reasons. Therefore, to accommodate all teachers, the researcher designed the focus group to be an online focus group with the six open-ended responses. All 10 teachers responded within 7 days of posting the questions.

Research Questions

Results of the study are listed after each research question. For this study, three research questions were formulated to discover answers as they relate to teacher professional development, teacher disposition for teaching literacy, and the cultural and

environmental changes of the identified schools. Listed below are the research questions that were created for this study.

1. What is the perceived impact of teacher professional development on decreasing low level reading skills for identified schools?
2. What is the impact of teacher professional development on teacher disposition for teaching literacy?
3. What is the impact of Project L.I.F.T on the cultural and environmental changes of identified schools?

The Missouri Professional Development Survey was used to answer Research Question 1, the Teacher Attitude Survey was used to answer Research Question 2, and six open-ended questions were created to answer Research Question 3. The two surveys were given on a Likert scale where teachers could respond to statements by choosing Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Agree (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5).

Research Question 1 Findings

For the first survey question, there were eight teachers who responded: four first-grade teachers, two third-grade teachers, one fourth-grade teacher, and one fifth-grade teacher. Two teachers did not respond to the first question. For Survey Question 2, one teacher disagreed, six teachers somewhat agreed, and three teachers agreed. Survey Question 3 had the highest percentage with 80% (n=8) of respondents agreeing with the question. Survey Question 4 had 60% (n=6) of teachers agreeing with the statement. Survey Question 5 had 30% (n=3) of respondents who disagreed with the statement and 40% (n=4) who agreed somewhat. Survey Question 6 had 60% (n=6) of respondents who agreed, and Survey Question 7 had 70% (n=7) of teachers who agreed with the

statement. Survey Question 8 had more of a distribution of responses with 30% (n=3) of respondents who disagreed, 40% (n=4) who agreed somewhat, and 30% (n=3) who agreed with the statement. Survey Question 9 had 80% (n=8) of teachers who agreed with the statement, while Survey Question 10 had 70% (n=7) of teachers who agreed with the statement. The last survey question had 10% (n=1) of teachers who disagreed with the statement, 50% (n=5) who somewhat agreed, 20% (n=2) who agreed, and another 20% (n=2) who strongly agreed. Listed below are the frequency tables associated with the above findings/survey results.

Table 5

Survey Question 1: What grade level do you teach?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1st grade	4	40	50	50
	3rd grade	2	20	25	75
	4th grade	1	10	12.5	87.5
	5th grade	1	10	12.5	100
	Total	8	80	100	
Missing		2	20		
Total		10	100		

Table 6

Survey Question 2: Teachers in professional development activities are involved in determining literacy topics and content.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	6	60	60	70
Agree	3	30	30	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 7

Survey Question 3: Literacy professional development presenters are knowledgeable and have credibility with the participants.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat agree	2	20	20	20
Agree	8	80	80	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 8

Survey Question 4: Literacy professional development includes a variety of activities designed for adult learners (i.e. active engagement, use of prior knowledge, working in teams, & real world applications).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	3	30	30	40
Agree	6	60	60	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 9

Survey Question 5: The literacy professional development includes continued support and follow-up activities (frequent and ongoing sessions/problem solving).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	3	30	30	30
Somewhat agree	4	40	40	70
Agree	2	20	20	90
Strongly agree	1	10	10	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 10

Survey Question 6: Literacy teachers can demonstrate changes in classroom practices after a professional development session.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat agree	3	30	30	30
Agree	6	60	60	90
Strongly agree	1	10	12	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 11

Survey Question 7: The literacy professional development provides for changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of participants.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	1	10	10	20
Agree	7	70	70	90
Strongly agree	1	10	10	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 12

Survey Question 8: Literacy teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovative idea presented at a professional development session.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	3	30	30	30
Somewhat agree	4	40	40	70
Agree	3	30	30	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 13

Survey Question 9: The learning climate of literacy professional development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat agree	1	10	10	10
Agree	8	80	80	90
Strongly agree	1	10	10	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 14

Survey Question 10: All literacy professional development activities include theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	20	20	20
Somewhat Agree	1	10	10	30
Agree	7	70	70	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 15

Survey Question 11: Each school can determine its own literacy professional development activities rather than having uniform activities throughout the district.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	5	50	50	60
Agree	2	20	20	80
Strongly agree	2	20	20	100
Total	10	100	100	

In examining the data, Survey Question 1 established a mean of 3.3750 with a standard deviation of 1.597. Of 10 respondents to the first question, two teachers did not disclose the grade level that they taught. First grade had the highest percentage (40%) of total number of respondents. Survey Question 2 had a mean of 3.200 and a standard deviation of .6324. Sixty percent of teachers only somewhat agreed that they were involved in determining literacy topics and content for professional development activities. For Survey Question 3, 80% of teachers felt professional development presenters were knowledgeable. This yielded a mean of 3.800 and a standard deviation of .4216. Survey Question 4 had 60% of teachers who agreed that there were a variety of activities designed for adult learners. Survey Question 4 yielded a mean of 3.500 and a standard deviation of .7071. Survey Question 5 had only 40% of teachers, which is a small percentage, who agreed that professional development included continued support for teachers. There was a mean of 3.100 and a standard deviation of .9944 for Survey Question 5. Sixty percent of teachers for Survey Question 6 agreed that literacy teachers can demonstrate changes in their classroom after a professional development session. This question generated a mean of 3.800 and a standard deviation of .6324 for Survey

Question 6. Seventy percent of teachers felt that professional development provided for changes in knowledge, skills, and beliefs of participants for Survey Question 7. The mean for this question was 3.800 and the standard deviation was .7888. Survey Question 8 only had 40% of teachers who somewhat agreed that they are randomly observed to determine if an innovative idea was implemented in their classroom. Survey Question 8 produced a mean of 3.000 and a standard deviation of .8165. Survey Question 9 had 80% of teacher respondents who agreed that the learning climate of professional development activities were collaborative and informal. A mean of 4.000 and a standard deviation of .4714 was yielded for Survey Question 9. For Survey Question 10, 70% of teachers stated that professional development activities included theory, practice, feedback, and coaching. This question had a mean of 3.500 and a standard deviation of .8498. The last question generated a mean of 3.500 as well and a standard deviation of .9718 for Survey Question 11. Fifty percent of teachers somewhat agreed that each school can determine its own literacy professional activities.

Data set two for Research Question 1 was collected 7 days after the initial professional development survey was sent in order to gain more respondents for validity purposes. Survey Question 1 had 50% (n=5) of teachers who disagreed with the statement, 20% (n=2) who somewhat agreed, 20% (n=2) who agreed, and 10% (n=1) who strongly agreed. Survey Questions 2, 3, 8, and 9 had all 10 respondents agree with the statement. Survey Questions 4 and 6 had 80% (n=8) of teachers who agreed with the statements. Survey Question 5 had 20% (n=2) who disagreed with the statement, 30% (n=3) who somewhat agreed, and 50% (n=5) who agreed with the statement. Survey Question 7 had the highest number of respondents disagree with the statement totaling 40% (n=4); 20% (n=2) somewhat agreed, and 40% (n=4) agreed with the statement. The

last question had 50% (n=5) of teachers who agreed with the statement. Below are the findings/survey results listed in frequency tables.

Table 16

Survey Question 1: Teachers in professional development activities are involved in determining literacy topics and content.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	5	50	50	50
Somewhat agree	2	20	20	70
Agree	2	20	20	90
Strongly agree	1	10	10	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 17

Survey Question 2: Literacy professional development presenters are knowledgeable and have credibility with the participants.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	10	100	100	100

Table 18

Survey Question 3: Literacy professional development includes a variety of activities designed for adult learners (i.e. active engagement, use of prior knowledge, working in teams, & real world applications).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	10	100	100	100

Table 19

Survey Question 4: The literacy professional development includes continued support and follow-up activities (frequent and ongoing sessions/problem solving).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	1	10	10	20
Agree	8	80	80	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 20

Survey Question 5: Literacy teachers can demonstrate changes in classroom practices after a professional development session.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	20	20	20
Somewhat agree	3	30	30	50
Agree	5	50	50	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 21

Survey Question 6: The literacy provides for changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs of participants.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat agree	2	20	20	20
Agree	8	80	80	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 22

Survey Question 7: Literacy teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovative idea presented at a professional development session.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	4	40	40	40
Somewhat agree	2	20	20	60
Agree	4	40	40	100
Total	10	100	100	

Table 23

Survey Question 8: The learning climate of literacy professional development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	10	100	100	100

Table 24

Survey Question 9: All literacy professional development activities include theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	10	100	100	100

Table 25

Survey Question 10: Each school can determine its own literacy professional development activities rather than having uniform activities throughout the district.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	10	10	10
Somewhat agree	5	50	50	60
Agree	4	40	40	100
Total	10	100	100	

In examining the above data, Survey Question 1 generated a mean of 2.900 and a standard deviation of 1.100. Fifty percent of teachers disagreed that they are involved in determining literacy topics for professional development activities. Survey Questions 2, 3, 8, and 9 all had teacher participants agree 100% to the statements in the survey. Survey Question 2 teachers agreed that presenters were knowledgeable. Survey Question 3 teachers agreed that literacy professional development included a variety of activities for adult learners. Survey Question 8 teachers all agreed 100% that the learning climate of professional development activities is collaborative. Survey Question 9 teachers agreed that the professional development activities included theory, demonstration, and feedback. Eighty percent of teachers agreed for Survey Question 4 that literacy professional development included continued support and follow-up activities. The mean for this question yielded 3.700 and the standard deviation was .6749. Survey Question 5 had 50% of teachers who agreed that they were able to demonstrate changes learned from professional development activities in their classrooms. The mean generated 3.300 and the standard deviation equated to .8232 for Survey Question 5. Eighty percent of teachers agreed for Survey Question 6 that professional development activities provided

for changes in knowledge and attitudes of teachers. This question produced a mean of 3.800 and a standard deviation of .4216. Survey Question 7 had 40% of teachers who disagreed that they were observed randomly to determine their use of ideas presented at professional development sessions, while 40% agreed that they were randomly observed. The mean of this question was 3.000, and the standard deviation was .9428. The last question, Survey Question 10, had 50% of teachers who somewhat agreed that each school can determine its own literacy development activities. The mean yielded 3.300 and the standard deviation was .6749 for Survey Question 10.

The teacher attitude survey was given first to assess teacher dispositions on teaching reading skills followed by the professional development survey. The perceived impact of the data indicated that teachers were involved in literacy development activities that enabled them to implement strategies in their classrooms to reduce low level reading skills. For those teachers who disagreed with less than 10% ($n=1$) of the survey questions, those items were not significant to determine the impact of low level reading skills.

Research Question 2 Findings

The Teacher Attitude Survey for teaching literacy included 26 survey questions for each respondent to answer (Appendix B). From Survey Questions 16 to 26, there was one teacher who skipped those questions, not completing the entire survey. The results below are 10 questions from the survey that were significant to Research Question 2. The remaining survey questions can be found in Appendix C. Beginning with Survey Question 1, there were three kindergarten teachers, five first-grade teachers, five second-grade teachers, six third-grade teachers, three fourth-grade teachers, and eight fifth-grade teachers, totaling 30 participants to answer each question. Survey Question 2 had 33.3%

(n=10) of teachers who agreed with the statement. Survey Question 3 yielded 46.7% (n=14) of teachers who agreed with the statement and 33.3% (n=10) strongly agreed with the statement. For Survey Question 4, there were 73.3% (n=22) of teachers who disagreed with the statement. There were 40% (n=12) of teachers who disagreed with Survey Question 8 and 73.3% (n=22) who disagreed with Survey Question 9. Eleven teachers (36.7%) agreed with Survey Question 11, and 50% (n=15) of teachers agreed with the statement for Survey Question 13. Survey Question 15 had 43.3% (n=13) of teachers agree with the statement, while 50% (n=15) of teachers disagreed with Survey Question 20. Survey Question 20 had one teacher (3.3%) skip the question. Seventeen teachers (56.7%) disagreed with Survey Question 22, with one teacher skipping the question (3.3%). The last question, Survey Question 25, had 63.3% (n=19) of teachers disagree with the statement, and one teacher skipped the question (3.3%). Listed below are the frequency tables associated with the above findings/survey results.

Table 26

Survey Question 1: Grade level you teach.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Kindergarten	3	10	10	10
1st grade	5	16.7	16.7	26.7
2nd grade	5	16.7	16.7	43.3
3rd grade	6	20	20	63.3
4th grade	3	10	10	73.3
5th grade	8	26.7	26.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 27

Survey Question 3: I am continually finding better ways to teach literacy.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat agree	6	20	20	20
Agree	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
Strongly agree	10	33.3	33.3	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 28

Survey Question 4: Even when I try very hard, I do not teach literacy as well as I do most subjects.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Disagree	22	73.3	73.3	76.7
Somewhat agree	2	6.7	6.7	83.3
Agree	2	6.7	6.7	90
Strongly agree	3	10	10	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 29

Survey Question 8: If students are underachieving in literacy; it is most likely due to ineffective literacy teaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Disagree	12	40	40	43.3
Somewhat agree	10	33.3	33.3	76.7
Agree	6	20	20	96.7
Strongly agree	1	3.3	3.3	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 30

Survey Question 9: I generally teach literacy ineffectively.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
Disagree	22	73.3	73.3	90
Somewhat agree	3	10	10	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 31

Survey Question 11: The low literacy achievement scores of some students cannot generally be blamed on their teachers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
Somewhat agree	9	30	30	56.7
Agree	11	36.7	36.7	93.3
Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 32

Survey Question 13: I understand literacy concepts well enough to be effective in teaching elementary reading.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	6.7
Somewhat agree	6	20	20	26.7
Agree	15	50	50	76.7
Strongly Agree	7	23.3	23.3	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 33

Survey Question 15: The teacher is generally responsible for the achievement of students in literacy.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Somewhat agree	10	33.3	33.3	40
Agree	13	43.3	43.3	83.3
Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 34

Survey Question 20: I wonder if I have the necessary skills to teach literacy.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	3	10	10.3	10.3
Disagree	15	50	51.7	62.1
Somewhat agree	8	26.7	27.6	89.7
Agree	3	10	10.3	100
Total	29	96.7	100	
Missing System	1	3.3		
Total	30	100		

Table 35

Survey Question 22: Given a choice, I would not invite the principal to evaluate my literacy teaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	7	23.3	24.1	24.1
Disagree	17	56.7	58.6	82.8
Somewhat agree	3	10	10.3	93.1
Agree	2	6.7	6.9	100
Total	29	96.7	100	
Missing System	1	3.3		
Total	30	100		

Table 36

Survey Question 25: I do not know what to do to turn students on to reading.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	3	10	10.3	10.3
Disagree	19	63.3	65.5	75.9
Somewhat agree	7	23.3	24.1	100
Total	29	96.7	100	
Missing System	1	3.3		
Total	30	100		

In the data set above, there were more fifth-grade teachers who responded to the literacy questions. For Survey Question 1 there was a mean of 3.833 and a standard deviation of 1.723. For Survey Question 3, 46.7% of teachers agreed that they are continually finding better ways to teach literacy and 73.3% disagreed that they teach literacy just as well as they teach other subjects in Survey Question 4. Survey Question 3 generated a mean of 4.133 and a standard deviation of .7303, while Survey Question 4 generated a mean of 2.466 and a standard deviation of 1.041. For Survey Questions 8 and 9, teachers disagreed that students are underachieving in literacy due to ineffective literacy teaching and subsequently did not feel they taught literacy ineffectively. These questions yielded a mean of 2.800 and a standard deviation of .9247 for Survey Question 8, and for Survey Question 9, a mean of 1.933 and a standard deviation of .5208. For Survey Questions 11 and 13, most teachers agreed that low achievement scores in literacy cannot be blamed on teachers and teachers understand literacy concepts to be effective in elementary reading. Survey Question 11 produced a mean of 3.233 and a standard deviation of .9352. Survey Question 13 produced a mean of 3.866 and a standard

deviation of .9371. For Survey Question 15, teachers agreed that they are generally responsible for the achievement of students in literacy, yielding a mean 3.700 and a standard deviation of .8366. For Survey Questions 20 and 22, teachers disagreed with these survey questions. Teachers feel they have the necessary skills to teach literacy and they would invite the principal to observe their literacy lessons because they feel confident with literacy teaching. Survey Question 20 generated a mean of 2.379 and a standard deviation of .8200. Survey Question 22 generated a mean of 2.000 and a standard deviation of .8017. The last question, Survey Question 25, yielded a mean of 2.137 and a standard deviation of .5808 because teachers disagreed that they do not know what to do to turn students on to reading.

From the results of the survey, teacher attitude about teaching literacy is positive. Dispositions in regards to teaching literacy can be viewed as confident and teachers take full credit for high achievement in literacy. Although there are 3.3% (n=1) of teachers who strongly disagree with most of the statements, one or two of those teachers are not confident in their literacy teaching ability. Those percentages of teachers are not significant enough to skew any results.

Research Question 3 Findings

To answer Research Question 3, an online focus group was created for teachers. Initially, teachers were asked to meet as a group to discuss six open-ended questions as they related to Project L.I.F.T. However, due to time-consuming teaching assignments, a majority of the teachers could not meet; therefore, the online form was created. From the 30 respondents, only 10 respondents indicated that they would participate in the focus group. Of the 10 respondents, 50% (n=4) were first-grade teachers, 25% (n=2) were third-grade teachers, 12.5% (n=1) were fourth-grade teachers, and 12.5% (n=1) were

fifth-grade teachers, totaling eight teachers. Two teachers did not respond to the question that asked what grade level they taught.

For the focus group, six questions were asked concerning the cultural and environmental changes of Schools B and C in Project L.I.F.T. The following open-ended questions were asked:

1. How has Project L.I.F.T impacted the culture of your school?
2. With the various components of Project L.I.F.T do you feel like parents are more involved with your school?
3. How do you feel Project L.I.F.T will help reduce the literacy gap in your district? School?
4. Has Project L.I.F.T equipped you with the skills you need to teach literacy? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe a teacher's attitude/disposition can impact the culture of a school?
6. How did your professional development contribute to your competency in literacy?

From the six questions, the researcher extracted six themes from teacher statements that were significant to the research question. The six themes were common goal/consistency, parental involvement, school resources, coaching/mentoring, teacher disposition, and skills/method. Below, teacher respondent answers are displayed followed by the common theme that was expressed by those teachers.

Question 1: How has Project L.I.F.T impacted the culture of your school?

Teacher 1: "Teachers are more unified toward a common goal to help students achieve. Student behavior is not an issue due to consistent rules and expectations."

Teacher 5:

Project L.I.F.T has had good and bad effects. It seems like a lot of things are done last minute and we are given many extra responsibilities with little time to implement them. This stresses us out and makes me feel unvalued. It helps because we feel unified and we don't feel alone in the struggle when comparing ourselves to other schools.

Teacher 7: "I think it is helping to make the culture better with the help of administrators, teachers, TAs, and everyone else at the school working together as a family to improve the school and help the students."

Teacher 10:

It has encouraged us to focus on improving both student culture and instructional culture—things that we know were important before but didn't have the impetus or tools to really tackle it. The extra focus on these things has greatly improved both staff and student attitudes, making policies and procedures more consistent and effective.

The theme that was extracted from the above teacher statements is the concept of having common goals and consistency. Teachers feel as though there is a unified goal in their school which is aligned with Project L.I.F.T's goals. This unification affects the culture of their schools in positive ways because teachers and administrators are working together to improve their schools. Project L.I.F.T has in some cases forced schools to look at their culture in order to make changes to improve staff and student attitudes, "making policies and procedures more consistent and effective" (Teacher 10).

Question 2: With the various components of Project L.I.F.T do you feel like parents are more involved with your school?

Teacher 1: “Not really, some parents are only involved when there is a discipline issue or when report cards are distributed.”

Teacher 6: “Parental involvement continues to be a challenge because many parents are still working two jobs and trying to maintain a household.”

Teacher 8: “I do not feel my school has a lot of parent involvement.”

Teacher 10:

For a few parents yes. I think we have a few parents who have gotten more involved but they are generally not the parents who we need to reach the most—there needs to be more intensive effort to target the parents who are particularly struggling with academics or behavior, instead of doing blanket parent involvement activities.

The theme that was apparent in the above responses was that parents were not involved with their schools. Teachers felt that although the Project provides for many opportunities for parents to become involved in their schools, most parents are only involved when there are discipline issues or, on the other hand, the same parents who always attend parental activities. Teachers also indicated that parents have challenges that could hinder their involvement due to working two jobs or maintaining a household as a single parent.

Question 3: How do you feel Project L.I.F.T will help reduce the literacy gap in your district? School?

Teacher 1:

Project lift will help schools obtain the resources necessary to teach literacy.

Project lift can also use funds to implement innovative literacy practices that other non-project lift schools may be able to do. The district can take the innovative

approaches used within project lift to help with literacy in the district.

Teacher 3: “By offering extended learning opportunities, offering resources to increase the use of technology and training effective teachers/principals.”

Teacher 6: “Project L.I.F.T has allocated many resources in terms of professional development and investing in the teachers. Long term sustainability will be achieved by providing additional support to K-2 teachers to ensure students have string foundation skills.”

Teacher 7: “By becoming aware of what student need to improve and making sure the teachers have the necessary resources, and PDs needed to help the students improve.”

Teacher 9: “By providing aide with literacy materials, books for the students to take home, etc.”

The theme from this question is the availability of resources. Project L.I.F.T will help with the reduction of the literacy gap by obtaining resources necessary to teach literacy. The use of resources to increase the use of technology is also important to teachers in reducing the literacy gap. Resources are provided and available in professional development activities which is an investment in teachers as Teacher 6 stated.

Question 4: Has Project L.I.F.T equipped you with the skills you need to teach literacy? Why or why not?

Teacher 1: “Yes, I have gained skills from other teachers that will help me as I teach literacy in my classroom.”

Teacher 2: “Provide me with time to analyze my students assessments and working one on one with literacy facilitator has helped me take ownership of my data.

Also, creating action plans for a road map to guide my instruction.”

Teacher 3: “Yes, I have attended literacy professional development in which I was able to use new skills and strategies in the classroom.”

Teacher 6: “Professional development and coaching at my school has strengthened my ability to facilitate student achievement in literacy.”

Teacher 7: “Yes very helpful PDs and support.”

The theme from this question is professional development and coaching/mentoring. Project L.I.F.T has provided teachers with the skills necessary to teach literacy from the professional development that is provided and the coaching. Utilizing other teachers in the school building as well as literacy coaches enables teachers to have the skills to increase literacy achievement in students at the elementary level. The ability to implement the skills learned from coaching and mentoring has empowered teachers to become facilitators in their classrooms, allowing students to take ownership in their learning.

Question 5: Do you believe a teacher’s attitude/disposition can impact the culture of a school?

Teacher 1: “Yes, if a teacher does not buy-in to the vision of a school, their negative attitude can have a negative impact on student learning as well as reduce the morale of other teachers.”

Teacher 2: “Teacher attitude is number one, if you don’t have hope in the students or in your craft; you are a disservice to population that you serve.”

Teacher 3: “Yes, a teacher’s attitude/disposition is vital and it will impact the school culture negatively or positively. The attitude will be obvious by observing how daily duties/responsibilities are carried out within the school and classroom.”

Teacher 5: “Yes, motivated and happy teachers have motivated and happy students. Frustrated and burnt out teachers have frustrated and burnt out students.”

Teacher 6: “Absolutely! Students and colleagues can sense the energy and attitude of those around them.”

Teacher 7: “Yes it will affect how they teach and the students will be able to tell by actions how the teacher feels.”

Teacher disposition and attitude is the overall theme for this question. A teacher’s attitude can impact the culture of a school negativity which could impact student learning and achievement. This negativity can also have a detrimental impact on the teacher’s morale and the morale of other teachers. Unfortunately, as Teacher 5 indicated, frustrated and burnt out teachers can have students who are frustrated and burnt out. Therefore, a teacher’s negative disposition can have a lasting effect on the whole school including affecting the students.

Question 6: How did your professional development contribute to your competency in literacy?

Teacher 1: “It provided me with the necessary skills to help struggling learners and use innovative ways to motivate students to read.”

Teacher 3: “By demonstrating and using the theories, skills, strategies, and practices I learned.”

Teacher 5: “I have learned a lot of new methods and how to run balanced literacy through the professional development.”

Teacher 9: “It has given me different ideas and strategies to use in my classroom.”

Teacher 10: “I am better informed about the components of balanced literacy,

which is best practice. I have learned more about how to do an effective interactive read-aloud, and how to use small group instruction to boost reading comprehension.”

Learning effective skills and methods to teach students is the theme for this question. The professional development opportunities allowed teachers to increase their skills and competency in literacy. Teachers have learned innovative ways to teach literacy through Balanced Literacy and have been able to demonstrate these skills in their classrooms.

Results indicate that Project L.I.F.T is steadily working towards the goal of closing the literacy achievement gap for students through teacher professional development and changing the dispositions of teachers. This change of behavior has come from the support provided from the program, allowing teachers the opportunities to receive resources needed to improve student scores and the skills and strategies needed to prepare students. A majority of teachers agreed with statements from the surveys given demonstrating their buy-in to the new program. Although Project L.I.F.T is scheduled to end their collaboration agreement with the large urban school district in 2017, the program will make many necessary strides toward its goals based on these findings.

Chapter 5: Summary/Conclusions

Although there is an overall achievement gap among students, there is a more specific literacy achievement gap in education among secondary students (Teale et al., 2007). No Child Left Behind has been conducting research to try and resolve this achievement gap since 2001 for the purpose of enhancing reading instruction and providing targeted support of reading to the most economically challenged schools (Teale et al., 2007). Therefore, most school districts have implemented programs since NCLB to address the problem of the literacy gap in secondary schools.

The elementary years are critical in the acquisition of literacy skills; however, schools are failing to teach reading effectively to students who progress through school without having achieved a working competency of basic reading skills (Shuman, 2006). Therein lies the problem: Students at the elementary level have to receive a quality level of literacy instruction in order to achieve in literacy. Most of the burden falls on teachers to deliver reading instruction, many of whom are not equipped to teach literacy (Shuman, 2006). This issue could be due to the lack of resources they receive or professional development in literacy to increase their skills in order to deliver and facilitate lessons to elementary-level students.

The purpose of the study was to address the literacy achievement gap in a large urban school district and ascertain teacher dispositions in delivering literacy instruction as it relates to having professional development provided in the area of literacy. To aid in this study, Project L.I.F.T was evaluated to determine how the literacy achievement gap will be addressed by examining teacher dispositions and professional development practices. Project L.I.F.T was developed to close the achievement gap among African-American students by addressing academic difficulties among students. The schools that

were targeted for Project L.I.F.T are located in the west corridor of the large urban district in the study. Students in this corridor face economic hardship and have low literacy skills. There are five prekindergarten through eighth-grade schools, two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in the project.

Project L.I.F.T was evaluated using the Logic Model. Due to the number of variables that go into the development and successful implementation of the Project, the study focused on teacher dispositions and professional development by the use of the Logic Model. The inputs that were determined in the Logic Model are investments for the program. The inputs are Talent, Time, Technology, and Community Support, but for the sake of this study, the focus was on the investment of staff/talent as it relates to the program. Outputs of the Logic Model were activities created and implemented to reduce the literacy achievement gap. Those activities were the professional development sessions in literacy development that teachers were offered and able to attend to gain competency in Balanced Literacy. Balanced Literacy is the program that was used that taught teachers various strategies and methods to teach reading skills to elementary students, including small group instruction, guided reading, and read-aloud strategies. The outcomes of the Logic Model are the effects of the Project implementing the inputs as well as generating the outputs to determine the short-term and long-term goals of the program. The impact of the program is related to the results that were gathered in Chapter 4 which define the findings of the Program and how teachers responded to survey questions and a focus group. Three research questions were created to gain insight into the impact of Project L.I.F.T from teacher dispositions and professional development activities.

The three research questions that were used for the study were as follows.

1. What is the perceived impact of teacher professional development on decreasing low level reading skills for identified schools?
2. What is the impact of teacher professional development on teacher disposition for teaching literacy?
3. What is the impact of Project L.I.F.T on the cultural and environmental changes of identified schools?

For Research Question 1, the findings indicated overall a majority of the teachers answered each question on the Likert scale agreeing with statements that teacher professional development impacted the teachers' abilities to decrease low level reading skills of students. Teachers reported that after returning from a professional development session, they could see changes in their classroom practices. Their skills, knowledge, and beliefs as they relate to literacy also changed as a result. These changes are major indicators of teachers witnessing a change in student achievement in literacy and decreasing low level reading skills. Professional development sessions gave teachers new insight of delivering skills to aid in reading achievement. It is also important to note that the professional development activities allowed for feedback, practice, and coaching. Research on instructional coaching as a form of professional development is an emerging entity, with coaching being described as an opportunity for teachers to learn new strategies and techniques, to observe the demonstration of strategies, and to practice and receive feedback on the strategies in their own classroom (Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009, p. 500, as cited in Rush & Young, 2011). Therefore, teachers are no longer sitting and listening to training regarding literacy; they have gained valuable coaching and mentoring needed to implement foundational skills in their individual classrooms. However, it is important to note that a small percentage of teachers felt they

did not have continued support or follow-up activities after professional development sessions. Although support was given during the sessions, they did not receive additional help in the classroom setting to guarantee skills were properly implemented. Due to the low response rate with receiving additional help, it is safe to conclude that a number of factors could have prevented coaching or observation in these teachers' classrooms. Teachers with this disposition should request additional support in their classrooms so that the literacy performance of students is not affected and the low performance in literacy is reduced.

Findings for Research Question 2 suggest teacher professional development has an impact on a teacher's disposition/attitude for teaching literacy. Teachers report that they are consistently finding better ways to teach literacy by showing their passion and dedication to decrease low level reading scores. Teachers feel they teach literacy effectively and, because they are elementary teachers, teach literacy as well as other subjects. Professional development activities allowed for teachers to understand literacy concepts well enough to be effective in teaching elementary reading and to have learned skills to turn students on to reading. There was a somewhat equal distribution of participants who felt teachers can be blamed for students' low scores in literacy, while other teachers felt that there are other factors and variables that can contribute to a student's low scores in literacy and reading achievement. Nonetheless, in another question, a majority of teachers believed they were responsible for a student's achievement in literacy. Findings suggest students show the greatest achievement gains when teachers take responsibility for student success and failure rather than blaming the students for failure (Lee & Smith, 1996, as cited in Peterson et al., 2011). In other statements, teachers were not confident if they had the skills to teach literacy and would

like observations completed on a regular basis, which was one of the issues detailed in Research Question 1. Despite the number of professional development sessions teachers attend, some continue to suggest hesitation of having the necessary skills to teach literacy concepts to students and would like to be observed. Although these questions were not significant to the outcome of this study, it is important to note that some teachers are reaching out to report that they are questioning their skills once having left professional development sessions and felt observations would help them with follow-up support and coaching while they teach important reading skills to students.

The research has indicated that professional development has been essential in teachers decreasing low level reading skills and positively impacting teacher disposition for teaching literacy. In order for Project L.I.F.T to continue to be successful using professional development as a change agent, it must adopt the suggestions of Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), as cited in Rush and Young (2011), that the essential characteristics of a teacher professional development should include the following: (a) it must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection; (b) it must be collaborative, involving the sharing of knowledge among educators; (c) it must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant driven; (d) it must be connected and derived from teacher work with their students; (e) it must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice; and (f) it must be connected to other aspects of school change. Those other aspects of school change are described in Research Question 3 findings below.

Findings for Research Question 3 generated six themes from the open-ended questions teachers were asked during the online focus group. Below are the questions

that were asked of each participant.

1. How has Project L.I.F.T impacted the culture of your school?
2. With the various components of Project L.I.F.T do you feel like parents are more involved with your school?
3. How do you feel Project L.I.F.T will help reduce the literacy gap in your district? School?
4. Has Project L.I.F.T equipped you with the skills you need to teach literacy? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe a teacher's attitude/disposition can impact the culture of a school?
6. How did your professional development contribute to your competency in literacy?

The theme that yielded from Question 1 is teachers having a common goal or shared vision for student achievement which impacts the culture of their school. These dimensions lead to the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs) that produce collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared personal teacher experience which is important for student success and school improvement (Huffman, 2003). Teachers agree that they are unified in their efforts to support the school, and Project L.I.F.T has assisted with those efforts. Collaboration was also mentioned when Teacher Participant 5 indicated that administrators, teachers, and teacher assistants all work together as a family to improve the school and help students. This collaboration generates the emergence of a strong shared vision based on collective values from leadership, staff member commitment, and student success (Huffman, 2003). Project L.I.F.T has encouraged staff to focus on the student culture as well as the instructional culture, improving the morale

of staff and students and creating a more consistent and effective school culture.

Question 2 discussed parental involvement and most teachers felt as though there was not adequate parental involvement in their schools. Researchers continue to find evidence that a higher level of involvement by parents is related to academic success for students (Epstein, 2001, as cited in Smith, 2006). Participants suggested that parents are usually involved the most when it comes to discipline issues or there are challenges that prevent parents from attending activities designed for them. Another issue that could prevent parental involvement is that it is always the same parents participating as Teacher Participant 10 stated. Despite these issues presented, most parents have personal circumstances that cause them to be limited in their involvement (Smith, 2006). For example, many of these families do not have books in the home to help their child; rather than blame families for not being involved, the desire should be to assist families as teachers educate their children (Smith, 2006). One area of Project L.I.F.T that community leaders chose to invest in is continued parental support which to date has not been effective. Nevertheless, Smith (2006) suggested that knowing the needs and strengths of school families was foundational in attempts to enhance parental involvement. This knowledge will enable schools to tailor after-school activities and parental involvement activities in order to increase attendance at the school setting or in the community.

The theme that derived from Question 3 is the availability and use of school resources. Teachers felt as though Project L.I.F.T has an advantage in reducing the literacy achievement gap by the resources that are available for schools and teachers. One teacher noted that Project L.I.F.T will be able to use funds to implement innovative approaches in literacy that most schools without resources will not be able to do.

Resources can bring forth increased use in technology and training effective principals and teachers as Teacher Participant 3 stated. The availability of resources can also create more literacy professional development opportunities for teachers to attend, providing them with needed materials and books to use toward teaching effectiveness.

In regards to available resources and funds, Project L.I.F.T has more of an advantage in reducing the literacy gap due to the investment that has been provided for the program. A group of community leaders raised needed funds from corporate foundations to help support the project over a 5-year period. All of the foundations that participated collected \$55 million to assist Project L.I.F.T in closing the achievement gap. These funds will be used throughout the collaborative agreement to provide resources to teachers and schools to help in the goal of reducing the literacy achievement gap. Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) found in his study comparing education resources that allocation and student achievement suggest a school's *resource package* helps promote high-quality instruction and positive school culture, thus influencing school achievement.

Question 4 respondents determined that coaching and mentoring was important in equipping teachers with the skills needed to teach literacy. Research has discovered that for practicing teachers, professional development and coaching was one of the most important bridges from research to classroom implementation (Kretlow, Cooke, & Wood, 2012). Working with coaches and gaining skills from other teachers were helpful as teachers taught literacy concepts in the classroom. A combination of in-service and follow-up support is an effective method in improving teacher practice and student achievement (Kretlow et al., 2012). Coaching can be used in two forms: supervisory roles and side-by-side coaching. Supervisory coaching involves a skilled peer observation and constructive feedback provided. Side-by-side coaching involves a peer

observing a teacher then co-teaching a classroom lesson, in which the coach models specific skills (Kretlow et al., 2012). Coaching in the Project L.I.F.T program took place in the supervisory role with the assistance of a literacy facilitator whose job is to help literacy teachers develop their skills in literacy teaching. Teacher Participant 3 stated that time was provided to analyze their data working one on one with a literacy facilitator who helped them take ownership of their classroom data. Professional development opportunities also allowed teachers to learn new skills and strategies in the classroom to facilitate learning in their classrooms as it relates to literacy.

The prevalent theme in Question 5 is teacher disposition. A teacher's disposition/attitude can have either a positive or negative impact on the culture of the school. Rath (2001), as cited in Mueller and Hindin (2011), believed that teachers need opportunities to explore their current dispositions as well as to strengthen their dispositions in ways that would be supportive of students in their classrooms. This examination will enable teachers to reflect on how they feel so it does not affect the school culture. For this question, most teachers felt that a teacher's attitude can impact the morale of other staff members as well as students. Dispositions of teachers can be so powerful that it can impact student scores and change the outcome of how students learn. Villegas and Lucas (2002), as cited in Mueller and Hindin, suggested there are six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers: (1) socioculturally conscious, (2) take a positive approach to student differences and have high expectations for students, (3) believe they can make a difference, (4) understand how learners build knowledge, (5) care about lives of their students, and (6) use their knowledge to design educational opportunities for the school setting. Knowing these characteristics is useful to impact a teacher's disposition in order to create a culture at a school that is learning-focused, safe,

and positive.

The last theme that was extracted from Question 6 is teachers having the literacy skills and methods to be effective in the classroom. Participants suggested that the professional development that was offered contributed to their competency in literacy by providing the necessary skills to help struggling students. Teachers were able to gain knowledge in literacy and discover new innovative ways to deliver literacy instruction and how to implement balanced literacy in the classroom.

To answer Research Question 3, the impact of the cultural and environmental changes on Schools B and C is positive and various factors have improved student achievement. Teachers are collaborative and have a shared vision for their schools based on the goals of Project L.I.F.T. Professional development has allowed teachers to learn the skills needed to effectively teach literacy concepts to students, and there is an encouraging attitude from teachers concerning the culture of their schools. On the other hand, the environmental changes have not been successful to date due to the limited amount of parental involvement. More resources and funds have to be put in this area to ensure parents are involved in the academic achievement of their children because research has indicated parental involvement is vital in the improvement of student achievement.

Implications

The development of Project L.I.F.T has been a great investment for the large urban school district this study represents. Although the school district did not have to disburse any funding for the project, the school district changed the way Project L.I.F.T schools are operated by giving the area superintendent access to resources needed to make the project successful. For instance, in the 2012-2013 school year, Project L.I.F.T

implemented a year-round schedule for their schools. Therefore, several of the schools operated on a different schedule than the *regular* school district. The implementation of the year-round schedule is an example of the *time* element of the project. Extended learning opportunities (time) are one of the essential elements that Project L.I.F.T suggests will reduce the achievement gap among students. At the end of the collaboration agreement in 2017, Project L.I.F.T has determined that 90% of students will be proficient in reading, 90% of students will achieve more than one year's growth in reading, and 90% of students will graduate high school.

The achievement of Project L.I.F.T's goal is well within reach of reducing the low level literacy skills evidenced by the results reported in this study. The surveys given indicated that teachers are positive in their dispositions to reduce the literacy achievement gap. Professional development activities given allow teachers the opportunity to increase their competency in literacy and teaching reading skills to students. Coaching and mentoring were also used as a professional development tool, and teachers were open to administrators and peers observing their classrooms. These observations allowed for constructive feedback that research suggested is essential to the reduction of low level reading skills. Reflection is also a key piece to the puzzle and teacher responses indicated they actively evaluate their work in their classrooms.

The increase of teacher disposition and how they viewed their teaching after attending professional development sessions is another implication of the study. Teacher professional development activities impacted dispositions of teachers enabling them to become socioculturally conscious. Social constructs that were apparent at the beginning of the study were the low academic statuses of students who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Teacher responses indicated they were open to professional development

activities that introduced new skills to be learned, which in turn changed their knowledge of instructional practices and application of strategies to help increase literacy achievement in low performing students from these disadvantaged neighborhoods. Teachers were able to enter each professional development session with an open mind which impacted their attitudes, beliefs, and prior knowledge as the survey implied. Working in Title I schools that have students who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods could have a significant impact on teachers who are not equipped to handle externalizing behaviors of these students. Earlier in this study, it was noted that Matthews et al.'s (2010) study reported that African-American boys rated higher on externalizing behaviors and lower on learner-related skills, and they tend to experience difficulties with literacy skills development. However, teachers who participated in this study response suggested that the social barriers of students did not have a negative impact on how they participated in professional development settings and implemented changes in their classrooms.

Lastly, the culture of Schools B and C has changed and is positively influenced and impacted by Project L.I.F.T. Collaboration has increased and teachers are working in teacher teams forming PLCs. These PLCs have allowed teachers to formulate a shared vision which have had a positive impact on the school's culture and have had a positive influence on teachers, students, and administration. The morale of staff and students has also been influenced since Project L.I.F.T began their project. The results of the study suggested that teachers are motivated and encouraged to make changes in their schools by providing students with the skills needed to increase their academic performance in literacy. A person's attitude toward a behavior consists of beliefs about whether outcomes of the behavior will be favorable; therefore a perceived favorable outcome

increases the likelihood that the person will engage in the behavior (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010). Survey results determined that teacher morale was optimistic in regards to providing students with the literacy skills needed to increase their performance and reduce the literacy achievement gap.

An increased teacher-child interaction is another influence Project L.I.F.T has had on the cultural and environmental changes of the identified schools in the study.

Teacher-child interactions are the daily exchanges that teachers and children have with one another on a daily basis, including those interactions that are social and instructional in nature (Hamre et al., 2012). When these interactions are helpful and positive, the culture of a school will be influenced. This influence will exist in the form of improved behavior and increased student achievement. More importantly, researchers noted that when students are surrounded in a school culture with caring, warm, and sensitive caregivers, these interactions will have direct or indirect effects on a child's language and literacy development (Downer, Sabol, & Hamre, 2010, as cited in Hamre et al., 2012).

Project L.I.F.T has created a culture of schools and impacted the dispositions of teachers from the survey results. There have been many programs in school districts that were created to bring about change in academics, in which some programs have been successful and others have failed. There has been collaboration between investors and community and school leaders who have created this project and thus far has been successful in its efforts. This success has been evidenced by teachers who are the foundational element to the reduction of the literacy achievement gap. Teachers buy-in to this project has proven to be significant which is important to academic achievement. Project L.I.F.T has included several researched components that they have utilized that have contributed to their success thus far. Those components are schools having a shared

vision, collaboration, school resources, coaching, mentoring, and teachers having a positive disposition. All these ingredients have proved to generate positive results from students.

After the collaboration agreement ends in 2017, how will Project L.I.F.T sustain their momentum? If Project L.I.F.T continues with implementing the researched-based components and applying them with fidelity, the momentum will continue. Sustainability does not simply mean whether something can endure; it addresses how initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment (Hargeaves & Fink, 2002, as cited in Garcia, 2005). No longer will money be one of the determining factors; how teachers collaborate with one another and an increase in parental involvement will be some of the essential elements that will sustain the achievement attained in these schools in the west corridor of the district. Promoters of sustainability cultivate and recreate an environment that has the capacity to stimulate continuous improvement on a broad front (Garcia, 2005).

Putting Project L.I.F.T aside and removing the funding investors put into the implementation of the project, how can another school district replicate what Project L.I.F.T has done in regards to impacting teacher skills, dispositions, and the positive culture of schools? The replication would be effortless if districts implement the researched components into their organization. Investing in teachers by providing effective professional development will be the initial step to building a culture of teachers to bring about change to any district. The change in the beliefs, knowledge, and competence will allow for these changes to affect the culture influencing students. The results of these changes more than likely will reduce the literacy achievement gap, increasing student achievement.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research can be developed to determine the success of Project L.I.F.T from literacy test data that will be available after students take their end-of-grade tests at the end of May 2014 and subsequent years. The test data will show the impact of teacher professional development opportunities and how student achievement has been effected as a result. Research can also be conducted in 2017 to conduct a full study on the program implementation and look for trends in testing data to determine if Project L.I.F.T accomplished its goals and closed the achievement gap. This research can lead the district to consider making changes within the school district to mimic Project L.I.F.T and the efforts to improve student achievement. The various elements of Project L.I.F.T can be researched such as extended learning opportunities and the effects of year-round schooling on test data and student achievement. Parental involvement is another researchable area. Parental involvement was low in the two study schools, so data can be compiled to determine the measures to be applied to reach parents and increase parental involvement.

More research can also be conducted as it relates to sustainability. When the collaboration agreement between the school district and the contributing foundations and community leaders ends, research can be conducted 3-5 years after the study to determine if the district was able to sustain the momentum that Project L.I.F.T brought to the organization. This will be a major research study question because if these schools are able to improve student achievement, educators would like to see those changes sustained nationwide.

Conclusion

Closing the literacy achievement gap is imperative in the field of education.

School districts, state and federal have been trying to implement programs for decades to try and combat these issues in student achievement. Many innovative approaches have been successful, while many have not been effective. The large urban school district that was studied is using community resources to make changes within the district trying an innovative approach to make improvements and close the achievement gap among students. In education, leaders have to be proactive in their approaches to make changes, and it is apparent that this district is on its way to make an impact in the field of education.

Project L.I.F.T is a new program with many different components. It was the researcher's intent to begin with assessing the professional development practices as well as teacher dispositions to determine how teachers felt about the program. Teachers are one of the major components in establishing if the program will be successful in closing the literacy achievement gap. If teachers are not on board to make changes, the program cannot be successful. However, from this research, it was concluded that teachers are a vital part of the project and it is successful thus far because they are determined to make a difference in the schools that are labeled as Project L.I.F.T.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent for Teacher Participants

Gardner-Webb University

Informed Consent

Dear Elementary teachers,

My name is Quinetta Hall and I am a student at Gardner-Webb University working on my Doctor of Educational Leadership degree. I am conducting a research study entitled “Evaluating Project L.I.F.T and Its Impact on Reducing the Elementary Literacy Gap through Teacher Professional Development.” The purpose of the study is to evaluate the components of Project L.I.F.T and determine its impact of reducing the literacy achievement gap by examining teacher dispositions as it relates to professional development and literacy.

Your participation will involve completing one survey and participating in a focus group, if randomly selected. You may be asked to complete the survey face to face with the researcher or on a computer. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate and provide your consent, you will receive the link to the online survey as well as other directions for participating in the focus group. Once you start, you can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. The results of the study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be made known to any outside party. In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you.

If you wish to withdraw from this study after data has been collected, you must contact me by email explaining that you no longer desire to be a participant. However, a benefit from being a part of this study is providing new knowledge with the new program Project L.I.F.T and how it impacts you as a teacher. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me at XXXXXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXXX. For questions about your rights as a study participant, or any concerns or complaints, please contact Gardner-Webb Graduate School at 704-406-4000.

By signing this form, you agree that you understand the nature of this study, the possible risks to you as a participant, and how your identity will be kept confidential. When you sign this form, this means you are 18 or older and that you give your permission to volunteer as a participant in the study that is described here.

I consent to participate in the online survey
group

____ Yes ____ No

I consent to participate in the focus

____ Yes ____ No

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B

Surveys

Project L.I.F.T Professional Development Survey

Purpose: To assess teacher's attitude toward professional development practices

Administered to: K-5 teachers

Format/Length: 10 closed-ended items. Each item is a statement that teachers rate on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Source: Missouri Professional Development Guidelines for Student Success

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate numbers to the right of each statement.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
Participants in professional development activities are involved in determining topics and content.	1	2	3	4	5
The professional development presenter is knowledgeable and has credibility with the participants.	1	2	3	4	5
The professional development includes a variety of activities designed for adult learners (active engagement, use of prior knowledge, working in teams, real world applications, choice of activities)	1	2	3	4	5
The professional development includes continued support and follow-up activities (frequent and ongoing sessions/problem-solving)	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher can demonstrate changes in classroom practices after a professional development session.	1	2	3	4	5
The professional development provides for changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of participants.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovative idea presented at a professional development session.	1	2	3	4	5
The learning climate of professional development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.	1	2	3	4	5
All professional development activities					

include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Each school can determine its own professional development activities rather than having uniform activities throughout the district.	1	2	3	4	5

Project L.I.F.T Teacher Attitude Survey

Purpose: To assess teacher's attitude toward literacy teaching

Administered to: K-5 teachers

Format/Length: 25 closed-ended items. Each item is a statement that teachers rate on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Source: NSF: Teacher Enhancement (ESIE)

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate numbers to the right of each statement.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	
<hr/>					
When a student does better than usual in literacy, it is often because the teacher exerted a little extra effort.	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>					
I am continually finding better ways to teach literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
Even when I try very hard, I do not teach literacy as well as I do most subjects.	1	2	3	4	5
When the literacy grades of students improve, it is often due to their teacher having found a more effective teaching approach.	1	2	3	4	5
I know steps necessary to teach literacy concepts effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
I am not very effective in monitoring students' reading.	1	2	3	4	5
If students are underachieving in literacy, it is most likely due to ineffective literacy teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
I generally teach literacy ineffectively.	1	2	3	4	5
The inadequacy of a student's literacy background can be overcome by good teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

The low literacy achievement scores of some students cannot generally be blamed on their teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
When a low-achieving child progresses in literacy, it is usually due to extra attention given by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand literacy concepts well enough to be effective in teaching elementary literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
Increased effort in literacy teaching produces little change in some students' literacy achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher is generally responsible for the achievement of students in literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
Student's achievement in literacy is directly related to their teacher's effectiveness in literacy teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
If parents comment that their child is showing more interest in literacy in school, it is probably due to the performance of the child's teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to explain to students why literacy is important.	1	2	3	4	5
I am typically able to answer students' literacy questions.	1	2	3	4	5
I wonder if I have the necessary skills to teach literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
Effectiveness in teaching literacy has little influence on the achievement of students with low motivation.	1	2	3	4	5
Given a choice, I would not invite the principal to evaluate my literacy teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

When a student has difficulty understanding a literacy concept, I am usually at a loss as to how to help the student understand it better.	1	2	3	4	5
When teaching literacy, I usually welcome student questions.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not know what to do to turn students on to reading.	1	2	3	4	5
Even teachers with good literacy teaching abilities cannot help some students learn reading skills.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Remaining Teacher Attitude Survey Results

Table 37

Survey Question 2: When a student does better than usual in literacy, it is often because the teacher exerted a little extra effort.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	6	20	20	20
Somewhat agree	9	30	30	50
Agree	10	33.3	33.3	83.3
Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 38

Survey Question 5: When the literacy grades of students improve, it is often due to their teacher having found a more effective teaching approach.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Somewhat agree	5	16.7	16.7	20
Agree	16	53.3	53.3	73.3
Strongly agree	8	26.7	26.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 39

Survey Question 6: I know steps necessary to teach literacy concepts effectively.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Somewhat agree	10	33.3	33.3	36.7
Agree	17	56.7	56.7	93.3
Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 40

Survey Question 7: I am not very effective in monitoring students' reading.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
Disagree	16	53.3	53.3	70
Somewhat agree	5	16.7	16.7	86.7
Agree	3	10	10	96.7
Strongly Agree	1	3.3	3.3	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 41

Survey Question 10: The inadequacy of a student's literacy background can be overcome by good teaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Somewhat agree	9	30	30	33.3
Agree	14	46.7	46.7	80
Strongly agree	6	20	20	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 42

Survey Question 12: When a low-achieving child progresses in literacy, it is usually due to extra attention given by the teacher.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Somewhat agree	9	30	30	33.3
Agree	15	50	50	83.3
Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 43

Survey Question 14: Increased effort in literacy teaching produces little change in some students' literacy achievement.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Disagree	23	76.7	76.7	83.3
Somewhat agree	2	6.7	6.7	90
Agree	3	10	10	100
Total	30	100	100	

Table 44

Survey Question 16: Student's achievement in literacy is directly related to their teacher's effectiveness in literacy teaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	6	20	20.7	20.7
Somewhat agree	9	30	31	51.7
Agree	9	30	31	82.8
Strongly agree	5	16.7	17.2	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 45

Survey Question 17: If parents comment that their child is showing more interest in literacy in school, it is probably due to the performance of the child's teacher.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	5	16.7	17.2	17.2
Somewhat agree	9	30	31	48.3
Agree	12	40	41.4	89.7
Strongly agree	3	10	10.3	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 46

Survey Question 18: I find it difficult to explain to students why literacy is important.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	11	36.7	37.9	37.9
Disagree	18	60	62.1	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 47

Survey Question 19: I am typically able to answer students' literacy questions.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	18	60	62.1	62.1
Strongly Agree	11	36.7	37.9	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 48

Survey Question 21: Effectiveness in teaching literacy has little influence on the achievement of students with low motivation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	5	16.7	17.2	17.2
Disagree	15	50	51.7	69
Somewhat agree	7	23.3	24.1	93.1
Agree	2	6.7	6.9	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 49

Survey Question 23: When a student has difficulty understanding a literacy concept, I am usually at a loss as to how to help the student understand it better.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	6	20	20.7	20.7
Disagree	16	53.3	55.2	75.9
Somewhat agree	7	23.3	24.1	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 50

Survey Question 24: When teaching literacy, I usually welcome student questions.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	19	63.3	65.5	65.5
Strongly agree	10	33.3	34.5	100
Total	29	96.7	100	

Table 51

Survey Question 26: Even teachers with good literacy teaching abilities cannot help some students learn reading skills.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.8	13.8
Disagree	17	56.7	58.6	72.4
Somewhat agree	5	16.7	17.2	89.7
Agree	3	10	10.3	100
Total	29	96.7	100	