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Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement
Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

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May 2006

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Keywords: Decoding, Emergent Readers, Look-Say Method, Phonics, Reading,
Teacher-Preparation, Whole-Language Method

ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers

by

H. Brooke Blair

Reading is not an easily learned skill for most students. I chose to look at the methodology being used by teachers in East Tennessee to instruct emerging readers. Through my review of literature, I researched reading approaches implemented in American classrooms in the last 150 years. I compared and contrasted data to determine current researchers' findings concerning the most effective techniques for teaching reading and how teachers have implemented this knowledge base into their teaching strategies.

Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Therefore, I also researched literature addressing the growing concern among educators with teachers' preparation and professional development opportunities as well as the amount of specific preparation teachers received regarding the reading methods they are using.

After compiling the data from my interviews with 30 East Tennessee first-grade teachers, I found that most said they did not feel adequately prepared to teach emergent readers. These teachers reported they had not had instruction that provided foundations in a wide range of research-based

approaches to reading. The professional development offerings for teachers already in the classroom were often sporadic and did not compensate for their lack of preparation in college.

There is a need for colleges and universities to re-evaluate the current teacher preparation programs. School systems should strive to provide quality inservice opportunities for instructors of emergent readers as well as hiring reading coaches or specialists to assist the reading instructors.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear and supportive family, but most especially to . . .

my mother, Norma;

my children, David, Beth, and Mary;

and my grandchildren, Victoria, Madison, Nora, Joseph, and Thomas.

I thank them for their unconditional love, support, and encouragement.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the support and monetary help from Delta Kappa Gamma International and Tom and Lou Walker. Their assistance made this work possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is a direct result of the encouragement of two people who believed in me and my ability to complete this study. To my chairperson, Dr. Louise MacKay, who even during illness, has continued to help me not only grow as a person and an educational leader but has also helped me to re-evaluate my priorities to keep my life in focus. She has become a dear friend.

This work is also dedicated to Debby Bryan, who so faithfully helped, encouraged, and supported me. Her professionalism and friendship provided the motivation needed to complete the project even though, at times, I felt it was a lost cause. She will always have my most heartfelt gratitude.

Dr. Russell West deserves special acknowledgement. What a wonderful teacher and compassionate human being! I will remember him always and count my contacts with him, though too few, as beneficial and precious.

Thanks to my support at work. Melissa Dixon and Gail Fancher, through their aid and assistance with my students, allowed me to complete my study and dissertation. I am so thankful for their friendship and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my committee members for their patience. They all believed that I could and would eventually finish this dissertation, and they were all correct.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	5
LIST OF TABLES	9
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	10
Background	10
Statement of the Problem.....	13
Research Questions.....	14
Significance of the Study	14
Limitations and Delimitations	15
Definitions of Terms.....	16
Overview of the Study	20
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	21
Historical Overview of Teaching Methods Used in America.....	21
Methods Used for Teaching Reading	24
Criteria for Choosing an Approach to Teach Reading	31
Preparation of Teachers of Reading.....	37
Summary	39
3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	41

Chapter	Page
Focus of the Study	41
Research Design	41
Research Questions.....	42
Interview Questions	42
Participants.....	44
Instrumentation	45
Data Collection	45
Data Analysis	46
Summary	46
4. ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	48
Interview Guide and Participants.....	48
Research Question #1	50
Research Question #2	52
Research Question #3	58
Research Question #4	64
Research Question #5	70
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	73
Summary	73
Conclusions.....	75
Findings	76
Recommendations for Future Study	76
Recommendations for Future Research	77
REFERENCES	79
APPENDICES	86

Chapter	Page
APPENDIX A: Letter to Director of Schools.....	86
APPENDIX B: Letter to Administrators	87
APPENDIX C: Interview Questions for First-Grade Teachers	88
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form	89
APPENDIX E: Auditor's Certification	93
VITA	94

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participants' Experience and Education	49
2. Teachers' Perceptions of Preservice Training.....	51
3. Additional Professional Development/Workshops Attended by Teachers.....	53
4. Teachers' Most Difficult Problems Regarding Effectively Teaching Emergent Readers	59
5. Emergent Reading Teachers' Perceptions of Successful Methodologies	64
6. Methods Used to Evaluate the Success of Chosen Methodologies	71

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When Paul entered his new third-grade classroom, Ms. Wilson, his teacher, was happy to see him. She had read the notes from his previous teachers indicating that Paul was a thoughtful, eager-to-please, and obedient student. Paul lived up to his reputation--until the day Ms. Wilson asked him to read aloud to the class. He stood up, sat back down, shook his head angrily, and said, "No, I won't do it, and you can't make me!" Mystified at this outburst from her normally easy-going student, Ms. Wilson took Paul aside and discovered, to her astonishment, that Paul could not read. Is it possible in today's society for a child to progress through 3 years of schooling and not learn to read? According to Sweet (1996a):

Teaching children to read is the most important objective educators have to accomplish. Reading is a prerequisite for everything else, not only in school but in life itself. Western civilization has taught its children to read using an alphabetic approach ever since the Phoenicians invented the alphabet and the Egyptians stopped writing in hieroglyphics. English is an alphabetic language that, when written, uses letters to represent speech sounds. (¶ 20)

Reading is not an easily learned skill for approximately 20% to 30% of the student population (Lyon, 1999). The fact that such a large number of American children are not learning to read successfully is an important issue that has gained national attention. Educators and researchers are seeking answers as to the best way to teach all children to read.

Background

The education system in the United States has a history of embracing one philosophy after another and changing these philosophies approximately every 10 years. According to Palmaffy (1997), the formula during Colonial times was: Teach children the relationship between letters and sounds and then let them read, a method similar to the phonetic approach that

would reappear in the late 1900s. This was the accepted method until around 1850, when Horace Mann, an educational reformer, told the Massachusetts Board of Education that children should focus on comprehension by learning whole words first (Palmaffy).

In the late 1800s, Mason, an educator in England, developed a four-step method of teaching ("Charlotte Mason Philosophy," 2002). The first step was to motivate the students by making the lessons interesting and on their academic level. Step two was to present facts from "living books," nature, and the humanities. Mason's definition of living books was books that were well written and engaging and had characters that came alive. The third step focused on reinforcing learning by copying words, taking dictation, writing in journals, or creating a time line. Step four included narration implemented by the students telling what they had learned and sharing information with others. The Mason method was adapted in America and was based on forming good habits, reading a variety of books, reciting, copying work, taking dictation, keeping a nature diary, maintaining a spelling notebook, and preparing a time-line book.

Montessori (1956/1989), an Italian physician, formulated and introduced the Montessori philosophy during the early 1900s. Her program for education and child development focused on the natural development of the whole child from birth through maturity. This concept allowed children to make choices from available materials when readiness was determined based on teachers' observations (*Frequently Asked Questions About Montessori*, 2002; Montessori).

In the 1920s, Orton (1937), a physician, became concerned with the number of patients he saw who were unable to read. After ruling out physical disabilities, he prescribed multisensory teaching techniques and began working with a researcher named Gillingham; together, they concluded that students must be taught one-on-one by their reading instructors (Orton).

From 1910 to 1935, educators saw a shift in America's classrooms from oral reading to silent reading. Effective silent reading was considered a necessity to prepare students for a productive role in society. This premise was based on the concept that reading is primarily a

receptive process with thinking as its goal--a process that involves perceiving text instantaneously, associating text with spoken words, and relating those ideas into thought.

Mann's (as cited in Palmarffy, 1997) whole-word-first teaching method returned to prominence from around 1940 until 1970, when phonics became popular once again. Whole language, a non-skill based approach involving children's literature, writing activities, and communication activities used across the curriculum, gained a foothold during the 1980s (Jones, 1998; Lemann, 1997; Padelford, 1995).

During the 1980s with the resurgence of phonics-based instruction and the whole-language approach, the great reading debate began anew. Advocates of whole language and the phonics-based supporters clashed on the lecture circuit as well as in the print media. In an effort to find acceptable alternatives, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) and the Direct Instructional System for Teaching and Remediation (DISTAR) gained some popularity in the 1980s (Taylor, 1992). In addition, unacceptable reading scores across the nation prompted development of the Reading Recovery method and phonological awareness research (Taylor, 1992).

From the beginning of the 1990s to the present, the reading trends have been using more teacher-guided skill instruction programs. These programs included *CARE*, *Four Blocks*, *Accelerated Reader*, and *Project Read*.

Teachers of reading, challenged by high-need students, public dissatisfaction with low test scores, and the large number of illiterate Americans, continue even today to search for the methodology that best meets the needs of their students. Teachers assess students' needs each year as class populations change, and they evaluate the approach or approaches to be implemented that will affect success in reading for all students. To accomplish this assessment and implementation, teachers must be knowledgeable about current data on reading methodologies. Are reading teachers adequately trained to assess and implement strategies relating to effective teaching methods and implementation?

With the multitude of reading instruction methods used throughout history and available to teachers today, another question becomes evident: Are educators prepared to choose and implement methods to successfully teach emerging readers? Data have been gathered and reported concerning the lack of preservice training required or offered to teachers by colleges and universities (Beasley, 1964; Broman, 1962; Goodlad, 1976; Isgar, 1999; McRobbie, 2000; Smith, 1971). Beginning teachers are often unprepared to make the best choices concerning reading methodology. Rarely do they have the opportunity to practice new reading methods before they begin their student-teaching experiences. It is important that quality staff development focusing on instructional strategies be regularly provided for experienced reading teachers as well as novice teachers (Broman; Durr, 1967; Erickson & Otto, 1973; Goodlad, 1976; McRobbie; Smith, 1971).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Many reading teachers have inadequate preservice preparation to teach emergent readers; therefore, opportunities for postservice training through inservice and professional development activities should be offered regularly for every reading teacher. For this study, I examined reading programs presently being used in five counties in East Tennessee and determined which methodologies teachers perceived as affording the largest number of students maximum success. I also researched teachers' preparation to ascertain if reading teachers believe they are adequately trained to teach children reading and language arts skills.

Data were collected from 30 teachers in five selected school systems in East Tennessee counties who indicated their willingness to be interviewed for this study. Directors of schools, supervisors of first-grade teachers, and principals of several schools were contacted in order to identify teachers and seek permission to pursue the study. Interviews requesting information

concerning teaching approaches and professional development training for first-grade teachers were used for this qualitative study.

Research Questions

The following five research questions served as the focal point of this study that comprised three subgroups of teachers: 10 beginning teachers with first-grade teaching experience ranging from 1 to 4 years, 10 novice teachers with first-grade teaching experience ranging from 5 to 12 years, and 10 veteran teachers with experience ranging 15 years or more:

1. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, how well did their preservice training prepare them to effectively teach emergent readers?
2. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what additional professional development designed for reading instruction was needed to effectively prepare them to teach emergent readers?
3. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what was believed to be the most difficult problems for them to effectively teach emergent readers?
4. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what was believed to be the most successful methodologies for them to use to teach emergent readers?
5. How did these teachers of emergent-readers evaluate the success of their chosen methodologies?

Significance of the Study

The teaching strategy, or approach, is a key element in successful language arts mastery. The challenge of teaching emerging readers to decode, encode, comprehend, write creatively and correctly, and understand spelling rules is a current topic of research and debate. Students in teacher-preparation programs should be afforded the opportunity to observe, study, and research reading techniques prior to their student-teaching experiences (McRobbie, 2000). Professional

development focusing on the teaching of reading should be a yearly offering for educators in order for them to choose, design, and implement effective instructional reading programs for the emergent reader. This study focused on what first-grade teachers considered the best approaches to teach emerging readers and the extent to which these teachers perceived their professional development in these approaches was adequate.

Quality professional development is a necessity for keeping abreast of current strategies and trends. Adequate training must be offered if educators are to confidently plan and implement the best curriculum as well as to be able to assess the learning styles, progress, and academic needs of their students. Such training should encompass the varieties of methodologies available and why, when, and how they should be implemented in order to achieve maximum success for reading acquisition. The findings of this study might provide information useful in planning curriculum, choosing reading methodologies that best suit individual learners, recommending the best choices when adopting reading instructional materials, and implementing meaningful preservice and inservice training.

Limitations and Delimitations

Each participant was chosen by school administrators with the only criterion being the teacher's number of years of teaching experience. The choice of open-ended interviews as the major source of data limited the number of participants involved in this study. If asked to complete a questionnaire for a quantitative study, teachers might have been reluctant to acknowledge any instructional difficulty in their classrooms. Using the qualitative approach allowed me to describe in depth the perceptions and thoughts expressed by the teachers interviewed. Data must be deemed trustworthy. To be trustworthy, qualitative studies must satisfy the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview questions were approved by dissertation committee members and the ETSU Institutional Review Board. The motivation for my choosing to do qualitative

research was that qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live (Myers, 1997).

Definitions of Terms

The following list of definitions will aid in understanding the data compiled for this study. Many are words that are used frequently by reading educators but are rarely used outside the school environment:

1. *Accelerated Reader (AR)* is a curriculum-based assessment tool that provides a summary and analysis of results to enable teachers to monitor students' comprehension of authentic literature using a classroom computer (Reading Online, 2006).
2. *Alphabetic principle* is the combination of alphabetic understanding--words are composed of letters that represent sounds--and phonological awareness--the relationships between letters and phonemes to retrieve the pronunciation of an unknown printed word or to spell words (Kameenui, Simmons, & Smith, 1999).
3. *Alphabetic understanding* is awareness that letters represent sounds and that whole words have a sound structure consisting of individual sounds and patterns of groups of sounds (Kameenui et al.).
4. *CARE reading program* (Children Achieving Reading Excellence) is an organization of multi-sensory teaching strategies that use the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning channels for teaching reading and language arts skills (Hutchinson, B., personal communication received May 20, 2005).
5. *Choral reading* occurs when a whole class reads aloud from the same selection. The teacher also reads and sets the pace as well as modeling proper pronunciation and variation in tone (Choral Reading, 2006).
6. *Decoding* is a method of translating individual letters and or groups of letters into sounds in order to pronounce a word (Kameenui et al.).

7. *DIBELS* (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a screening and monitoring tool administered individually in 7 minutes or less. The fluency-based indicators assessed using DIBELS can help identify students at risk for reading failure (Good, 2002).
8. *Dolch words* is a list comprised of 220 high frequency words, excluding nouns, that were used in beginning reading programs in the 1940s. This list was developed by Dolch in 1948.
9. *Emergent readers* are those persons who are beginning the process of recognizing and using letters and words to enhance their literacy development (Adams, 1990).
10. *Four blocks* approach to reading includes daily language arts instruction through guided reading, working with words, self-selected reading, and writing; all taught in 20- to 30-minute segments (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999).
11. *Graphemes* are written symbols of the alphabet, usually abstract and without meaning. They are the written equivalent of phonemes (Kameenui et al.).
12. *Initial Teaching Alphabet* (i.t.a.) is a special alphabet consisting of 44 characters designed to regularize the coding of the basic sound units in English (Bond & Dykstra, 1967).
13. *Integrated Thematic Instruction (I.T.I.)* is designed on three interlocking, interdependent principles. These principles are directly based on brain research, teaching strategies, and curriculum development to assist students in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The concept is based on a year-long plan of thematic units of teaching (Kovalik, 1984).
14. *Language Experience Approach* (LEA) is built upon a framework of experiences resulting in pupil- and teacher-made materials designed to bring language arts skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) together as a unit (Bond & Dykstra; Stauffer, 1970).
15. *Literacy centers* contain literacy-related materials arranged for collaborative exploration set up in an area of the classroom. Children working in centers use general activities and

materials organized by the teacher. These activities may sometimes be differentiated for individuals or groups to set the direction and pace of the activity (Owocki, 2005).

16. *Look-say method* is a teaching method based on memorization of the shape of a word by focusing on the letters that make it up (Durkin, 1978).
17. *Montessori method* is an educational program based on the philosophy that children learn by making choices. These choices are stimulated through a variety of experiences including role-playing, stories, class meetings, multiage peer interacting, and teacher observation to gauge readiness (Montessori, 1956/1989).
18. *Multi-sensory education* is a method whereby educators are trained in reading remediation, as developed by Orton and Gillingham. This approach for emergent readers is language-based. The student, through direct instruction, is taught reading, handwriting, spelling, and written expression as one body of knowledge. This method is sequential and cumulative (Jerger, 1996; Orton, 1937; Smith, 2001).
19. *Partner reading* is an activity used during guided reading using the *Four Blocks* method. The use of partners reading together should be modeled by the teacher. The teacher may choose to have partners taking turns; echo reading (the stronger reader leads the struggling reader); choral reading (softly, head to head); or after each child reads the page, the student then either asks an appropriate question or makes an appropriate comment (Cunningham, Cunningham, & Hall, 2000).
20. *Peer tutoring* is a way for all students to get one-on-one help and enough time to practice and learn. Every student in the class is paired with another. During the tutoring, one student explains the work to another student, asks the student to answer questions, and tells the student whether his or her answers are correct (Carta, Greenwood, & Greenwood, 1988),
21. *Phonemic awareness* is reached when a child is phonemically aware that he or she is able to identify and manipulate the individual speech sounds (phonemes) in a sound pattern

and to make comparisons between pairs of sound patterns (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Chard & Dickson, 1999).

22. *Phonemes* are the smallest units of sound, represented by letters of the alphabet (Welsford & Whitten, 1999). There are 44 phonemes in the English language (Lemann, 1997).
23. *Phonics* is a method of teaching reading that makes clear the fact that letters are symbols for sounds. Children decode written sounds; this enables them to use this skill for deciphering unfamiliar words (Bond & Dykstra; Chall, 1983).
24. *Phonological awareness* is an auditory skill that involves understanding the different ways in which spoken language can be broken down and manipulated (Podhajski, 1999-2000).
25. *Project Read* is a research-based mainstream language arts program for students who need a systematic learning experience with direct teaching of concepts and skills through multi-sensory techniques (Project Read, 2002).
26. *Reading Recovery* (RR) is an early intervention program developed in New Zealand by Clay to reduce the number of children having language arts difficulties. The program focuses on first grade. Teachers identify students not making progress. These students are observed, assessed, and, if selected, receive 30 to 40 minutes a day, one-on-one instruction with specially trained RR teachers (Coulter, Grossen, & Ruggles, 1997).
27. *Reading Renaissance/Accelerated Reader* (AR) is a comprehensive program that is designed to balance a reading curriculum with an intensive regimen of reading practice, motivational techniques, and technology (Williams, 2000).
28. *Whole-language method* is a teaching method that was introduced in New Zealand and is based on the premise that children learn to read the way they learn to talk, by absorbing and imitating the language around them (Adams; Stahl, 1998).

29. *Word wall* is a designated area of a classroom in which high frequency words are displayed throughout the year, with an addition of at least five words per week (Cunningham et al., 1999).

Overview of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction to the study, followed by a brief background, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, definitions of terms, and an overview of the study.

Chapter 2 includes a review of literature related to the teaching of emergent readers, an exploration of the initial training or lack of training for reading teachers, and professional development opportunities for teachers of reading. Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the methods and procedures that were used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 includes a description of each section of the study, the presentation of the data, and findings of the study. Chapter 5 contains a summary, conclusions, findings, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thomas Jefferson said, “A nation that is ignorant and free is a nation that never was and never will be” (BrainyQuote, 2006, n. p.). According to Beasley (1964), “A democratic society requires a public that can read” (p. 1). There is a growing awareness of the importance of reading in meeting social, cultural, educational, and personal needs of individuals engaged in all activities (Witty, 1948). More innovations have been implemented in reading instruction during the last 50 years than during any time previously in American educational history. Durr (1967) acknowledged:

Progress in reading instruction has been marked by a succession of turning points. For years, reading instruction and materials were virtually unchanged; then, all of a sudden, a new plan emerges and instructors implement this method in the classroom until another emerges. (p. 3)

Sweet (1996b) stressed the significance of reading instruction by stating, “Reading is a gateway skill; without the abilities necessary to read, our children will be unable to go through the gate to all other areas of learning; for they all depend on this one skill” (¶ 17).

Historical Overview of Teaching Methods Used in America

According to Sweet (1996b), in the mid-1800s when Horace Mann was Secretary of Education for Massachusetts and considered an influential educator, he rejected the teaching of phonics. He preferred the “look-say” method of reading. His wife published an early look and say reader. It was based on the ideas of Gallaudet who was developing reading programs for the deaf. One of the first lines in her early reader was, "Frank had a dog, his name was Spot” (Sweet, 1996b, ¶ 21). Sweet (1996b) said he was sure that Spot never dreamed about how world renowned he would become.

This practice of look and say or look-say reading, aided by the Normal School for training teachers, firmly entrenched this method until approximately 1914. According to Sweet (1996b), “The basic premise was, teach the children to memorize the most commonly used words in the English language, adding new words each year and reaching a total of about 1,500 words by the end of the fourth grade” (¶ 22). A second premise was that children could learn to read by associating words with pictures. Drills in sound/letter correspondences were considered to be unnecessary (Sweet, 1996b).

According to Durr (1967), some historians viewed the year 1910 as a time of significant new insights, with the introduction of what is termed the "scientific movement" in education. For hundreds of years, oral reading was the preferred method for teaching students to read; however, from 1910 to approximately 1920, the idea of initiating silent reading was a major topic of discussion among educators. During this 10-year period, the “development of the concept of applying scientific techniques to the study of reading, devising standardized instruments to measure reading achievement, and increasing the number of studies” were the major accomplishments (Durr, pp. 4-5).

During the decade from 1910 to 1920, 763 investigations pertaining to reading were reported (Durkin, 1978). With these innovations in place, the 1920s were extremely progressive. This activity was credited to educators' increased interest in searching for information relating to reading instruction. The three main topics of research that resulted in significant changes were silent reading, individual differences, and remedial reading. Textbooks were printed based on the concept of silent reading (Durkin; Wheat, 1923). Studies were conducted revealing that silent reading increased reading speed and comprehension (Wheat). Silent reading became almost an obsession for 5 years. However, as so often happens in education, the novelty of this new idea began to wear off as researchers revealed that there was also a special need for oral reading in the school program (Curriculum Development Timeline, 2002; Durr, 1967). This spawned the idea of combining the two approaches to meet individual needs of the students. To

help identify these individual needs, standardized tests were used to gauge students' progress and identify needed remediation (Durr).

The next decade, from 1930 to 1940, was a continuation of the previous 10 years with investigations perpetuating at an increasingly rapid pace. There were approximately 1,200 reading studies reported during this time. These studies were superior to previous research in the areas of isolating specific problems, educational designs, and controls. A trend was emerging concerning the study of reading readiness. These studies were beneficial for the growing acceptance of the need for remedial reading for some students (Durr, 1967).

The 30-year period from 1910 to 1940 has been referred to as the time of the “activity movement” (Durr, 1967, p. 8). The reading programs were based on units of study with reading as an integral part of the programs. There were charts, booklets made in the individual schools, and a quantity of available literature in the classroom--all coordinated with the units of study (Durr).

In the 1940s, education was dominated by the atomic age. Because of America's involvement in World War II, investigative educational studies were vastly reduced. At the same time, the war brought about a disturbing discovery. It was found that many men in the military were unable to read well. This phenomenon prompted the study of teaching reading at the higher levels as well as placing emphasis on studies about reading in the content areas. There was a growing recognition of the relationship between reading and all aspects of what is today referred to as language arts that includes handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, and composition. There was also a growing concern about the influence of the newest media for mass communication: comics, movies, and the radio. There was a fear that these activities might be a threat to reading (Durr, 1967).

Some researchers referred to the time from 1950 to 1960 as the most exciting decade in education (Durr, 1967; Padelford, 1995; Nicholson, 2000). This decade gave birth to individualized instruction. Earlier teachings were more subject-matter oriented with assignments

increasing in difficulty and designed to be completed as the individual student's progress and understanding developed. Assignments were now designed to stimulate the student to choose to read selections that were of interest and to proceed at his or her own pace (Durr).

Significantly, during the 1950s, reading instruction in American schools was scrutinized and criticized by laypersons. This encouraged educators to carefully examine their teaching methods, promoted parental involvement, and afforded educational researchers the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind the implementation of then current teaching methods. This scrutiny also prompted a movement to increase reading courses in colleges and universities to produce better-trained teachers (Durr, 1967). From the late 1900s to the present, the fields of reading and cognitive psychology have grown together, and reading educators have benefited from this growth (Stahl, 1998).

Methods Used for Teaching Reading

During the 1950s, the look-say reading approach began to gain popularity. Mann (as cited in Durr, 1967) had recommended this method 100 years earlier after witnessing the success of using this method with deaf children in Hartford, Connecticut. The method was invented by Gallaudet in the 1830s for the deaf and mute by juxtaposing a word with a picture. In 1837, it was adopted by the Boston Primary School Committee and Mann, then Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts, favored the method but referred to the process as learning the whole words first (Wikipedia, 2005). Some educators referred to this concept as associative learning. The advocates of the look-say method claimed that learning to read is the association between seeing the word and the students' response to the sound of the word. The method involved showing the word to the child a number of times and pronouncing the word each time. This repetition becomes unnecessary when the child is conditioned to recognize the word each time it is seen (Anderson & Dearborn, 1952). According to Lyon (1999), the average student must see a word between 4 and 14 times before recognizing it automatically. This method was widely used

until the mid-1950s when Flesch (1955) published *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Flesch's basic claim that the look-say method was unsupported by research caught the interest of Chall (1967). Chall (1967) reviewed the research compiled prior to 1967 that compared one reading method with another and visited many classrooms to observe the teaching of reading. Consequently, Chall (1967) became an advocate for strong phonics-based reading instruction. Her 3-year study resulted in the book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. After further research, Chall published a second edition in 1983, still touting the phonics method. Her findings led to a revival of phonics-based instruction during the 1970s, but these gains were delayed by the growing influence of the whole-language theory, a method similar to the look-say method of instruction that de-emphasized skills and focused on comprehension.

Goodman concluded from his 1967 study concerning the benefits of the whole-language method that context was the dominant factor in deciphering text (Goodman, 1997). His contention was that reading was the skill of making sense of print--not just recognizing words. As stated in Palmarffy (1997), Foorman, an educational psychologist at the University of Houston, pointed out that if reading was as natural as speaking, there would be no illiteracy in literate societies. Lyon (1999) disagreed with Goodman, and stated that reading was making sense of print by recognizing words. Palmarffy contended, "Whole-language teachers tend to regard themselves as motivators rather than instructors, instilling enthusiasm instead of basic skills" (n. p.). Whole language continued to be the method of choice for a large number of educators throughout the 1980s despite continued research producing negative data concerning this method of teaching reading. When reading scores plummeted in states that had adopted the whole-language method exclusively, other methods were researched and implemented. Many chose to keep the positive portions of the whole-language idea and insert phonics into their strategies. After all, what was a child to do when he encountered a word not yet memorized? Suggestions were to look at the pictures; but, what if there were no pictures? Then a student should ask a friend. However, most of the time, reading is a solitary activity. Perhaps the

student could substitute another word or look for patterns? Yet, it is probable that if there were no phonics being taught, the student would not be aware of patterns (Ghate, 2000).

Most educators would probably agree with whole-language advocates that education should be relevant to everyday living, children should be reading a variety of good literature, students should be writing as early as possible, and comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading. However, as the number of students who are non- or unsuccessful readers grows, teachers and researchers are studying the best methods to teach all children to read (Jones, 1998; Palmarffy, 1997). Whole-language advocates contended that children would develop the ability to read primarily through a print-rich environment and, therefore, would not require direct instruction in phonological awareness. Phonics supporters promoted the direct teaching approach of letter–sound correspondences. According to Adams (1990), this would mean little if children did not understand that letters represent sounds that make up the words. The majority of researchers recommended a balanced approach to reading instruction, one that combines the language and literature-rich whole-language activities with the teaching of skills needed to develop fluency (Jones; Sensenbaugh, 1996). Carbo (2003), writing in the *Principal*, concluded that using a single approach to reading generally did not work and strategies from different approaches needed to be implemented.

The United States Office of Education conducted a study in 1967 known as the First Grade Reading Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967). There were definite weaknesses in the study such as discrepancies among and within programs; in many cases, it was not the reading method being measured, it was the individual basal texts. At this time, a basal reading series written in what was then termed the initial teaching alphabet (i.t.a.) and another basal reading series written in the traditional 26-letter alphabet were used to teach two separate groups of students. With such different instructional programs, the findings were inconsistent. Despite the weakness of the study, there was one definite benefit. It became apparent that reading trends of the past

needed to be reviewed. Initial suggestions were to use i.t.a., linguistic methods, phonics programs, and language-experiences (Karlin, 1975; Nicholson, 2000).

In the 1960s and 1970s, as researchers continued to seek the most successful methodology for teaching reading, many school systems were reporting failure of their adopted programs (Alexander, 1983). In a number of school systems, as students' reading test scores plummeted, reading specialists, directors of curriculum, principals, and classroom teachers searched for alternative reading methods for the students who were reading below grade level. Classroom teachers began teaching Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary and Fry's list of Instant Words (Alexander). Many educators maintained that students would read more successfully if they knew the words that made up over half of the running words in the textbooks.

Another reading method became popular during the 1980s. This method was called the Language Experience Approach (LEA). According to Johnson and Smith (1980), "The reading materials are created by actually recording children's spoken language and mandates that reading be based on the language and experiences of the learner" (p. 46). This methodology is an interest-based approach and it was designed to teach beginning reading. The philosophy of the LEA program is that initial vocabulary should include frequently used beginning words--words with regular, patterned, and letter-sound correspondences. This approach rejected the idea of a controlled vocabulary; the development of a basic sight vocabulary was considered an individual matter based upon the child's oral expression (Bond & Dykstra, 1967) and all reading materials should be high-interest literature (Johnson & Smith).

The Direct Instructional System for Teaching and Remediation (DISTAR), now known as Reading Mastery, was developed in the 1960s but gained popularity in the 1980s because of the growing number of students not achieving reading success. DISTAR "incorporates intense, systematic phonics instruction into a fast-paced, heavily scripted program with constant teacher-student interaction" (Palmaffy, 1997, p. 11). According to Nicholson (2000), this method is a very structured phonics method with many phonemic awareness activities.

The public's growing dissatisfaction with low national reading test scores prompted the use of the Reading Recovery method. This early-intervention program was designed by Clay in 1979 and many educators noted it to be the best program available for preventing reading failure (as cited in Coulter et al., 1997). Trained teachers worked with identified children on a one-on-one daily basis. The program was expensive, as the Reading Recovery teacher worked with only four students each day (Klein & Swartz, 1996). Lemann (1997) termed this method the transmission device for the spread of whole language in the 1980s.

DISTAR and Reading Recovery are both “pullout” programs. Reading researchers contended that most programs involving the students' leaving the classroom for services could actually be detrimental by segregating the students at risk and supporting their feelings of helplessness (Jones & Knuth, 1991).

According to Williams (2000), in the 1990s, Renaissance Learning emerged with the *Accelerated Reader* (AR) program. Created by Paul and marketed by Advantage Learning Systems, a company founded by Paul and her husband, AR has become the most widely used reading management software program in the country. The *Accelerated Reader* program consists of four major steps. The first is to select a book from the *Accelerated Reader* list on the student's reading level. The student then reads the entire book. Afterwards, the student takes a computerized multiple-choice, objective reading test on the book. Finally, the student receives a score. In-context vocabulary questions plus authentic text passages give a precise measure of student's reading performance (Williams). The objective of this program is to encourage students to see reading as a valuable social skill by being read to, read with, and by reading independently from a vast supply of trade books available on their own reading levels.

Also, during this decade, the *Four Blocks* Literacy Framework began in a North Carolina classroom in 1989-90. This multi-method, multi-level language arts model is designed to represent four different approaches to teaching children to read. These approaches are guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words (Cunningham et al., 1999).

Teacher read-aloud is included during guided reading. Phonics, including phonemic awareness, is taught during working with words. Vocabulary is developed during self-selected reading as students listen to what the teacher reads aloud and engage in regular independent reading (Cunningham, DeFee, & Hall, 1991).

Good (2002), and Simmons, who were professors at the University of Oregon, developed the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) screening and monitoring program in 2002. This screening and progress monitoring assessment is being widely used throughout the United States to predict reading outcomes. DIBELS testing can identify speedily students who are at risk for reading failure so that educational decisions can be implemented to change their reading outcomes. Enhancement programs based on a research-based core curriculum include *Project Read* and Orton-Gillingham (Good).

Project Read is based on scientific research done by the National Reading Panel and the Reading First Initiative established from the *No Child Left Behind Act* signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. This language arts program is designed for students who need a systematic learning experience with direct teaching of concepts and skills through multisensory techniques (Project Read, 2002). This program has been designed to build a firm foundation of reading by teaching phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. The teacher is trained to instruct through seven specific steps. First is the anticipatory set in which the teacher informs the students what will be taught. Next, the students learn what, how, and why they need to learn the particular skill or concept. Third, the skill or concept is presented in what is considered the most effective manner, perhaps, through discovery, discussion, reading, listening, or observing. Next, the teacher will model what is to be learned and check for understanding. The sixth step involves guided practice. Finally, independent practice is assigned to ensure understanding. *Project Read* addresses the essential components of research based on scientific reading instruction by using

the five instructional blocks outlined in the *Reading First Initiative*. These are comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness (Project Read).

The *CARE* program is currently being implemented in all kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade classrooms in Knox County, Tennessee. *CARE* stands for Children Achieving Reading Excellence and is an organization of multisensory teaching strategies that use the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning channels for teaching reading and language arts skills. The strategies are based on material from the work of Orton (1937). The four main areas that are emphasized are handwriting, decoding, spelling (including dictation and language skills), and reading. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic clues are used to make language skills as concrete as possible. When letters are initially taught, the students learn the formation of the letters by tracing a pattern and writing the letter in the air. Then a sound is associated with each letter with a key word for additional memory enhancement. The students learn to visually recognize letter patterns when decoding for reading purposes and also to listen and associate a sound with a letter pattern for spelling. All writing, reading, and language skills are linked, and students are taught rules, pattern, and structure when needed for daily performance. New learning is built on patterns. When words are decoded, they are then used in written application by the student, making them more meaningful. Skills are built sequentially and are practiced to the point of automatization. The *CARE* workshop was organized by Beverly Hutchinson, a Knox county teacher. After 3 years of summer training in a multisensory program, she then adapted those strategies to a regular classroom situation with the use of the Knox County curriculum (Hutchinson, B., personal communication, May 20, 2005).

The importance of learning to read is evident in all educational disciplines. Children who do not learn to read well experience difficulty in their general knowledge, spelling, writing, mathematics skills, and oral language abilities. The effects of these difficulties include decreases in self-esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn (Lyon, 1999; Welsford & Whitten, 1999). The Learning First Alliance (2000) noted that the primary reason children are retained, assigned

to special education classes, or given long-term remediation is that they have experienced reading failure.

Criteria for Choosing an Approach to Teaching Reading

For generations the educational pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other...teaching skills but with little reading of quality materials, or teaching literature without the skills necessary to actually read it. We know now, that doing one without the other dooms large numbers of our children to failure and closes the door to further learning (Sweet, 1996b, ¶ 16).

The debate over the best reading instruction method continues; however, there are significant aspects about which most researchers and teachers agree. Some of these aspects include the ideas that meaning does not come from the actual words on the page. Readers construct meaning by interpreting and making inferences. The learner links new information to prior knowledge about the written topic. Reading and writing are related in that both have many common characteristics. Writing increases comprehension; thus, reading about the topic improves writing accomplishment. Collaborative learning is an effective approach for teaching and learning (Jones & Knuth, 1991). Reading must involve instructional practices that teach word attack skills, word recognition, decoding, phonics, phonetics, and word analysis. Children need these tools to become independent readers (Johnson & Pearson, 1978). Teaching reading is a complex process with many components. Among the more widely used reading methods there seems to be three major differences that are interrelated. The first difference is the processes required for reading. The second involves the skills and abilities used in reading, and the third difference is the procedures used to teach reading (Harris & Smith, 1972).

Children construct meaning from their experiences in life; they are not passive receivers of information. Based upon their previous knowledge and experience, they cognitively interrelate new information; thus, students extract meaning from reading by connecting it to what they already know. Children do not learn simply by receiving information but by constructing their own knowledge, creating their own meanings, and by connecting ideas and skills to

previous knowledge (Gove, Vacca, & Vacca, 1987; Padelford, 1995). Roberts (1981) pointed out that “Reading instructors need to know what strategies and perceptions children develop as they attempt to organize their own reading behavior” (p. 2).

Several important prerequisites to formal reading must be recognized and addressed when teaching emerging readers. In the English culture, reading proceeds from left to right and from up to down (Alexander, 1983; Chenoweth, 1999; Harris & Smith, 1976). Reading is the exchanging of ideas between an author and the reader (Harris & Smith, 1976). Students need to understand that language is represented by written symbols (Chenoweth). Children must have knowledge and an understanding of their world in order to interpret what they read (Learning First Alliance, 2000).

As early as 1936, Orton, along with Gillingham and Stillman, proposed reading techniques to teach the smallest meaningful units of language or phonemes (as cited in Jerger, 1996). In 1964, Orton’s wife modified the techniques. Rawson became interested in the Ortons’ findings after reviewing the literature twice and conducted a longitudinal study of boys with dyslexia. In 1985, Liberman found Rawson’s study of interest, and she began conducting several research studies of her own in 1989 (as cited in Jerger). Along with Mann, Shankweiler, and Werfelman, Liberman conducted an interesting study in 1982. Students chosen for the study were of similar age with equivalent IQs. One group was comprised of good readers and the other was made up of poor readers. The two groups were equivalent in their visual memory skills for nonlinguistic visual material. However, there was a significant difference with the poor readers making more errors than good readers when the two groups were asked to remember linguistic visual or spoken material (Cowin, Mann, & Schoenheimer, 1989).

Other studies have been conducted during the last 20 years with researchers gathering data concerning the importance of auditory skills and learning to read. There was documented research conveying that phonological awareness is an important factor in learning to read (Adams, 1990; Alexander & Lyon, 1997; Fox & Routh, 1975; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1989;

Padelford, 1995; Perfetti & Rieben, 1991; Stanovich, 1988). There has also been documented research noting that teaching reading using the phonemic awareness approach is not beneficial to students with English as their second language, deaf children, or adult nonreaders (Fabian & Hoover, 2000; Scholes, 1998).

Researchers' findings underscored the importance of early identification of students who need phonological awareness training. The researchers recommended that phonological awareness instruction be explicit, using conspicuous strategies that show a plan of action. These strategies need to be obvious because phonemes are not easy to isolate. Students seldom hear pure phonemes (Kameenui et al., 1999). Developmental researchers suggested that detecting these phonemes is neither natural nor acquired by many students without specific instruction (Behrmann, 1995; Felton, 1993; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1989). Another reason for explicit instruction was that in normal speech development, infants articulate single and small groups of phonemes. As speech progresses, children pay more attention to meaning and not to the individual sounds; this necessitates specific instruction to make phonemes conspicuous to the learner. Phonological awareness permits the attachment of the sounds of oral language to letter combinations during initial literacy experiences, thus making reading a reasonably systematic representation of a child's familiar spoken language (Ellenwood & Majsterek, 1995). This direct instruction should involve the teacher modeling specific sounds and the students producing these sounds. The teaching of these particular sounds may be referred to as segmenting. The tasks involved in the segmentation phase are addressing the number of phonemes in a word, phoneme position in the word (initial, medial, or ending sound), and size of the phonological unit (single consonant or consonant blend) (Kameenui et al.).

A study concluded by Gough (1975) indicated findings concerning the importance of segmenting and phonic-blend training in students' mastery of word attack skills. Data analysis indicated that when students could associate sounds with the individual letters and blend the sounds together, they were able to transfer these letter-sound skills to word-learning tasks. The

concern was with an immediate need for methods to be developed that were designed to train children in segmentation (Fox & Routh, 1975). It is important to understand that phonemic awareness is different from phonics and that phonological awareness is a broad term that encompasses phonemic awareness (Sensenbaugh, 1996). Phonics is visual and print-centered whereas phonemic awareness is auditory and speech-based. Phonics teaches that letters represent sounds and the phonemic approach teaches that speech sounds have letters (Shefelbine, 1998). Phonological awareness is “one’s sensitivity to, or explicit awareness of, the phonological structure of the words in one’s language” (Rashotte, Torgesen, & Wagner, 1994, p. 276). Phonemically aware children understand that print is “captured speech” (*Ithaca Sound Reading Program*, 1999). Phonological awareness permits the attachment of the sounds in oral language to letter combinations, thus making reading a representation of a child’s familiar spoken language (Ellenwood & Majsterek, 1995).

Phonological awareness and phonics are intertwined in that the combination of the two, the correspondences between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations lead to understanding of the alphabetic principle (Adams, 1990). An awareness of phonemes is necessary to comprehend the alphabetic principle that underlies the system of written language (Chard & Dickson, 1999; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1989).

Most emerging readers possess an astounding wealth of language. Children need to be afforded the opportunity to use this knowledge of sound when they learn that print is speech written down (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Johnson & Smith, 1980; Stauffer, 1970). An awareness of the 44 phonemes is the key to understanding the logic of the alphabetic principle; this understanding enables the student to apply his or her knowledge to phonics, spelling, and word analysis skills (Harris & Smith, 1976; Welsford & Whitten, 1999). The phonological tasks most useful for attaining successfully these language arts skills are phonemic segmentation and phonemic blending (Davidson & Joseph, 1994).

Researchers have conducted experiments to ascertain the most important aspects of the phonological awareness method for teaching emerging readers. Davidson and Joseph (1994) used a variety of phonemic manipulation tasks that included sound grouping, blending, segmenting, and rhyming.

As students progress, they integrate previously learned skills with new skills. This is sometimes referred to as strategic integration. This integration involves five levels of ability: The first level involves rhymes and alliteration and is sometimes measured by children's knowledge of nursery rhymes. The second level uses comparing and contrasting skills employing the sounds of words in rhyme and alliteration. The third level of ability is to blend and split syllables. The fourth is performing phonemic segmentation, such as counting the number of phonemes in a word. The last ability involves adding or deleting a particular phoneme and creating a new word from the remainder (Adams, 1990).

With so many tasks related to phoneme awareness, there is concern as to whether performance on all these tasks is predictive of reading success. Classroom teachers are in the best position to identify children who are experiencing phonological difficulty. Early intervention is the recommended procedure for struggling readers (Jerger, 1996). Early phonemic awareness training could extend beyond its influence on beginning reading instruction and spelling. Based on research and observation, it is clear that poor readers are exposed to less text than good readers and have fewer opportunities to practice their emerging reading skills. This delays the speed at the decoding level; therefore, the student spends much of his or her concentration and energy in word recognition processes rather than comprehension. As reading for meaning is slowed, frustration with all reading experiences could increase (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Lyon, 1999; Stanovich, 1988).

To implement this early intervention, teachers need to be aware of methodology designed for students' success. Currently, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Lyon (1999), its director, are conducting longitudinal studies as an intervention initiative. The studies are

designed to identify the most powerful interventions for remediation of reading disability and they include elements intended to teach phoneme awareness and sound-symbol relationships as well as addressing elements to generalize these skills toward reading in text. Jerger (1996) indicated anticipation that these findings, upon completion, would provide information to guide future practices. Teachers need to learn more about the intensity and timing of phonological training, as well as the best combination of instructional strategies, so that they can successfully concentrate on the individual student's areas of deficiency (Blachman, 1994; Rashotte et al., 1994). Definitive research showed that emerging readers learn best through phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, and spelling patterns, accompanied by reading material that provides practice in the skills being taught (Taylor, 1998).

From 1990 to the present, the trend in teaching reading has been to use a literature-rich methodology with emphasis on phonics. However, many educational organizations are beginning to recommend the benefits of phonological awareness for reading success. This auditory method strives to help the learner grasp the connection between the letters or words he or she sees and the spoken words or sounds he or she already knows. Spoken language is made up of 44 units of sound, with the smallest functional unit called phonemes (Behrmann, 1995). Phonological awareness occurs when the student is able to break down the spoken words into their specific phonemes and symbolize these with written letters. Decoding is easier when a child has an understanding of the rules (Chenoweth, 1999; Felton, 1993; Ghate, 2000).

According to Sensenbaugh (1996), educators are always looking for valid and reliable predictors of educational achievement. Researchers not only indicated a relationship between phonological processing, language comprehension, and reading ability but phonemic awareness was suggested to be a better predictor of reading acquisition than IQ, vocabulary, and listening comprehension (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1998; Cowin et al., 1989; Fox & Routh, 1975; Liberman & Mann, 1984; Smith, Kameenui, & Simmons, 1995; Stanovich, 1988).

Lemann (1997) stated that educational trends have three primary means of transmission and all are invisible to the public, "the sale of textbooks and other instructional materials, teaching in schools of education, and teacher-training seminars conducted during the paid noninstructional days that are provided in teachers' contracts" (p. 5). According to Lemann, this is not necessarily a bad situation. If the trends are research-based and valid, then the transmission is beneficial. All educational trends should be based on the concept that learning strategies are the tools and techniques that learners use to acquire new material or skills. Learning strategies should integrate new information with what the learner already knows in a manner that makes sense. These strategies should also enable the learner to recall the information or skill later to include a different situation or place (Sturomski, 1997). With phonological awareness, teachers have the opportunity to establish modes of teaching that are based on solid research. The phonemic approach to reading is a method that has well-documented success (Ellis, 1997). It is time for educators, parents, and everyone concerned with children's education to make sure that children have all the experiences that research has shown to support reading development.

Preparation of Teachers of Reading

Ellis (1997) reported that for instructors to teach reading effectively, they must understand the structure of the English language, as well as the similarities and differences between the spoken language and print. They must have a strong understanding of children's development. They must maintain a working knowledge of current research on reading and be able to implement a variety of research-based teaching methods. All of this requires well-designed teacher preparation. The International Reading Association (Isgar, 1999) suggested that before a student teacher graduated, he or she should be required to take three or more reading courses that included strategies for motivating children to read. These "would be" teachers should be afforded many opportunities to design and conduct lessons that are observed

and critiqued by professors. Other suggestions included a standards-based reform of teaching to incorporate expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do (McRobbie, 2000). Teachers cannot teach what they do not know (Alexander, 1983) and a teacher's knowledge directly affected a student's achievement (McRobbie).

Preservice or inservice training for teachers should be based on developing competency. At least one expert advocated a year of residency--actually teaching in a public or private school before taking charge of a classroom (Goodlad, 1980). Others stressed the advantages of using technology to view actual classrooms with students in order to improve skills and problem solving abilities. Former Education Secretary Riley (1998) advocated that colleges should create more clinical experiences in order to improve the teaching of reading. Preservice instruction focusing on methods that have been research-based and teachers having the opportunity to apply that research in a classroom setting offered invaluable experience with such methods (Learning First Alliance, 2000). The quality of undergraduate programs in teachers' education impacted novice educators' abilities to effectively teach reading. Contacts with children during the freshman and sophomore years of college including experiences in tutoring, serving as instructional assistants, and observing in classrooms could upgrade the educational program (Smith, 1971). A strong concentration in the liberal arts is essential to prepare teachers to be well versed in a variety of disciplines. According to Lehrer (1998), teachers entering primary classrooms for the first time need professional support from mentor teachers and they need reading specialists in their schools--people who are more advanced in their knowledge of such a complex topic. McRobbie (2000) demonstrated that beginning teachers who had mentoring, as well as other kinds of support, were more likely to stay in the profession and be more effective in their teaching careers.

However, local systems should invest in helpful professional development opportunities to make up for any teaching inadequacies. According to Darling-Hammond (1994), less than one half of a percent of school districts' resources are used for professional development.

Teachers need to be aware of proven approaches to the teaching of reading and of how to identify reading problems among their students. Staff development consisting of brief presentations provided by textbook publishers was not normally helpful or adequate. Effective professional development requires extended time for training that not only includes discussions or research on how children learn to read but also on specific instructional strategies. It should be understood that professional development is not a one-time event, but a never-ending process, a lifelong journey of learning (Learning First Alliance, 2000; McRobbie, 2000). McRobbie maintained, “Unfortunately, well over half of America's teachers get less than a day’s worth of professional development annually, when compared with teachers in many other countries who work on professional development for 10 to 20 hours a week” (p. 7). Goodlad (1976) pointed out, “Schooling is the largest enterprise not providing opportunities for inservice education and professional improvement at the time and cost of the industry” (pp. 22-23).

There are opportunities for improvement because of a surge in student enrollment and the retirement of many older teachers. The U.S. Department of Education in 1998 reported that these factors would cause American schools to hire 2.2 million teachers over the next 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Educational leaders in America have the responsibility at this opportune time of raising teachers' standards and providing teachers with ample time and opportunities to keep abreast of the developments in their field (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2002). The results of these efforts were numerous, ranging from the unification and motivation of educators to work toward common goals and the clarification of problems and solutions, to the introduction and implementation of new ideas and procedures (Erickson & Otto, 1973).

Summary

With the multitude of reading methods available to teachers, beginning teachers must be able to choose what best fits their particular class. They must be able to assess the needs of the students and match reading methods accordingly. To be able to accomplish this effectively,

teachers in training must have ample reading instruction internship opportunities in addition to the classroom instruction currently provided in most colleges and universities. Nevertheless, according to Broman (1962), "Preservice education cannot adequately prepare educators for their years of teaching" (p. 3). Quality professional development opportunities must be offered annually for veteran teachers of reading to keep abreast of current trends in reading methodologies. Knowledge and training in research based reading methodology affords teachers the confidence to implement these approaches.

The Learning First Alliance (2000) called on educators and policy makers to:

. . .base educational decisions on evidence, not ideology. Reading teachers should provide all students explicit, systematic instruction in phonics and exposure to rich literature, both fiction and nonfiction. Also, instructors should promote adoption of texts based on evidence of what works. Preservice education for elementary teachers should be improved by including instruction on the research base. Ongoing professional development should be centered around instructional strategies that include discussion of research on how children learn to read (n. p.).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their preparation to choose and implement effective methods for teaching emergent readers. The study was conducted in primary and elementary schools in five counties of East Tennessee. I interviewed selected first-grade teachers concerning their current and past methods pertaining to teaching emergent readers. I collected data concerning preservice and postservice training for teachers of reading. This chapter describes how the research was conducted, the participants, the instrumentation used, how the data were collected and recorded, how the data were analyzed, and how the trustworthiness of the study was assured.

Research Design

This study was conducted using qualitative research methods. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) wrote that qualitative research is:

. . .inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational. The dominant methodology is to discover these meanings and interpretations by studying cases intensively in natural settings and by subjecting the resulting data to analytic induction. (p. 767)

The purpose of this study was to investigate methods of reading instruction used in East Tennessee elementary schools to determine which methods teachers of emergent readers perceived to have afforded the maximum amount of success for beginning readers. I also researched teachers' preparation to ascertain if these reading teachers considered themselves adequately trained to teach children reading and language arts skills.

Research Questions

The following five research questions served as the focal point of this study that comprised three subgroups of teachers: 10 beginning teachers with first-grade teaching experience ranging from 1 to 4 years, 10 novice teachers with first-grade teaching experience ranging from 5 to 12 years, and 10 veteran teachers with experience ranging 15 years or more:

1. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, how well did their preservice training prepare them to effectively teach emergent readers?
2. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what additional professional development designed for reading instruction was needed to effectively prepare them to teach emergent readers?
3. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what was believed to be the most difficult problems for them to effectively teach emergent readers?
4. According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent-readers, what was believed to be the most successful methodologies for them to use to teach emergent readers?
5. How did these teachers of emergent-readers evaluate the success of their chosen methodologies?

Interview Questions

To obtain qualitative data needed to answer the five research questions, I formulated and used the following open-ended interview questions to guide the study:

1. How many years have you been teaching? How many years' experience do you have teaching beginning readers? What is your highest degree? In what field is your most advanced degree?

This introductory question was devised to give the participants an opportunity to “ease” into the interview situation. The rationale was that most teachers enjoy talking about their jobs and

therefore would be comfortable beginning with this question. This question also garnered additional information to help with further questions in the interview.

2. What type of preservice training did you receive concerning the teaching of reading?

This question was designed to move the participant into a mode that might be helpful in recalling what influenced his or her choice of reading methodology.

3. What postservice training concerning the teaching of reading have you taken? (This includes inservice, professional development, or continuing education courses.)

When was each taken? Which was the most effective?

This question was designed to gather data concerning the participants' motivation to keep abreast of current trends in reading education.

4. Was the postservice training you received optional or mandated by the local board of education? If it was optional, how did you select the activity?

Question 4 was intended to provide more data to answer the previous question. It also provided the participant with a focus on why his or her previous answer was given and why the experience was important.

5. Tell me about a successful reading experience you have had with a student. What strategies and/or methodologies did you use to affect this success? How did you determine what strategy or methodology to use?

This question was meant to help the participant focus on the components of his or her teaching experiences and to afford a reflective mode for the participant.

6. Tell me about your most challenging reading instructional experience. What strategies and or methodologies did you employ with this student? What were some of the determining factors affecting your choice or choices?

This question served as a probing device to help the participant focus on experiences that might have been perceived as a challenge for him or her.

7. Tell me about the approach or approaches presently being used in your classroom to teach emergent readers. How and why did you select a particular approach?

This question was designed to assist the participant in remembering specific details that related to his or her current role as a teacher of emergent readers. Its purpose was to focus the participant's attention on past and present experiences that influenced the choice of particular methodologies.

8. Are your choices of approaches based on recommendations in the system's adopted basal text, personal choices, or a combination of both? How did you make this decision?

This question was designed to garner insight into what motivated the instructor in choosing and implementing reading methodologies.

9. Are there any particular reading strategies that you would like to incorporate in your present reading program? If yes, why? Also, what are the reasons you have not done this?

This question focused on the participant's perceptions of possible barriers or setbacks related to the teaching of emergent readers.

Participants

The participants in this study were first-grade reading teachers, both tenured and nontenured, from five East Tennessee counties. I wrote to administrators (see Appendix B) asking for their assistance in selecting teachers who had a minimal amount of experience (1 to 4 years), a moderate amount of experience (5 to 12 years), as well as veteran teachers with 15 years experience or more. To investigate the research questions, I gathered data from the 30 selected teachers using interview questions.

I analyzed the data from the interview questions and field notes and made conclusions and recommendations using this information. The research continued until all participants had

been interviewed and theoretical redundancy had been achieved. To promote the trustworthiness of this study, the participants were assured that numbers would be assigned to each teacher interviewed and that no names or schools would be mentioned. All data collected have been securely filed. Dr. Faye Nelson served as my auditor for the study (see Appendix E).

Instrumentation

The qualitative approach to this study afforded me the opportunity to gather data concerning the participants' thoughts and perceptions. Myers (1997) noted, "The motivation for doing qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, comes from the observation that, if there is one thing which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is our ability to talk!" (p. 2). I designed open-ended questions for my interviews (see Appendix C) and used a tape recorder in order to record the participants' own words. These open-ended questions were pilot tested by two other teachers of emergent readers. Both teachers responded with positive input concerning the relevance of these nine questions. The recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and the text of the transcriptions, as well as my notes, served as my source for the interpretation and analysis of the data.

Data Collection

I sought permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University (see Appendix D). Once permission was granted, I contacted the selected school systems by phone and mailed an official request form to the director of schools (see Appendix A). After approval at the system level, my requests were referred directly to the principals of the selected schools. After receiving permission from the principals (see Appendix B), I contacted each by phone to make scheduled appointments with the first-grade teachers in each school. Principals at the participating schools allowed me to contact the schools' first-grade teachers to solicit their cooperation with the study. Thirty first-grade teachers agreed to allow

me to personally interview each of them using an audio tape recorder for convenience in transcribing all data accurately after each interview was completed. I also made descriptive field notes both during the interviews and afterwards for reflective information. I analyzed the data from the interview questions and field notes and made conclusions and recommendations using this information. The research continued until all participants had been interviewed and theoretical redundancy had been achieved.

Data Analysis

This study describes 30 first-grade teachers' perceptions of their preparation to choose and implement effective methods for teaching emergent readers. The teachers interviewed were divided into three groups. The group division was solely based on years of experience teaching emergent readers. The study also includes a comparison of the data and the differences, if any, in the answers to the interview questions between three divisions of teachers based upon the amount of teaching experience.

Five questions guided this research. Research questions 1 and 2 were selected as the primary focal point of the investigation and research questions 3, 4, and 5 provided additional insight from the teacher participants concerning their teaching practices.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the research design, participants, instrumentation, and statistical procedures used for data analysis. This study used qualitative procedures to evaluate teachers' choices of reading materials and teaching strategies. In addition, teachers' perceived levels of preparedness for teaching emergent readers was documented and analyzed. I spoke with each teacher participant for at least 20 minutes and gathered data by taking notes during the interview, audiotaping the interview, and observing teachers' reactions to the questions. All of these procedures helped provide thick, rich description for this qualitative study. Chapter 4 provides

an analysis of the data, and Chapter 5 includes a summary, conclusions, findings, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Interview Guide and Participants

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their preparation to choose and implement effective methods for teaching emergent readers. Five research questions were formulated to guide the investigation. To gain information for these questions, a nine-question interview guide was developed to elicit free and open responses from the participants. Each of the participants was interviewed for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The questions contained enough flexibility to allow them to deviate from the questions whenever appropriate. This homogeneous sampling (Creswell, 2002) consisted of teachers of first-grade students only. The participants were all educators presently employed in five East Tennessee public school systems. The participants chosen for this study fell into three categories: 10 beginning and or nontenured teachers with 1 to 4 years of experience, 10 novice teachers with 5 to 12 years of experience, and 10 veteran teachers with 15 or more years of experience. Participants were first-grade teachers selected with the help of the principals and site coordinators at each participating school.

The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and were audio taped for accuracy; the tapes were subsequently transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity and was given a numeric indicator to ensure confidentiality and accuracy of the information collected. All interviews were conducted at the school sites. Each participant was interviewed individually and privately. The interviews began with an explanation of the study and the informed consent form. After securing the signature on the consent form, an introduction to the use of the tape recorder was made along with a brief discussion of the data collection process. During the interview process, notes were taken to

document any critical elements or ideas that might not be reflected in the transcriptions later. With the five research questions in mind, the interviews began.

My interview questions were intended to gather information concerning how teachers were trained and if they felt they were adequately trained to teach emergent readers. Encompassed in this inquiry was how these instructors chose, implemented, and evaluated their reading instruction. I categorized the data into four parts to best explain the relevancy of these questions to my study. I gave each participant a number for ease in cataloging and analyzing the data given. Teachers having taught emergent readers between 1 and 4 years were each given a number between 1 and 10. This category was entitled “beginning teachers.” The second category of participants consisted of novice teachers with experience ranging from 5 to 12 years teaching emergent readers. These teachers were assigned numbers from 11 to 20. The third group was comprised of veteran teachers who had experience teaching emerging readers for more than 15 years. These teachers were assigned numbers from 21 to 30. Table 1 shows each participant's total years of teaching experience, years spent teaching emergent readers, and highest degree earned.

Table 1
Participants' Experience and Education

Teacher	Years Experience Teaching	Years Experience Teaching Emergent Readers	Highest Degree Earned
1	1	1	BS
2	1	1	MS
3	4	1	MS
4	7	1	MS
5	2	1	MS
6	20	4	BS
7	3	1	MS
8	10	2	MS
9	1	1	MS
10	10	4	MS

Table 1 (continued)

Teacher	Years Experience Teaching	Years Experience Teaching Emergent Readers	Highest Degree Earned
11	12	10	MS
12	8	8	BS
13	8	7	MS
14	14	12	MS
15	12	10	BS
16	10	10	EdS
17	16	7	BS
18	6	6	BA
19	5	5	MS
20	19	6	EdS
21	30	20	MS
22	18	18	BS
23	24	14	MS+45
24	28	15	MS
25	22	12	BS+24
26	30	26	BS
27	20	20	MS
28	25	25	MS
29	19	19	MS
30	25	21	EdS

Research Question #1

According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent readers, how well did their preservice training prepare them to effectively teach emergent readers?

Table 2 shows the number of participants at each level of experience regarding their perceptions of preservice training and the percentage who reported feeling adequately prepared to teach effectively emergent readers.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of Preservice Training

Level of Experience	<i>N</i>	% Who Felt Adequately Prepared
Beginning (1 to 4 yrs)	10	40%
Novice (5 to 12 yrs)	10	10%
Veteran (15 or more)	10	0%

Of the 30 participants interviewed, only 5 teachers said they felt adequately trained and comfortable teaching emergent readers; of those, 4 were beginning teachers having taught fewer than 5 years. Four had a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. One had an education specialist degree and had 10 years teaching experience. All but one had completed an internship lasting one school year (as required by the University of Tennessee). Novice teacher #18 said, “Interning prepared me to teach--you know--like being a teacher but not getting paid.” Novice teacher #20 sighed and said, “In college, they really didn’t teach us how to teach children to read. I felt like I was clueless until I did my intern experience.” The fifth teacher had worked as a first-grade instructional assistant prior to obtaining her BS in elementary education. All five had had hands-on daily training and experience with the *Four Blocks* approach to reading as well as use of the Word Wall. The *Accelerated Reader* program and methods to modify the adopted curriculum for individual students' needs had also been an integral part of their internship.

The other 25 participants in all three categories stated that the only training they had received was mandated education courses plus their student teaching for half or one quarter of a semester. Beginning teacher #8 regretfully stated, “I had methods courses and practicums. I was not prepared enough.” Novice teacher #13 with 12 years experience said, “At the very beginning? Not any. Years ago, you just got your teaching degree and just jumped right into it.”

Veteran teacher #27 retorted, “I was totally unprepared! I have taken a few workshops in the summer but most have not had enough ideas on our level. They have been more for the upper grades.”

All participants stated that they had not had enough preparation, including the five who had stated that they were adequately prepared to teach emergent readers. The 30 teachers interviewed unanimously concurred that the coursework presently being implemented for teacher preparation should be examined, re-evaluated, and re-designed for more thorough teacher preparedness. The five teachers having had two semesters of hands-on, day-to-day classroom experience said they felt more confident and assured; thus, their beginning teaching experience was less stressful for them and for their students. The 25 teachers lacking what they considered adequate preservice training bemoaned the fact that they felt unprepared for the many obstacles and unique situations involved in teaching emergent readers.

Research Question #2

According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent readers, what additional professional development designed for reading instruction was needed to effectively prepare them to teach emergent readers?

Table 3 shows the professional development that the participants chose after they began their teaching careers and their reasons for choosing a particular course or workshop program.

Table 3

Additional Professional Development/Workshops Attended by Teachers

Professional Development	Level of Experience	<i>N</i>	Reason for Choice
DIBELS	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0	
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2	mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0	
<i>CARE</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	4	mandated
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1	mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2	mandated
Brain Research	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	optional
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0	
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1	optional
<i>Accelerated Reader (AR)</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	mandated
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	3	mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2	mandated
Literacy Centers	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0	
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2	1 optional/1 mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2	mandated
<i>Four Blocks</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	3	2 optional/1 mandated
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	5	4 optional/1 mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	5	2 optional/3 mandated
Scott-Foresman	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	mandated
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1	mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1	mandated
TCAP Training	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	mandated
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1	mandated
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1	mandated

Table 3 (continued)

Professional Development	Level of Experience	<i>N</i>	Reason for Choice
<i>Project Read</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	optional
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0	
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0	
<i>Foxfire</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0	optional
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0	
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2	
<i>ITI</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1	optional
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1	optional
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1	mandated

Of the beginning teachers, 55% said they had paid for and attended optional workshops on their own time. Three stated that they chose *Four Blocks* training because that was the way they had been taught to teach during their internship experience and were already implementing this methodology in the classroom. Teacher #2 responded, “When I observed my wonderful mentoring teacher using the *Four Blocks* method and saw the results, I knew that was the path I would take when planning my reading program.”

Teacher #1 did not have the internship experience; however, she was older and had directed a Mother’s Day Out program at a local church prior to changing careers. She opted for the masters degree cohort program and became a teacher. She explained:

I had no idea how I was going to structure my reading program until I started researching in the summer. I was offered the first grade position and I knew I had to take the initiative. I had one course that was a seminar type format. Unfortunately, the content was based on questions submitted by us, the students. I did not have enough knowledge about teaching reading to ask the right questions. I signed up for the *Four Blocks* Conference my first year of teaching and my preparation beforehand made the conference effective.

Beginning teacher #7 said she had taken and would continue to take *Four Blocks* training because, “It’s difficult when you are trying something not everybody else is doing. There’s not a

whole lot of reference or support that you can pull from, so any ideas I am able to get makes my teaching more comfortable.”

One participant said she chose to attend a workshop on literacy centers so that she could better establish the center approach in the classroom. With a somewhat apprehensive smile, she added, “Our principal is encouraging us all to implement literacy centers. I haven’t quite figured out how to work it so it runs smoothly. I’m chicken. I do plan to read up on it.”

The fifth instructor, novice teacher #18, said she had attended a training workshop for *Project Read* and had incorporated many of those strategies into the teaching of the county-mandated basal program. This teacher shared that although this was her first year teaching emergent readers, she had previously taught fourth grade. She continued, “The *Project Read* focus of building on a continuum of skills worked as well for my first graders as it did for my fourth-grade students.”

The remaining 50% of the beginning teachers said they had attended required inservices relating to the teaching of the system-wide adopted basal-reading program. In one county, the *CARE* program as well as the adopted basal series was required teaching for all primary instructors. The teachers who attended *CARE* training voiced their opinions. Teacher #9 stated, “The *CARE* program is so good because when I was in college, it was all about whole language” and “My *CARE* training was the most effective for me because it is phonics based and, therefore, hits the widest range of students,” was voiced by beginning teacher #8.

Of the 10 teachers with more than 4 years experience but fewer than 13, 30% said they chose to attend workshops and/or classes designed specifically for teaching reading. These optional choices were paid for by the individual teachers and attended during non-school time in the summer, on weekends, or after school. Novice teacher #15 had taught 13 years and acknowledged, “Teachers are always looking for a new strategy to use.”

Teacher #18 said she had attended *Accelerated Reader* and literacy centers workshops as well as the first-grade conference designed and implemented by the Tennessee State Department

of Education. Teacher #16 said she attended college classes focusing on the teaching of reading. These classes were for credits beyond the master's degree already earned and were chosen to help the teacher become more proficient in reading instruction.

Teacher #19 said she chose to take multiple workshops for the *Four Blocks* method of teaching reading. This approach was currently being used as the instructional base for the teaching of reading in this instructor's classroom. She added, "Having taken the *Four Blocks* literacy seminar I am getting ready to do more. After I complete this next segment, I should be ready to come back and train teachers here at my school."

The other 70% of the novice teachers having taught between 4 and 12 years said they attended a variety of system-mandated workshops for training pertaining to the *Four Blocks* methodology, *Accelerated Reader*, adopted basal, DIBELS, *CARE*, Literacy Centers, and the multi-age classroom. Teacher #16, with 7 years experience, said, "I took courses at UT on the *Four Blocks* method and during my internship, I took more reading instruction courses for masters credit."

Novice teacher #19 reported, "*CARE* has been our savior. I had zero training beyond methods and student teaching. That was it, was it! *CARE* combines spelling, reading, phonics, and language and is correlated with the reading series. The training was phenomenal!"

Teacher #14 vehemently stated:

The most helpful inservice in the past 4 years has been the one where representatives from Scott Foresman came and showed us how to use all the stuff they gave us. That's real world and that's practical. Anytime you have adopted a textbook series, you should have an inservice on it.

An interesting item concerning this participant was that she filled in the grades on her report cards during the entire interview and yet responded to each of my questions with carefully thought-out answers.

Teacher #12 was proud to relate that her school was the only school in their county that administered the *Terra Nova* test to first graders. She added, "The training I have had

concerning the T-CAP test has been so helpful to my reading instruction. This is a good thing because I am really held accountable for the education of my students.”

Novice teacher #11 voiced a concern about the reading program at her school. After saying she was slated to attend a particular workshop on classroom organization for reading instruction, she said, “Both of our principals want us to move more toward ability grouping. When I was in college, we were taught that you NEVER ability group.”

The third group of 10 veteran teachers, those having taught more than 15 years, also responded to the question concerning postservice training. Veteran teacher #26 tiredly said, “Oh gosh, 25 years of it. Its too hard to remember all of them.” Of this group, 60% said they had attended many optional workshops and conferences designed to help teachers with their reading programs. Veteran teacher #30 quietly stated:

I’ve been to many reading workshops over the last 28 years. At different times, there’s been different methods that were, you know, highlighted at different points during my teaching career. I have implemented all but cast aside most for what was said to be better. Actually, I probably use parts of all of them as I plan my reading program each year.

Three of the veteran teachers said they had attended multiple seminars and workshops for implementing the *Four Blocks* method of teaching reading in the classroom. Veteran teacher #27 whispered, “We have had training in *Four Blocks* for the last 3 years, and I am totally sold that this is the only way to teach.” At the other end of the spectrum, teacher #25 shared that she was unsure now “how or if we ever really taught reading successfully, especially to those with learning disabilities or English as their second language before we implemented the *Four Blocks* method.”

Two teachers said they had attended Foxfire training and felt this had enhanced their reading instruction. Veteran teacher #24 said that these classes “helped her encourage children who are not motivated by starting with an experience and letting them help plan what to do next.” She acknowledged this approach had been successful across the curriculum and not just in reading. “Everything I teach, I pull reading into it,” she stated with pride. Teacher #27 said

although the last Foxfire course she had taken had been for masters credit in the 1980s, she felt that it helped her “be a more effective teacher, period!”

One veteran teacher, #27, said she had attended workshops concerning the brain and how it works in order to be more attuned to the needs of the individual students. She described:

Everyone, not just kids, must hear something at least three times before it becomes a part of their short-term memory. Movement helps the dendrites grow with knowledge learned and these dendrites love music and movement. I play music every day to get them into the mood to read--soft piano music with sounds of the weather and stuff.

Of the veteran teachers, 30% said they had received advanced training in the *Accelerated Reader* program and 40% said they had only attended workshops or training required by their particular school system. This training consisted of system-adopted basal training, *Four Blocks*, *CARE*, and creating and implementing literacy centers.

I asked the 14 participants who said that they chose the workshops, courses, or seminars they attended, to name those that were the most helpful. All 14 of these instructors said the sessions most recently attended were the most beneficial. These teachers also stated that the strategies learned enhanced the implementation of methodologies presently being used in their classrooms.

All 30 of the participants stated that postservice training was necessary and beneficial. However, the majority of the participants interviewed said they did not feel adequately trained to teach emergent readers. The 25 teachers having had little preservice preparation said they were especially thankful for the assistance provided by their school systems.

Research Question #3

According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent readers, what was believed to be the most difficult problems for them to effectively teach emergent readers?

Table 4 shows the most difficult problem that each group of teachers said they encountered in effectively teaching emergent readers.

Table 4

Teachers' Most Difficult Problems Regarding Effectively Teaching Emergent Readers

Most Difficult Problem	Level of Experience	<i>N</i>
Lack of Preparation for first grade	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	4
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	3
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2
Students with learning disabilities	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	6
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	4
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2
No support at home	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	2
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	6
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2
English Language Learners (ELL)	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	3
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Immaturity	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Emotional Problems	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Medical Handicaps	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
Lack of Motivation	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Need Additional Time to Work With Slower Students	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	10
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	4
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
Lack of Adequate Teaching Materials	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0

As shown, the beginning teachers' problems were many. One challenge mentioned by each participant was "not having enough time to work with students needing extra help." Each instructor in the beginning group mentioned that he or she wanted more time to work with the slower students in small groups. Two of the participants in the novice group had the help of an instructional assistant but only for 30 minutes a day. Both used their assistants for individual reinforcement for their struggling readers.

Four of the beginning teacher participants stated that they had several students in their classes without the proper foundation. Teacher #7 reported that she had a student who "could barely recognize the alphabet." After obtaining more information, she said she discovered that in kindergarten, the child had twice endured "severe family trauma."

Teacher #8, who had a transient class, said she continued to lose and gain students until by the end of the school year, she had taught 30 students. She admitted, "Each new student that entered my class was deficient in reading and had to be taught one-on-one. It was an impossible year! I feel like I took two steps forward and three steps back."

One beginning teacher of emergent readers sadly reflected, "What I'm teaching now in first grade is what I used to teach in second grade. Without the proper foundation, these expectations are unreal."

Beginning teacher #2, who had been teaching school for 20 years but had only taught first-grade emergent readers for 4 years, stated:

I think all elementary teachers should have to teach first grade for at least 1 year so that they can understand the expectations for these youngsters. It distresses me that we have kindergarten teachers who do not adequately prepare these students for first grade.

Six of the participants in this group of beginning teachers expressed their concern with meeting the needs of their special education and English Language Learning (ELL) students. Beginning teacher #7 was somewhat angry that none of her reading preparation classes in college had mentioned or suggested any strategies for teaching students who had severe speech

problems. She professed, “How can any student who cannot *say* the sound, properly *read* that sound?”

Three of the six participants who cited special education as a concern were frustrated with the fact that there were students in their classes who did not qualify for any extra help. Although the teachers stated they felt they had some special education obstacles with their reading acquisition, other factors such as excessive absenteeism, lack of parent involvement, and lack of student motivation were instrumental in keeping these students from getting the help that was needed. Beginning teacher #9 seemed visibly angry when she reported that one of her special education students had been identified and was receiving services through the speech and language program. She maintained:

I tell you this child has no alphabet recall and no help or support at home. Can you believe the powers-that-be decided to test him out of the program? Obviously, this was not a wise choice as he is still significantly behind and becoming more frustrated with each passing day!

The group of novice teachers, having taught between 5 and 12 years, cited many concerns. Somewhat different from the beginning teacher group, no one concern was necessarily the primary focus for a large percentage of these participants. Of the novice teachers, 60% cited that lack of help at home was a deterrent for the success of emergent readers. In one instance, participant #11 stated that the lack of parental support was so pronounced that after finally reaching a parent by telephone, "since they would not come to school for a conference," the mother declined free after-school tutoring. She continued, saying, "It is so hard for me to fathom a parent declining no-cost help for a struggling child!"

Teacher #17 shared that she had received a new student late in the year, stating:

He had emotional needs as well as educational. I took the child under my wing and worked one-on-one to give emotional support. The student was a resource pull-out. His home life caused regression and before I could finish, the student moved away. It was heart breaking.

Four teachers in this group reported that they had access to instructional assistants for only 30 minutes each day. All four stated that the assistants were primarily used to help their lower functioning readers by reading with them orally each day.

Lack of adequate teaching tools was reported by Teacher # 15 as being a problem. She explained:

We have no teacher's editions. All five of us work closely together taking the books we have and designing our program around them. For instance, we are presently reading a book with compound words in it--so we focus on compound words.

Other concerns were lack of kindergarten preparation for reading as well as immaturity. Participant #13 explained that she had a male student who came to her "knowing three letters and no sounds." She continued, "His birthday was in September, so he was young. It took him over half the year to understand that letters have sounds."

Learning disabilities and emotional or medical problems that directly impacted the student's ability to learn to read were also mentioned by four of the instructors interviewed. Teacher #18 said that one of her students had "no alphabet and had been retained in kindergarten"; however, "With lots of extra tutoring and a wonderful, collaborative, working relationship with the special education teacher, this child finally began to show progress mid-year."

The answers given by the group consisting of veteran teachers, having taught more than 15 years, were essentially the same as the beginner and novice groups. Two of these teachers had students dealing with deprived home lives, essentially no books at home, or no support from home. Teacher #27 shared that she had a student who came to school smelling of urine. She expounded:

There was no shower at home. He had no desire for school. His family members were all non-readers, but his dad owned his own business. I told him that he must try, but his dad knew the ropes. He was eventually certified as learning disabled but he was cocky. The parents wanted the certification for the extra money.

Instructor #21 explained about a student whom she said was essentially “raising himself.” She continued, saying, “He comes from a deprived home--I mean no books and no conversations. I have made home visits and given him books. I knew he would make little progress until he was exposed to books.”

Other concerns were struggling students unable to qualify for special help such as special education assistance or speech and language. Teacher #25, with a frustrated sigh, stated:

I had a student who struggled all year and could not read [the word] *the*. I recommended him for screening, and he fell between the cracks and did not qualify for any extra help. Finally, in second grade, he got a tutor certified in special education. His mom paid for the psychological testing.

Participant #22 said, “ My student is in first grade for the second time and does not qualify for resource. His reading attempts consist of guesses. It is so upsetting! He needs more help!”

Teacher #29 reported that she had a student who came to her knowing nothing. She added, “She knew nada...I mean no letters or sounds. After working with her one-on-one, I recommended her for speech testing. Voila! This has been her saving grace. She is now beginning to read.”

Participant #24 voiced her concern with a student, saying:

I had a boy with a normal I.Q., but he saw the murder of his father. This trauma kept him from learning with the rest of the group. He really felt that he could not learn. I had to teach him one-on-one. Low self-esteem was cited as a contributing factor in his inability to read.

Lack of proper foundation, students who are certified as learning disabled, and medical handicaps were other factors cited by this group as having been detrimental for emergent readers.

All 30 of these teachers were passionate about the job of teaching emergent readers and said they wanted to do what was best for them all. Their main concern was acquiring the best help that could be obtained for their students.

Research Question #4

According to the perceptions of teachers of emergent readers, what was believed to be the most successful methodologies for them to use to teach emergent readers?

Table 5 shows the methodologies that each group of teachers reported as being the most successful in teaching emergent readers.

Table 5

Emergent Reading Teachers' Perceptions of Successful Methodologies

Methodology	Level of Experience	N
<i>4 Blocks</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	2
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	5
<i>CARE</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	4
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	4
Literacy Center	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	3
Choral Reading	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
<i>Accelerated Reader (AR)</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	4
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	4
<i>Project Read</i>	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
Phonemic Awareness	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	1
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0

Table 5 (continued)

Methodology	Level of Experience	<i>N</i>
I. T. I.	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
Whole Language	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Peer Tutoring	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	2
Songs and Games	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	1
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	3
Dolch Words	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1
Partner Reading	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	1

The participants in the beginning group of teachers with 4 or fewer years experience were asked what methods they used to teach emergent readers in their classrooms. Most approaches or methodologies reported in this study were mandated by the particular school system in which the participants taught.

Teacher #4 said she used the *Four Blocks* approach in addition to nursery rhymes and interactive charts. When asked why these methods were chosen, she stated, “Different kids like different things.” Teachers # 5, 6, 7, and 8 all said they used the *CARE* program to teach reading. Participant #3 said she used literacy centers and the word wall. Participant #9 reported using choral reading, small groups, partner reading, and, in addition, she sent home phonics

readers for practice. She added, "I like whole group instruction at this age, but I also want them to have things to do at home with their parents."

Instructor #4 said she used "Apple Books" or phonics books purchased by the school system to reinforce the basal text. She also used *Accelerated Reader*, peer reading, guided reading, and choral reading. She continued by saying, "Sometimes I read, and the students track." She added that she makes sure they follow along with her as she reads.

Teacher #2 said she used the mandated basal (Scott Foresman) and the Saxon Phonics program. She reported being a firm believer in the *Project Read* approach to teaching. She explained, "I like this program because it includes predicting, retelling, story mapping, setting, and plot. It is a great set up for creative writing also."

Teacher #3 acknowledged that she preferred whole group instruction with big books. She used these for word building and decoding as hers were all phonics based. She added, "I do my guided reading in a small group format, and I also do writing workshop with my students."

Teacher #1 said that she began with instruction in phonemic awareness, and "After that, my instruction was basically *Four Blocks*. By using the four avenues, I could reach the most different types of learners. I do science and social studies as guided reading."

The final participant in this group of beginning teachers was #10 who had this to say, "I had individualized the entire program for each child in my class until spring. I began to try to implement the *Four Blocks* program at that time. I need more training because I don't feel comfortable yet."

The next group of interviewees consisted of teachers having taught more than 4 but fewer than 12 years. These 10 teachers used a wide variety of teaching techniques and methodologies. Teacher #13 said she used both *I.T.I* and the *Accelerated Reader* for "enhancing the reading program." Although she taught reading as a whole group, she added, "Basically, I use the whole language-approach."

Participant #12 said she found that “peer tutoring, prompts using silly songs and pictures, games for specific skills, and repetition, repetition, repetition” were the most successful methods for her students to reach competency in reading.

Teacher #14 said she used *CARE* every day. She pointed out, “This program is the most effective because it combines language, reading, spelling, phonics, and sight-word work.”

Teacher #18 said, “I use the current adopted reading program and basically go by the book. But I do some things on my own, mostly whole group with individual peer tutors and class meetings.”

Teacher #15 reported that she used the *Four Blocks* method for reading instruction because “it is multileveled and suitable for student readers and non-readers.” She said she also used the *Accelerated Reader* program because “The children are motivated and this program tests their comprehension.”

Participant #16 stated that she used Saxon phonics and daily implemented “working with words, word families chunks, sight word repetition, Dolch word lists, and guided reading.” She also did SSR or sustained silent reading three times a week. She confessed, “I grew up with this and I think this is an effective way to teach.”

Teacher #19 said she used Apple Books every day with her students, saying:

These are simple books that were designed for kindergarten through second. I also use the Scott Foresman reading program. The Dolch words are a personal requirement for me as is *Accelerated Reader*. These all work together for my reading instructional program.

Interestingly, Teacher #11 was the only one interviewed who did not use an adopted basal to help teach reading. Instead, she used daily sight word vocabulary review, Starfall phonics computer program, and *Accelerated Reader*.

The information gathered from the veteran group of teachers concerning methodologies used to teach emergent readers was very similar to the beginning and novice groups. These teachers cited the following list of methodologies or strategies:

Four Blocks,
one-on-one instruction,
small group instruction,
literacy centers,
peer tutoring,
CARE,
Dolch words,
games,
plays,
singing,
drill and practice, and
Accelerated Reader

Five of the veteran teachers said they used *Four Blocks* in some way for their reading instruction. Teacher #23 said, “I am presently implementing the *Four Block* approach. It is the most effective way to teach reading.” Participant #27 reported, “I use *Four Blocks*, especially the guided reading and working with words part. But, I also use a computer phonics program that is networked for the school and a requirement. It goes with the reading series.” Teacher #25 answered:

I use *Four Blocks*. We work together with the choral reading, echo reading with a partner, working with words, word wall, making words, and writing. I use this because I tried it and it works for the majority of students.

Teacher #22 related, “I use *Four Blocks*, word families, Saxon phonics, and the county mandated curriculum. *Four Blocks* reinforces the other for my students.” The fifth teacher in this group said:

I use *Four Blocks* including writing. I also use SSR (sustained silent reading), retelling, guided reading, word wall, and Saxon Phonics. Some children can’t learn phonetically. Thank heavens, the majority can because this opens up 200% of the world of words for them. Phonics is very structured . . . just learn the rules.

Participant #25 stated that she had recently completed her first *Four Blocks* training session and was looking forward to implementing the program with her students. She said she had previously, and would continue, to do "extensive phonemic awareness activities with her students at the beginning of the school year." She reported that once her students were phonemically aware, then she taught word families, promoted fluency through word lists in which the students were expected to "spit out 90 words like bullets in less than a minute," and used creative writing in both journals and reflective journals.

Teacher #27 excitedly related that she used a multitude of methodologies and resources in her reading program, saying:

I use the basal and *Accelerated Reader*. I use lots of library books on their level and games on the computer. We have "buddy time" within the class twice a week. We use a volunteer program called "foster grandmothers" three days a week, and every Friday, four sixth graders come to help their "reading buddies." I have had a lot of success with all this extra help.

Participant #29 reported that she used the whole-language approach but "beefed up the basal" with guided reading. She added, "I also use peer tutoring, reading around the room, word wall, and student-made dictionaries. During writing, I encourage the students to seek the word."

Teacher #26 emphatically stated, "Everything I do in reading is phonics based. Over the last 20 years, I have found this is the only way to have true reading success!"

The final teacher in this group, veteran teacher #30, related that she used the *CARE* program every day as mandated by the system. In addition to this, she reinforced some of the skills through modeling, echo reading, whisper reading, paired reading and buddy reading with older students in the upper grades.

These 30 participants were asked, "If you could incorporate additional reading strategies into the present reading program, what would they be?" Instead of a direct answer, the same immediate response was given by all but two of the teachers. That response was, "There is not enough time!" All were asked why additional reading strategies were not being implemented in their classrooms and all answers were a combination of four factors: (a) lack of time, (b) lack of

money for purchases and training, (c) lack of adequate instruction by knowledgeable trainers in order to feel comfortable with implementation, and (d) lack of regular volunteer assistance.

The best methodology, approach, and/or strategy for teaching emergent readers has been a source of debate and active data gathering for years and will most likely continue to be researched. The participants I interviewed were all striving to use the best method for their students. They all willingly participated in a variety of training and workshops concerned with the teaching of emergent readers. Through trial and error in some cases, these teachers adopted and/or eliminated certain teaching strategies and methodologies. All 30 participants wanted to do whatever was best for their students. The problem for these teachers was finding and implementing the best.

Research Question #5

How did these teachers of emergent readers evaluate the success of their chosen methodologies?

Table 6 shows the method used by each group of teachers to evaluate the success of their chosen methodology to teach emergent readers.

Table 6

Methods Used to Evaluate the Success of Chosen Methodologies

Reasons Affecting the Choices	Level of Experience	<i>N</i>
Regular assessments	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	8
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	6
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	5
Monitoring students' progress	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	5
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	9
Trial and error	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	3
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	5
<i>Accelerated Reader</i> (AR)	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	2
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0
Experience	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	0
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	4
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	8
Research current trends	Beginning (1-4 yrs)	8
	Novice (5-12 yrs)	0
	Veteran (15 or more yrs)	0

The participants in the group of beginning teachers evaluated their choices using the following:

1. regular assessments to gauge reading level,
 2. monitoring by routine observations,
 3. trial and error - tried several approaches until one best fit the needs of the students,
- and

4. reviewed research on current trends yearly to evaluate data concerning the use of certain methodology.

The participants in the group with 5 to 12 years' experience related three ways they assessed their reading methodology. These were:

1. using workbook pages to assess comprehension,
2. using experience gained from teaching former classes, and
3. using the *Accelerated Reader* program each day.

The group of veteran teachers described the following as their criteria for a successful reading program:

1. tried several and chose the one that worked best for most children;
2. drew conclusions based on past experiences with the teaching of reading, teacher monitoring, and observation; and
3. made weekly assessments.

The three groups consisted of educators from five East Tennessee school systems. An interesting aspect emerged from these interviews. In two of the counties, teachers were required to use a particular methodology and an adopted basal program. The time constraints involved left the instructor little time to execute any additional strategies or teaching methods. The systems' funded professional development guidelines consisted of required time, not chosen content. It was the instructor's choice as to what workshops, training sessions, or seminars would be most beneficial. Many teachers chose to avail themselves of science, math, or technology training each year rather than instruction for teaching reading.

Only three of the school systems where the participants were teaching had reading specialists for the county's elementary school system, and of these three systems, one had hired a reading specialist this school year for the first time.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their preparation to choose and implement effective methods for teaching emergent readers. The 30 participants of this qualitative study included teachers holding bachelors of science, masters, and education specialist degrees. These educators had teaching experience ranging from 1 year to 29 years, and all were currently teaching first grade in a public school system. All were from five neighboring counties in East Tennessee. The interviews were conducted over a 5-month period.

Individual indepth interviews were conducted using an open-ended technique with a set of interview questions to focus the inquiry. Personal interviews with the research participants revealed thick description of the methods previously and currently being used to teach emergent readers as well as the reasons for these choices and the training required and acquired.

Descriptive information was derived from transcriptions of the audio-taped interview sessions, and the answers were organized through the process of data analysis.

Research question #1 addressed the perceptions of teachers of emergent readers concerning their preservice preparation. All participants concurred that the coursework presently being implemented for teacher preparation should be examined, re-evaluated, and re-designed for more thorough teacher preparedness.

In 1999, Lyon, in a statement to the Committee on Education and the Workforce for the United States House of Representatives said:

Unfortunately, several recent studies and surveys of teacher knowledge about reading development and difficulties indicate that many teachers are underprepared to teach reading. Most teachers receive insufficient formal instruction in reading development and disorders during undergraduate, or even graduate studies, with the average teacher completing only one to two reading courses.

Research question #2 was designed to discover what teachers of emergent readers chose for their professional development and/or inservice opportunities relating to the teaching of reading and why these choices were made. All teachers voiced that they were grateful for any system-offered assistance. Many acknowledged that their most recently attended training session had been the most helpful. The largest percentage of teachers who paid for and attended optional workshops on their own time were the beginning and veteran teachers. These teachers also stated that the strategies they learned enhanced the implementation of methodologies that were presently being used in their classrooms.

Research question #3 dealt with what was believed to be the most difficult problems for these teachers to effectively teach emergent readers. Four particular concerns were mentioned by all teachers interviewed for this study. These teachers wanted students to be adequately prepared for promotion to first grade, they needed more parent or guardian support at home, they needed more time to work with students requiring additional help, and they desired more in-school help for special education students.

Research question #4 focused on what was believed to be the most successful methodologies used by these teachers to teach emergent readers. Most of the teachers chose to use the *Accelerated Reader Program*, *Four Blocks*, *CARE*, or a combination of these programs. Some used literacy centers, peer tutoring, songs and games, choral reading, phonemic awareness, *ITI*, the whole-language approach, partner reading, or the *Dolch* word list. None of the teachers interviewed used any approach exclusively except those teachers who were required by their systems to use the *CARE* program. These systems mandated that the teachers begin and end the *CARE* program each day at the same time. As this consisted of an hour-block of time, the teachers said they felt there was little time for implementing any other methodology.

Research question #5 focused on how these teachers of emergent readers evaluated the success of their chosen methodologies. Most of the teachers interviewed used assessments designed by the authors of the adopted curriculum. Many chose to monitor students' progress by

observation. None of the beginning teachers chose the last four evaluation techniques. These were (a) evaluating students' progress by using prior teaching experience, (b) trial and error, (c) *Accelerated Reader* (AR), and (d) researching current trends. The use of current trends to evaluate students' progress refers to examining the most recently published research concerning reading assessment.

Conclusions

Approximately 83% of teachers of emergent readers in this qualitative study said they did not see themselves as adequately prepared to teach emergent readers when they finished their college preparation courses and entered the teaching profession. Approximately 50% of teachers with teaching experience verbalized a need for more professional development, workshops, and/or training for the teachers of emergent readers. One veteran teacher bemoaned, "It seems that research provides data hourly concerning new, different, and better methods to teach children to read." Through the review of related literature, interviews with these 30 professional educators, and 28 years of experience as a classroom teacher, I definitely agree.

In 1980, Goodlad wrote:

Specifically, I suggest that perhaps a dozen of the strongest university-based schools of education be freed, experimentally, to develop programs to include 4 years of general studies and 2 years of professional/clinical work leading to a master's degree in teaching. Approximately half of the professional portion would consist of internships on the faculties of local schools. These local schools, in turn, would be part of an intensive school improvement program. In effect, each university would join in a consortium with the best available schools for both educational improvement and teacher education. (p. 13)

Interestingly, the 17% of the participants in this study who said they did feel adequately prepared to teach emergent readers had completed their master's degree at a local state university that required all aspiring teachers to complete 1 full school year of internship prior to receiving a teaching certificate.

Findings

During the interview process of gathering information concerning teacher preparation and chosen methodologies, other concerns were documented in all three groups with startling regularity. These first-grade teachers reported that they do not feel they have enough time to teach all that is required and still meet the diverse learning needs of their students. Almost all teachers desired ample time to use a variety of approaches to best teach each student in their classes. Also, many of the participants in the study added they wanted freedom to choose professional development activities that would most benefit their teaching philosophies and/or styles. According to Burns et al. (1998), the National Research Council stated in their 1998 study that professional development offerings for teachers already in the classroom were often sporadic and did not compensate for the teachers' lack of preparation in college. Lyon and Moats (1996) pointed out:

The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education reports that virtually all states require at least some coursework in reading methods. But, few require knowledge of the structure of the English language, the psychology of reading development, or other subjects needed to teach children with reading difficulties. This "overview" approach is inadequate to prepare novice teachers to assist the 50% of all students who do not learn reading easily. (p. 73)

There was no agreement among the professionals interviewed or the system for which they worked regarding the best method for teaching emergent readers.

Recommendations for Future Study

The recommendations for future study include an examination of training programs at the college and university level for future teachers of emergent readers. The four participants of this study who reported they felt adequately prepared to teach first-grade emergent readers received their teacher training through the internship program during their university studies. This graduate program affords the students who have been carefully screened the opportunity to participate in a 2-semester program of teaching on a daily basis in a classroom with a mentoring

teacher. The experience is equivalent to a full year of teaching with constant support, training, and guidance.

Hiring a full-time supervisor of reading or a reading coach for the primary grades should be a serious consideration for two of the five counties in which my interviews took place. This support would benefit the novice teachers as well as veteran teachers in that there would be guidance, knowledgeable recommendations, and a liaison between not only individual schools within the system but also between the schools and the director of schools.

Policymakers could have a great impact on the reading achievement of students by supporting colleges and universities in revising the reading instruction curriculum so that it focuses not only on theory but also on practical applications of reading development principles. Also, ensuring that prospective teachers of emergent readers have balanced instruction that provides foundations in a wide range of research-based approaches to reading as well as providing the training, support, and materials to become more proficient in reading instruction should be a high priority. New avenues through which to circulate new research findings on reading instruction quickly and effectively should be created. Finally, all prospective teachers of emergent readers should be required to have extended learning experiences in diverse classrooms prior to graduation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* are gradually being executed, it would be interesting to research the effect of full inclusion in the classrooms on the current reading programs being used. Another research recommendation would be to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of postservice training opportunities for teachers to keep abreast of current research concerning reading methodologies. A third recommendation would be to investigate the opportunities to participate in reading research validated training programs. Finally, researching the effect a transient pupil population has on a particular reading program

would be beneficial for all teachers to evaluate and implement the best reading methodology to effectively teach these students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Director of Schools

Month Day, 2003

Mr. Xxxx Xxxx
Xxxx Street
XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXX

Dear Mr. Xxxxx:

I am presently a first grade teacher for the Sevier County School System, as well as a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. During the 2003 summer and fall semester, I would like to conduct research within your system with the intention of acquiring information that may be used to better serve primary-aged students.

My research proposal centers on best practices for teaching emergent readers. The teaching of reading is one of the most important components of first-graders' curriculum. I hope that the findings of this study will benefit the reading program by either enhancing or helping formulate more effective instructional practice.

I would like to conduct open-ended interviews with first-grade teachers to include novice, as well as veteran instructors. I will attempt to determine by my research if these teachers feel adequately prepared to teach emergent readers as well as what specific preparational training they have received to include both post- and preservice

I am seeking your permission to communicate with administrators, primary supervisors, and first grade teachers as to their present theory and practice concerning the teaching of reading in the first grade setting. I will also solicit ideas for improvement. Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay at (423) 439-xxxx. If you have any questions, you may reach me at (865) 453-XXXX. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

H. Brooke Blair

APPENDIX B

Letter to Administrators

Month Day, 2003

Mr. XXXX XXXX
XXXX Street
XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXX

Dear Mr. XXXXX:

I am presently a first grade teacher for the Sevier County School System, as well as a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. During the 2003 summer and fall semester, I would like to conduct research within your system with the intention of acquiring information that may be used to better serve primary aged students.

My research proposal centers on best practices for teaching emergent readers. The teaching of reading is one of the most important parts of the first graders' curriculum. I hope that the findings of this study will benefit the reading program by either enhancing or helping formulate more effective instructional practice.

I would like to conduct open-ended interviews with first grade teachers to include novice, as well as veteran instructors. I will attempt by the research to determine if these teachers feel adequately prepared to teach emergent readers as well as what specific preparational training they have received to include both post and pre-service.

I will need your assistance in selecting teachers who have a minimal amount of experience (1-4 years), a moderate amount of experience (5-12 years), as well as veteran teachers with 15 years experience or more. I would like to interview at least five teachers, but I would prefer six.

Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay at (423) 439-xxxx. If you have any questions, you may reach me at (865) 453-XXXX. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

H. Brooke Blair

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for First-Grade Teachers

1. How many years have you been teaching? How many years' experience do you have teaching beginning readers? What is your highest degree? In what field is your most advanced degree?
2. What type of preservice training did you receive concerning the teaching of reading?
3. What postservice training concerning the teaching of reading have you taken? (This includes inservice, professional development, or continuing education courses.)
When was each taken? Which was the most effective?
4. Was the post service training you received optional or mandated by the local board of education? If it was optional, how did you select the activity?
5. Tell me about a successful reading experience you have had with a student. What strategies and/or methodologies did you use to affect this success? How did you determine what strategy or methodology to use?
6. Tell me about your most challenging reading instructional experience. What strategies and or methodologies did you employ with this student? What were some of the determining factors affecting your choice or choices?
7. Tell me about the approach or approaches presently being used in your classroom to teach emergent readers. How and why did you select a particular approach?
8. Are your choices of approaches based on recommendation in the system's adopted basal text, personal choices, or a combination of both? How did you make this decision?
9. Are there any particular reading strategies that you would like to incorporate in your present reading program? If yes, why? Also, what are the reasons you have not done this?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Page 1 of 3

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: H. Brooke Blair

TITLE OF PROJECT: First-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers in Five East Tennessee Counties

INTRODUCTION: You are being invited to participate in this study to examine first grade teachers' perceptions of their preparation to choose and implement effective methods for teaching emergent readers. Please read, review, and ask any questions that you might have concerning this study. You are free to stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine the preservice and postservice training of teachers of emergent readers in five East Tennessee counties. The researcher will also document methodologies used by these same reading teachers. The participants will be selected by contacting principals in Blount, Cocke, Jefferson, Knox, and Sevier counties after permission has been granted by the Directors of Schools in these counties. The researcher will select the schools from a list that will be secured at the Central Office in that county. Phone calls and/or letters to the principal will glean a roster of teachers who will participate in the study. There will be at least 30 participants in this study; 10 of which will be novice teachers, 10 teachers having taught between five and eight years, and 10 veteran teachers.

DURATION: The interview that will be conducted with each teacher will take approximately 30 minutes.

PROCEDURES: Data will be collected by using a general interview guide with open-ended questions. All participants will be given as much time as they feel necessary to respond to questions. With the expressed permission of each participant, the interviews will be recorded on audiocassette. A professional transcriptionist will transcribe the audiotapes. Copies of transcribed data will be available upon request. The participants will have control over the audio tape recorder and may cease taping at any time. No participant's name will be used, but each interview will be coded with a number that is strictly to permit matching interview to a teacher. In no way will the identification number be used to determine a participant's identity.

Version: January 12, 2004

Subject's Initial_____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: H. Brooke Blair

TITLE OF PROJECT: First-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers in Five East Tennessee Counties

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: Some of the questions asked during the interview may make the participant feel uncomfortable or may be difficult to answer. Participants are free to stop the interview without prejudice at any time, and may choose not to answer any questions that makes them feel uncomfortable.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND/OR COMPENSATION: No participant benefits or forms of compensation are included in this study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Brooke Blair or Dr. Louise MacKay at 423-439-4430. You may also contact the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423-439-6134 for any question you may have about your rights as a research participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Every attempt will be made to see that participants and interview information is kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet at my home for at least 10 years after the end of this research. Audiocassette tapes used for this study will be disposed of immediately following transcription and verification of the transcription. Although the participants' rights and privacy will be maintained, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board and the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT: East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury that may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 0-9-307. For more information about claims, call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at 423-439-6134.

Version: January 12, 2004

Subject's Initial_____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: H. Brooke Blair

TITLE OF PROJECT: First-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers in Five East Tennessee Counties

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The nature, demands, risks, and the benefits of the project have been explained to me, as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read or have had read to me and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy will be given to me upon request.

_____/_____
SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER DATE

_____/_____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR DATE

_____/_____
WITNESS DATE



East Tennessee State University
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707 • (423) 439-6053
Fax: (423) 439-6060

IRB APPROVAL

January 21, 2004

Helen Brooke Blair
ELPA
326 Cherry Street
Sevierville, TN 37862

Re: Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers

IRB#: c03-219s

The following items received expedited review:

- Form 103 (08/07/2003)
- Narrative (01/15/2004)
- Informed Consent Document (01/12/2004)
- Letter to Administrators (01/20/2004)
- Letter to Director of Schools (01/20/2004)
- Questionnaire / Survey - Interview Question for 1st Grade Teachers (07/09/2003)

Expedited approval was granted 07/21/2003 for a period not to exceed 12 months. Your Continuing Review is scheduled for 05/06/2004. This expedited review was reported to the fully convened IRB on 08/07/2003.

The changes requested by the Short Review Committee of the ETSU Campus IRB have been received. Your approval is acknowledged by this office as of January 20, 2004. Your study is approved for a period not to exceed twelve months. You must use a copy of the stamped and dated ICD when obtaining consent. Always use the assigned IRB number and study title, as indicated above, on any correspondence associated with this study. If you have any questions please call Catherine Shuttle, IRB Coordinator, at 423-439-6055.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea', is written over a faint, larger signature.

Andrea Clements, Ph.D., Chairperson
ETSU Campus Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E
Auditor's Certification

To: Brooke Blair:

This is to certify that I served as an auditor for the following study: *Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Choose and Implement Effective Methods for Teaching Emergent Readers.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Faye Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr. Faye Nelson

March 22, 2006

VITA

H. BROOKE BLAIR

Personal Data: Date of Birth: March 16, 1948
 Place of Birth: Knoxville, Tennessee
 Marital Status: Divorced

Education: Middle Tennessee State University; Murfreesboro, Tennessee
 BS Degree in Elementary Education
 1971

 University of Tennessee; Knoxville, Tennessee
 MS Degree in Curriculum and Instruction
 1995

 University of Tennessee; Knoxville, Tennessee
 Ed.S Degree
 1997

 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
 Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed. D.,
 2006

Professional Sevierville Primary School, Sevierville, Tennessee
Experience Teacher
 1979-present

Honors and German/American Relationship Award
Awards: 1986

 Career Ladder III Teacher
 1987

 Sevierville Primary School Teacher of the Year
 1992 & 2006

 Primary Teacher of the Year for Sevier County
 2006-2007