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**EXPLORING THE WAYS IN WHICH HIGHLY EFFICACIOUS
INTERMEDIATE TEACHERS EMPLOY BEST
PRACTICES IN READING INSTRUCTION
FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

(in Educational Leadership)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August, 2017

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Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Sarah Mackenzie

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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August, 2017

The purpose of this mixed method study was to build on the earlier efficacy work of Tschannen, Moran, and Hoy (2001) and the reading teacher efficacy work of Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) to add to educational research related to teacher efficacy and reading. This study is specifically focused on the teaching of reading to struggling readers at the intermediate levels. The study was guided by four research questions that focused on the teaching of struggling readers at the intermediate level. Reading teacher self-efficacy levels were established through a survey instrument. In addition, data from two interviews, structured and semi-structured, about core teaching practices in reading and how each teacher worked with struggling readers were compiled. The overarching goal of this study was to deepen our understanding of the practices that highly efficacious intermediate grade teachers incorporate into their classrooms to support the needs of struggling readers.

This study provides five findings: A range of efficacy levels exists among intermediate teachers and there was no evidence that the mantra, “In grades K-2, children

learn to read, and in grades 3-5, children read to learn” held true for these teachers. There is a range of implementation of instructional supports and best practices among high efficacy intermediate teachers of reading. A directive leadership and programmatic approach can negatively influence literacy instruction. Collaboration among teachers and leaders positively affects literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers. Differentiation of instruction is a key practice that intermediate literacy teachers find most challenging in supporting the learning of struggling readers.

The study also provides evidence that among these high efficacy teachers exists a belief that they have a responsibility to teach all students. The teachers who felt the most tension in trying to meet the needs of struggling readers taught in schools where school leadership chose scripted programs that did not reflect best practices in reading instruction. All of these high efficacy teachers struggled with differentiating instruction to some degree.

The findings of this study could benefit teachers and educational leaders who are hoping to develop focused professional development on how to more effectively meet the needs of struggling readers at the intermediate levels.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

When schools and classroom teachers are unable to successfully intervene on behalf of struggling readers, students will continue to struggle in reading, as well as other academic areas, throughout their academic careers. This chapter begins with an overview of reading instruction at the intermediate grade levels. Then introducing Jeanne Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* begins a discussion about a possible misinterpretation of it and introduces rationales and perspectives for how this misinterpretation may contribute to an inability of intermediate teachers to effectively respond to the needs of struggling readers. At the end of the chapter, teacher efficacy is introduced as a construct and as a possible explanation for how teachers may overcome this longstanding misinterpretation.

Intermediate teachers are often heard saying, "In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn." This phrase can be attributed to Jeanne Chall (1983), a Harvard University Professor, and is connected to her landmark work, *Stages of Reading Development*. According to Chall, reading is conceptualized not as a process that is the same from the beginning stages through mature, skilled reading but as a process that changes as the reader becomes more able and proficient. Chall believes that beginning reading is different from later "mature" reading and that early reading instruction should be based on systematic phonics instruction in an effort to prepare children to be mature readers in the later stages of their reading development. Jeanne Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* is considered a foundational work by the educational community because it provides a broad view of what it means to progress as

a reader from pre-k to college and beyond, and it has influenced the training of teachers and the development of curricula since 1983. As Chall explains, “Knowing the whole sweep makes possible a fuller appreciation of where students are, where they have been, where they are going, and what their instruction should be to bring them forward” (p. 3).

Reading Instruction at the Intermediate Levels

In my experience, many educators and educational leaders have misinterpreted the *Stages of Reading Development* in at least one way over the past twenty-seven years, and this misinterpretation has led to significant problems with how schools and teachers respond to struggling readers at the intermediate level. Currently, many teachers and school leaders view the primary grades or initial stages of reading development as being solely focused on decoding words, while they view the intermediate grades or the later stages of reading development as a time for students to learn how to comprehend what they are now able to read.

It is from this misinterpretation that the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5 children read to learn” has grown and contributed to an inability of many intermediate schools and teachers to respond to and to meet needs of struggling readers. As Robb (2002) explains in *The Myth of Learn to Read/Read to Learn*, “For years, many elementary and middle school teachers have shaped their teaching practices around the deeply rooted myth of ‘Learning to Read and Reading to Learn’” (p. 23). Along with this mantra, many intermediate teachers believe that their primary role is as “teachers of content.” Christine Finnan explains in her book, *The Upper Elementary Years: Ensuring Success in Grades 3-6* that many fourth and fifth grade classrooms are significantly different from primary-grade classroom environments. Teachers at the intermediate levels (grades 3-5) typically experience shifts in focus from nurturing children to teaching content (2008, p. 120).

Rationales for Inadequate Teaching of Struggling Readers

Many teachers at the intermediate levels believe that the majority of reading instruction should take place in the primary grades where the focus should be on teaching children phonics and providing them with opportunities to practice these skills while increasing their ability to read fluently. Once children arrive in the intermediate grades, the expectation from many teachers is that students will be ready for more formalized, content-focused instruction and that the skills of actually learning to read should take a secondary role. Research by Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) supports this: “Many upper elementary and secondary school teachers still consider the teaching of reading to be the responsibility of primary school teachers, and this limited perception could be contributing to the fourth grade slump and even the ‘eighth-grade cliff’” (p. 69).

Snow and Moje (2010) say, “We refer to the massive investment in primary grades literacy instruction while neglecting later literacy development as the inoculation fallacy—the widespread fallacy that an early vaccination of reading instruction protects permanently against reading failure. The need for literacy instruction does not end with the third grade, or even in high school” (p. 1). When struggling readers arrive at the intermediate levels, especially those who are considered low-income, oftentimes these children hit an instructional wall because they lack the necessary reading skills to be able to access the curriculum, and effective classroom reading instruction that meets their particular needs as readers is no longer available in a regular education setting.

In *The Reading Crisis: Why Poor Children Fall Behind*, a two year study that documented the challenge that some low-income students have in attempting to transition from learning to read to reading to learn, the authors say some low-income children

achieved as well in literacy and language as children in the normative population in grades two and three, but when they transitioned to grade four their scores started to decelerate and they exhibited signs of a slump (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990, p. 112).

Research by Marchman and Weisleder (2013) determined that at eighteen months of age children from wealthier homes could identify pictures of simple words they knew much faster than children from low-income families. They also found that by age two affluent children had learned 30 percent more words in the intervening months than the children from low-income homes. In two studies (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall et al., 1990) researchers found that the reading achievement of second- and third-grade low-income children was comparable to the achievement of the normative population on all subtests of the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading. By fourth grade, however, some children's scores began to decline. Furthermore, whether using results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, local standardized testing, or informal classroom assessment, this achievement gap becomes more noticeable by fourth grade and increases as children get older (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009).

Perspectives on the Inadequate Teaching of Struggling Readers

As a principal at the intermediate level in a Title 1 school, I have had first-hand experience with teachers who believe that the majority of “real” reading instruction should take place in the primary grades and that intermediate teachers are responsible for teaching content knowledge. These teachers often express frustration over students who are struggling in reading and the fact that they are moved into the intermediate grades even though they can be one or even two years behind established reading benchmarks. Teachers can be heard making comments such as, “If he cannot read fourth grade books,

he should not be in fourth grade.” These teachers question whether it is their responsibility to teach these struggling readers to become better readers and view the instruction of the struggling reader as the responsibility of someone else, like reading specialists or special educators.

When struggling readers arrive in the intermediate grades, and often lack the necessary basic skills to read grade level content, the ideal is that schools and teachers embrace an approach that meets the needs of these students and is built upon the skills of highly trained, expert classroom teachers. Research confirms that for struggling readers to make necessary gains teachers need to understand that it is their role and responsibility to: create literate classroom environments, organize their classrooms in a manner to support all readers, assess to inform instruction, and differentiate their instruction so children are able to access the grade level curriculum, particularly their literacy instruction. Unfortunately, even though elementary teachers need to be able to embrace students with a variety of strengths and weaknesses as readers (Walmsley & Allington, 1995), for many elementary school teachers teaching struggling readers is one of the greatest challenges that they face (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Moon, 2000; Stigler, J. W., & Hiebert, J. 2009).

As a result of the challenges, the approach in many classrooms runs counter to what researchers promote as best practices in reading instruction for struggling readers. Teachers cite many reasons for why instructional practices have not evolved to where teachers are better able to meet the needs of struggling readers in the regular education classroom. One reason that is often shared is that many teacher preparation programs fail to effectively prepare teachers to teach reading at the intermediate levels. Walsh, Glaser

and Wilcox (2006) discovered that teacher-training programs are generally unsuccessful at training prospective teachers in all five components of reading instruction. In this survey conducted by the National Council of Teacher Quality of 72 teacher education programs, they found only 15% of them taught all five components of effective reading instruction; almost half of them taught none.

Teacher preparation programs have maintained an approach where teachers who are interested in teaching at the primary levels receive more instruction in teaching reading and even more experience teaching reading when they are placed in primary classrooms for their internships. However, teachers who are interested in concentrating at the intermediate levels are instructed in methodology for teaching content, but they rarely receive instruction in how to effectively teach reading to struggling readers in the upper levels. According to Lyon (1998) teachers did not feel adequately prepared to teach reading, especially to struggling readers.

In my experience, teachers often express frustration over a lack of ongoing professional development in reading instruction. When teachers begin teaching, they often incorporate practices in reading that reflect a mix of district requirements, practices that they acquired while student teaching, and practices that their school “neighbors” incorporate into their classrooms and are willing to share with them. I see teachers adhering to a long-standing belief that intermediate schools and teachers are responsible for teaching the appropriate grade level content and that it is not the responsibility of classroom teachers to meet the needs of readers who are one to two grade levels “behind” established benchmarks. When school districts, principals, and classroom teachers see it as someone else’s responsibility to meet the needs of struggling readers, they look to

outside supports “to catch children up” in hopes that they will eventually be able to access the curriculum. These professionals hold true to the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read, and in grades 3-5, children read to learn,” and see struggling readers as the result of poor instruction at the primary levels, uninterested families who fail to place a high value on learning to read, and unmotivated students who lack the drive to become better readers.

Impact of Ineffective Reading Instruction

Research confirms that when schools and classroom teachers are unable to successfully intervene on behalf of struggling readers, they will continue to struggle in reading, as well as in other academic areas, throughout their academic careers. There is substantial research that supports the notion that students who experience difficulty learning to read continue to struggle throughout their academic careers. Children who are poor readers at the end of first grade almost never acquire average-level reading skills by the end of elementary school (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz & Fletcher, 1996; Shaywitz, Fletcher, Holahan, Schneider, Marchione, Stuebing, Francis, Pugh & Shaywitz, 1999; Torgesen & Burgess, 1998). Juel (1998) explains that several studies reveal that there is a 90 percent chance that a child who is a poor reader at the end of grade one will remain a poor reader at the end of grade four.

Often a child’s placement in lower performing reading groups leads to greater struggles later in life. Allington (1995) in his book *No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America’s Elementary Schools* states:

Assignment to a group predicts future educational outcomes with alarming accuracy. Most children placed in high-ability groups remain in those groups and

go on to college. Most children placed in a low-achievement group remain there and are far more likely (1) to leave school before graduating, (2) to fail a grade, (3) to be placed in special education, (4) to become a teenage parent, (5) to commit a juvenile criminal offense, and (6) to remain less than fully literate. (p. 2)

In contrast, there is much evidence to support the notion that good readers, who are considered good readers in their early stages of schooling, maintain that distinction throughout their academic careers. Juel (1988) found that 87 percent of students who were good readers in first grade were also good readers in fourth grade, and 75% of students identified with reading problems in the third grade are still reading disabled in ninth grade (Shaywitz et al., 1996). Research shows that if struggling readers are going to make appropriate academic gains, they need access to the same high quality reading instruction that readers who do not struggle receive in classrooms every day and that classroom teachers serve an important role in providing that type of instruction.

Allington (1995) further states:

We know that increasing the quantity of reading instruction provided is critical to acceleration of reading development, and yet participation in either remedial or special education is more likely to decrease the quantity of instruction, even though most school personnel assume that quantity is increased. We know that enhancing the quality of instruction is critical in accelerating reading development, but remedial and special education students spend more time with minimally trained paraprofessionals than do children who experience no difficulties (p. 23).

While we know that within many schools these beliefs about the intermediate grades hold true, we also know that there are some high performing schools and highly skilled teachers who are able to move past the mental model of, “In grades K-2, children learn to read, and in grades 3-5, children read to learn.” As a classroom teacher and as a principal, I have worked with teachers who have had a wide range of professional experiences. Some have had traditional undergraduate degrees from schools of education, while others are adult career changers who have participated in alternative certification programs. I have worked with teachers who have been teaching for 30 years and with others who are new to the profession. I have worked in districts, which provide a variety of high quality professional opportunities, and in others where no professional development opportunities are offered. With that said, the practices of many teachers reflect their understanding that this mantra is faulty, while I have observed and taught with other teachers who cite this mantra as a justification for their instructional practices. At this point in my career, I am left wondering if the reason some teachers overcome this misconception runs deeper than teaching experience, teacher preparation programs or professional development opportunities and is more a result of each teacher’s core beliefs.

Teacher Efficacy

One construct that has been investigated as a means to explain why certain teachers are able to overcome the myths and models that seem to be ingrained in others is teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher’s beliefs or expectations that he or she has the ability to affect student learning and bring about positive student change, even in those students who may be unmotivated or lack the appropriate social and academic

characteristics (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Teacher efficacy has been further defined as an ability to organize and establish a course of action so as to accomplish a task specifically related to a specific learning outcome (Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Teacher efficacy developed from the concept of self-efficacy, a conceptual strand of efficacy based on the work of Albert Bandura (1997), and posits that a teacher who has a high sense of efficacy believes effective teaching can positively influence student learning, has confidence in his or her own teaching abilities, and is more likely to incorporate new practices into his or her classroom (Cervone, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hoy & Davis, 2002; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization (Allinder, 1994). Strong efficacy beliefs also allow teachers to be more open to new ideas and to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Gordon, Lim, McKinnon, & Nkala, 1998; Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). Efficacy beliefs influence teachers' persistence when things do not go smoothly and their resilience in the face of setbacks.

While Bandura (1997) emphasized the importance of context in measuring teacher efficacy, Bandura cautioned that scales with the intent to measure teacher efficacy must be tailored to specific criteria of instruction. As a result, content specific efficacy measures have been developed over the years. Riggs and Enoch (1995) studied pre-service elementary teachers and the relationship between their self-efficacy beliefs and

the impact on teacher readiness to teach science at the elementary level. Midgley, Feldluafer and Eccles (1989) studied the relation between students' beliefs in mathematics and their teachers' sense of efficacy.

While the research on teacher efficacy establishes the notion that the beliefs of teachers are important and powerful, there has been limited research on the effects of teacher efficacy related to reading. Armor et al. (1976); Ashton and Webb (1986); Tracz and Gibson (1986) and Borton (1991) studied the relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement in reading. However, in these studies, researchers used global measures of self-efficacy and not instruments that were specifically aligned to literacy instruction. In core subjects other than reading, Thompson (1984, 1985); Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter and Loef (1989); Riggs and Enochs (1990); Kaplan (1991); Rubeck and Enochs (1991); Dossey (1992); Raymond (1997); and Stryker and Szabo (2007) studied the relationship between teacher self-efficacy levels and teaching practices and found that a teacher's beliefs play a significant role in the teaching strategies incorporated into classrooms.

Based on current research, one is left wondering whether intermediate teachers with a high sense of teacher efficacy are more likely to move past an established mental model and work effectively with struggling readers in the classroom setting. This dissertation is focused on learning more about intermediate classroom teachers with high levels of reading teacher efficacy who teach in high-and low-performing schools and how these teachers work with struggling readers.

Problem

When schools and classroom teachers are unable to successfully intervene on behalf of struggling readers, students will continue to struggle in reading as well as other academic areas throughout their academic careers. Jeanne Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* offers rationales and perspectives for how this misinterpretation may contribute to an inability of intermediate teachers to effectively respond to the needs of struggling readers. Teachers with beliefs in the efficacy of teaching and in their own efficacy as reading teachers may not operate with this misunderstanding.

While there is ample research that focuses on effective reading instruction for struggling readers at the primary levels as well as an abundance of research that focuses on the impact of teacher efficacy on teaching practices, student motivation, and achievement in academic areas such as math (Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter, and Loef, 1989; Dossey, 1992), there is limited research on the impact of teacher efficacy on effective reading instruction for struggling readers at the intermediate levels. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching reading comprehension and their classroom practices. Based on interviews, the researchers made predictions about the instructional beliefs of thirty-nine participants and determined that there was a relationship between their beliefs and their instructional practices, "practices could quite accurately be predicted from belief interviews" (p. 575). These researchers further explored this relationship by using a case study methodology to explore why a teacher's beliefs did not relate to her practices. A study of reading teacher efficacy and its relationship to teaching practices and how

classroom teachers work with struggling readers at the intermediate levels remains an area that has gone essentially unstudied.

The connection between reading teacher self-efficacy and the classroom practices that an intermediate teacher uses can be conjectured at this point based on decades of research focused on teacher efficacy and teacher instruction. But, further study is necessary to explore the linkage between reading teacher self-efficacy and teaching practices in reading. This study will use the Reading Teacher Survey, a survey based on the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument, a valid and reliable measure, to explore the relationship between high reading teacher self-efficacy (RTSE) and the classroom practices that an intermediate teacher incorporates into his or her literacy classes. The Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL) will be used to assess the level of fidelity in which these instructional practices were implemented in each classroom.

Research Goals

The overarching goal of this study is to deepen our understanding of the practices that highly efficacious intermediate grade teachers incorporate into their classrooms to support the needs of struggling readers. This will be accomplished by addressing three research goals: First, establishing the reading teacher self-efficacy beliefs of intermediate teachers; second, examining the reading practices of highly efficacious intermediate teachers and comparing them to practices considered to be effective as measured by the ESAIL; and third, by delving fully into the ways intermediate teachers who indicate they have strong beliefs in their effectiveness in teaching reading describe their work with struggling readers in their classrooms.

Research Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to build on the earlier efficacy work of Tschannen, Moran, and Hoy (2001) and the reading teacher efficacy work of Szabo and Mokhtari (2004). This dissertation will add to the educational research related to teacher efficacy and reading instruction because it is specifically focused on the teaching of reading to struggling readers at the intermediate levels. It will explore the relationship between high reading teacher self-efficacy beliefs and the classroom practices that intermediate teachers incorporate into their classrooms to meet the needs of struggling readers.

The findings from this study will address the gap in research related to teacher efficacy beliefs and the teaching of reading at the intermediate level and will benefit educational leaders, classroom teachers, and educational researchers in their work to meet the needs of all students. First, educational leaders will benefit from the findings because they may develop a deeper understanding of the beliefs that some teachers and educational leaders hold about teaching reading at the intermediate levels. These educational leaders will gain a better understanding of how these beliefs can sometimes inhibit effective classroom instruction for struggling readers. The study can provide educational leaders with a lens for identifying effective classroom reading instruction and professional development ideas for addressing ineffective reading instruction in classrooms.

Second, this research will bring a deeper awareness to teachers and provide a greater understanding of the needs of struggling readers. It will also provide knowledge about how classroom teachers' high efficacy beliefs and practices can play an integral role in meeting their students' reading needs.

Third, the findings will benefit educational researchers. This study builds upon other teacher efficacy research; the findings may promote dialogue related to the void in research specific to reading instruction and teacher efficacy beliefs. It may also inspire further research related to teaching and learning at the intermediate grade levels.

To understand the teaching and learning experiences of intermediate teachers and struggling readers, Chapter Two contains a review of relevant literature. The literature review begins with a historical perspective of the struggling reader and identifies ways that schools have responded to struggling readers since they were first identified in schools. In the next section, best practices in reading instruction at the intermediate level are highlighted as a means to understand how a teacher's classroom instruction can be designed to meet the needs of struggling readers. The final section establishes teacher efficacy as a construct and its relationship to instruction in a variety of subject areas. The conceptual framework concludes Chapter 2 and includes aspects from each section of the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several areas of scholarship form the foundation of this study: struggling readers themselves, effective reading instruction for struggling readers, and teacher beliefs, specifically a teacher's beliefs about his or her efficacy. In the first section, the history of the struggling reader is documented. The section begins in the 1900s with a focus on struggling readers and ends with the inception of the Every Child Succeeds Act. The goal of this section is to define the magnitude of the problem facing schools and teachers and illustrate how this history has contributed to the mental model that is held by many intermediate teachers. It underscores the major legislation that has contributed to the way schools and teachers are expected to respond to the needs of students who struggle in reading.

The second section of the review of literature describes best practices as they relate to meeting the needs of struggling readers. The goal of this section is to provide the reader with an understanding of how classroom teachers can contribute to meeting the needs of struggling readers by discussing specific classroom practices, such as a Reading Workshop Model, that are connected to high quality classroom instruction and provide the necessary structures to meet the needs of struggling readers within the regular education setting.

In the third section, the significance of teacher efficacy is established as a construct. Then, the influence teacher efficacy has on a teacher's confidence and willingness to incorporate new practices into his or her instruction is explored. The goal of the section is to explain the relationship between teacher efficacy and teaching

practices as well as initiate the discussion around whether teacher efficacy beliefs may contribute to the mental model held by teachers and schools regarding meeting the needs of struggling readers.

The fourth section is the conceptual framework and is based upon a historical perspective of struggling readers, the literature review, and the significance of teacher efficacy. The conceptual framework synthesizes the literature review and served as a guide in the development of the research questions and of the methodology for this study.

Foundational Beliefs About Reading Instruction and Students Who Struggle

Learning to Read

Struggling readers are defined as students who experience significant difficulties learning to read. They are considered struggling based on their scores on state reading tests, scores on informal classroom assessments, and more formal assessments such as the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing that measures a child's phonological processing skills. A student is typically defined as a struggling reader if he or she is two years behind his or her peers in reading.

The identification of struggling readers and the way that public schools meet their needs has taken a variety of twists and turns throughout the history of public schools in the United States. From the period before formalized schooling, when the belief was that reading was something that should be left to the economically privileged to the passage of No Child Left Behind, there has been great debate about the most effective ways to meet the needs of students who struggle with learning to read. The debate has included dialogue about why these children struggle, the best way to meet their needs, and whose responsibility it is to teach these struggling students so they become successful readers.

Compulsory Education and Concerns about Reading Ability

Students were first identified as having reading difficulties in the early 1900s during the Progressive Era of public education. Prior to this period, being able to read was not of high importance. Allington (1995) explains, “Until the arrival of compulsory and universal schooling in the twentieth century, failure to learn to read was not considered at all noteworthy: in fact, learning to read was not viewed as a particular accomplishment for all but a privileged class” (p. 20). The most notable characteristic of the Progressive Era was that it was a time of rapid influx of student enrollments in public schools. Urban and Wagoner (2004) reported these changes as follows, “A trend toward increased enrollments before this period, passage of compulsory attendance laws, massive immigration from Europe and elsewhere, and internal migration from farm to city all contributed to the huge increases in the size of city school systems” (p. 200).

During this time of increased enrollments, one of the trends that arose was the effective and efficient management of schools. In response to the increased enrollments, public schools moved away from the neighborhood control of schools to larger, more centralized school districts. These school districts, acting more like corporations, had school boards that functioned like boards of directors. They hired superintendents who were trained like business managers and were given the responsibility of effectively and efficiently managing these larger districts.

Effective and Efficient Management of Schools

There have been many developments throughout the 20th century that have contributed to our misconceptions about reading instruction and the manner in which states, districts, schools, and teachers respond to struggling readers. Allington (1995) compiled many of the beliefs that have been born from these misconceptions and are held by many states, districts, schools, and teachers into a concise explanation in his book, *No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America's Elementary Schools*. These beliefs are as follows:

- We can measure children's aptitude for learning to read.
- Children learn best in homogeneous age and achievement groups.
- Reading is best defined as a hierarchy of increasingly complex skills.
- Children who find learning to read difficult need slower paced lessons featuring repetition, concrete experience, and a single skill focus.
- Not all children can achieve literacy with their peers.
- Special teachers and special programs are the best way to address the needs of children who find learning to read difficult. (p. 5)

These six beliefs about teaching reading at the elementary level have emerged since the early 1900s and now dominate our thinking about children who find learning to read difficult.

The belief was that for teachers to be more effective and efficient they needed to become better at sorting students. Intelligence testing, which was developed to identify military officers, was seen by school administrators as a way to be more "mindful" of how students were educated. It was believed that the testing would provide these new

corporate-like schools with a tool that would assist in their being more effective and efficient in the education of children. Urban and Wagoner (2004) asserted, “School systems soon began developing elaborate bureaus of educational research whose major function was to purchase and administer the standardized tests that were believed to measure the educational potential and achievement of students” (p. 233). For the first time, the publication of group intelligence tests provided educators with the ability to identify a discrepancy between student ability and reading achievement. Klenk and Kibby (2000) expounded that in the 1920s it became increasingly obvious that many children who were failing as readers had intellectual abilities that far surpassed their reading abilities. Many of these struggling readers had documented IQ scores that were above average.

Many believed that the ability to evaluate a child’s intelligence provided educators with a means to see into a child’s future and predetermine what type of education he or she should take. Allington (1995) reasoned, “This was seen as an important step because the tests would allow an efficient sorting of children by aptitude” (p. 3). It was believed that this ability to “sort” children would allow schools to better meet the needs of the new industrial economy in America by providing the necessary workforce for this revolution of industrial change.

One example of this desire to sort students was found in Chicago with the proposal of the Cooley Plan, a plan to introduce a vocational system that would be totally independent from the traditional public system. Under Cooley’s plan, children were encouraged in the sixth grade to choose between an academic program and a vocational program. Within the vocational program, students would be better prepared with the

necessary life skills to enter the workforce upon graduation. Although the Cooley Plan was defeated, it was one of several proposals that began the conversation about separating students so as to prepare them for life after school. Urban and Wagoner (2004) explained, “Such preparation involved identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students and then fitting the students into appropriate social and vocational roles” (p. 235).

During the progressive period, many believed that if a child who had average intelligence was not achieving in reading it was due to some kind of medical ailment (Smith, 2002). Smith recounted that between 1910-1924 there was a large emphasis on the research of reading. Prior to 1910, doctors believed that “congenital word blindness was the cause of reading difficulties” (p. 179). Then, there was a shift to the notion that a child’s intelligence was innate and set. Allington (1995) reasoned, “Ultimately a conventional wisdom emerged that (1) intelligence is an inherited, generally fixed trait, (2) young children’s intelligence can be measured accurately with paper and pencil tests, and (3) this measured intelligence predicts that a child can learn” (p. 3). Smith (1986) in her book *American Reading Instruction*, argued:

With the advent of standardized reading tests, school superintendents began conducting surveys in their systems to ascertain the status of their pupils in reading achievement. They were appalled to find that large numbers of children were deficient in reading. At this point in history (about 1920-24) the public schools really became concerned about reading disabilities and many of them initiated some form of reading improvement for “retarded” readers. It was also during this period (1916) that the term “remedial reading” became evident in

educational discussion and public schools became concerned about “retarded readers” and there was an increased concern about how to improve the teaching of reading. Ability groups were suggested as a means to meet the needs of struggling readers (p. 190).

The Essentialist Movement

In the 1930s, the Essentialist Movement began to challenge the Progressive Movement that had shaped public education since 1890. Urban and Wagoner (2004) explained, “In opposition to the excesses of experimentalism and child-centered approaches, the essentialists called for a learning community based on a common core of ideas, understandings, and ideals. Their curriculum emphasized the essential subjects of reading, arithmetic, history, the sciences, and creative work in art. The essentialists criticized progressivism as academically weak and feeble in contrast to their own program, which was strong, virile, and positive” (p. 268). They wanted a return to traditional classrooms and believed that progressives were not strict enough and coddled their pupils. The challenges by the essentialists, while not resulting in a major change in how students were educated, defined a back-to-basics theme that continues to dominate educational reform.

Along with the “return to basics,” research on struggling readers, focus shifted from the possible physical ailments of struggling readers to identification and remediation. Allington (1995) asserted, “By 1930 the concept of the ‘slow learner’ was emerging in American education. Standardized achievement and aptitude tests provided educators with ‘objective’ assessments for identifying, which children were ‘slow’ and which were not. It was felt that these children needed not just different goals, but

different instruction as well, since so many failed to profit from the pace of curriculum introduction and to provide more concrete instruction” (p. 4).

Reading Instruction Debated

In the 1940s, according to Allington (1995), “It was during this era that reading curricula came to be described in terms of hierarchies of skills. What began around 1940 with quite simply schemes separating decoding from comprehension goals and first grade goals from fourth grade goals” (p. 4).

During the 1950s and 60s, America was in competition with the Soviet Union, and there was a renewed examination of how American children were being educated in public schools. The launching of Sputnik furthered the desire to examine how children were educated so that the United States would be better able to compete with other super powers. There was an increased demand for reading specialists and materials that would allow teachers to better prepare students and meet the needs of those who were falling behind. There was also a demand for more reading specialists with greater levels of expertise and training (Smith, 1986, p. 415). This was also a period in time when there began to be sharp criticism of how reading was being taught, and federal initiatives were formed in an effort to close the achievement gap. In 1965, one such federal initiative was the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

In 1955, John Flesh wrote a book, *Why Johnny Can Not Read and What You Can Do about It*, in which he criticized the state of reading education in the American Public Schools. Flesh’s book, coupled with the increased need to compete with the Soviet Union, brought the general public into the debate about the best ways to meet the needs of struggling readers. In 1967, Jeanne S. Chall published *Learning to Read: The Great*

Debate, in response to Flesch's book to explain why there had been such debate about teaching reading in the United States. It was also during this period that President Johnson created Title 1, which Harris and Hodges (1995) defined as "the federally funded compensatory education program in the United States, intended to serve children of lower socioeconomic backgrounds who may be at risk of school failure, particularly in the elementary grades" (p. 257).

This kind of criticism of reading instruction continued throughout 1970s and 1980s (Copperman, 1980; Flesch, 1981). It became the common public perception that United States reading achievement and schooling had declined considerably from prior periods of greatness and that schools needed to do a better job of meeting the needs of struggling readers. In 1981, beliefs about the continued failure of the system of public education led to the establishment of the National Commission on Excellence in Education and the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The Commission attributed America's inability to compete with other countries throughout the world as the direct result of our failing educational system.

In 1983, Jeanne Chall published *Stages of Reading Development*, a scheme for understanding reading development that was based the *Stages of Reading Development* on Jean Piaget's *Theory of Stages*. In the Stages of Reading Development, Stage 0 is categorized as the Pre-Reading Stage (6 months-6 years). At this stage, children are developing an understanding of reading through an initial understanding of the alphabet, pretending to read, and printing their names. Stage 1 is the Initial Reading and Decoding Stage. Children are typically in grades one-two and are ages six-seven in Stage 1 and are beginning to understand the relationship between letters and sounds and are able to read

simple, familiar stories. Stage 2 is a consolidation of what was learned in Stage 1 and is considered as the Confirmation and Fluency Stage because children are gaining in their ability to read fluently. Children are typically in grades two-three and are ages seven-eight during this stage and are gradually increasing the amount of functional and recreational reading they are doing. Stage 3 is the Reading for Learning Stage (grades four-eight; ages nine-thirteen) and children are using reading to learn new ideas and gain knowledge. The phrase, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn,” can be traced back to Stage 3 of Chall’s Stages of Reading Development. Stage 4 is known as the Multiple Viewpoints Stage (High School; Ages fourteen-eighteen). Students in this stage are reading widely from a broad range of more complex materials. During this stage, reading comprehension is better than listening comprehension. Stage 5 is referred to as the Construction and Reconstruction Stage (College and beyond; Ages eighteen+). Students in this stage are reading to meet their own needs and purposes. It is rapid and efficient and serves to integrate one’s knowledge with that of others to synthesize and create new knowledge.

Federal Initiatives and the Struggling Reader

No Child Left Behind. Between the year 2000 and 2010, significant pieces of federal legislation became relevant to closing the achievement gap and determining how schools and teachers view and respond to struggling readers. In 2001, President George W. Bush initiated No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a standards-based education reform based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve outcomes for individuals in education. The legislation required states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades. NCLB did not

propose a set of national standards; standards were set and measured by individual states. Compliance was required if states were to receive federal funding for schools. This landmark reform bill was the first piece of education legislation where funding was directly connected to a school's ability to make adequate yearly progress in student reading and math achievement. Within NCLB legislation, there were several initiatives added that focused specifically on reading: Reading First, Early Reading First, and Striving Readers.

Reading First. Reading First is a federal initiative under No Child Left Behind requiring schools funded by Reading First funds to employ scientifically-based reading instruction and to hire literacy coaches who assist teachers in focusing on data and in learning the newest instructional strategies. Reading First is limited to Kindergarten through third grade classrooms (NCLB, 2001).

Early Reading First. Early Reading First is another federal initiative that responds to the report from the National Reading Panels (NRP) published in the fall of 2000 (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Early Reading First was created to better prepare young children to enter Kindergarten with the necessary reading skills. Early Reading First was designed to transform early education programs into centers of excellence that provided high quality early education to young children, especially those from low-income families. Federal funds were awarded competitively to local programs that displayed an ability to increase young children's readiness to attend school.

Striving Readers. The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) formula grant was authorized under NCLB and is a comprehensive literacy development and education

program to advance literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12. Formula grants are provided to assist states in creating or maintaining a state literacy team with expertise in literacy development and education for children from birth through grade 12 and to assist states in developing their own comprehensive literacy plan. The aim of Striving Readers was to raise middle and high school students' literacy levels and to build a system of scientific research for identifying and replicating strategies to improve adolescent reading skills.

Response to Intervention. In 2004, under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Response to Intervention (RTI) was initiated to increase the amount of support a child is provided before he or she can be identified as having a disability. The tiered approach to instruction places a greater emphasis on improving instruction and increasing the monitoring of individual student growth at the classroom level.

Common Core Standards. The Common Core Standards were not developed under No Child Left Behind but can be traced back to a report called *Nation at Risk* that was written in 1980. *Nation at Risk* was developed by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education and reported a long list of what it considered problems with American students, including

- American students finished last on seven of nineteen tests of international student achievement;
- twenty-three million American adults were functionally illiterate;
- average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests were lower than when Sputnik was launched; and

- between 1963 and 1980, SAT scores fell more than fifty points in verbal and nearly forty points in math.

In 1989, George H.W. Bush convened an education summit with all 50 state governors attending. This education summit called for education goals to go into effect by the year 2000, which included content standards. Congress followed up by setting its own “Goals 2000” in the 1990s. In 1996, governors and business leaders at a national governors’ conference created an organization dedicated to supporting standards-based education efforts across the nation. Within two years, nearly every state in the union had implemented or was in the process of implementing academic standards for their students. The Common Core Standards initiative that we have today was launched by the national Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 2008 with the intent of “providing a ‘clear and consistent’ educational framework that prepares our children for college and the workforce.” The Common Core Standards were believed to be a compilation of the best standards work that had been done to date across the states.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed on December 10, 2015 to replace the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The Every Student Succeeds Act reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The new law builds on key areas of progress in recent years and provides support to schools and districts that consistently underperform. The Every Child Succeeds Act allows states, districts and

schools to develop the supports and interventions that will be implemented to support students.

Literacy for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act. As part of ESSA, the Literacy for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act allows the department of education to award grants to states to “develop or enhance comprehensive literacy instruction plans that ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing for children from early childhood through grade 12, including English learners and children with disabilities.” Federal support for literacy was provided by

- authorizing \$2.35 billion for comprehensive literacy programs, providing funds for both existing and new high-quality state and local school-based literacy programs that span birth to grade twelve, through the use of a state formula grant;
- allocating of not less than 10 percent of the \$2.35 billion for children from birth to age five, not less than 40 percent for students in kindergarten to grade five, and not less than 40 percent for students grades six through twelve; and
- requiring of a rigorous national evaluation of the programs that includes stringent conflict of interest restrictions for the programs’ peer review process.

This history is crucial to understanding the magnitude of the problem facing schools and teachers and the mental model that is held by teachers about learning to read. This leads to a description of exemplary teachers and the impact their instructional practices have on meeting the needs of struggling readers.

Exemplary Instructional Practices

If struggling readers are going to make gains at the intermediate level, research clearly shows that they need to be placed with exemplary classroom teachers. Mendro,

Jordan, and Bembry (1998) studied the effects of three consecutive years of high quality classroom instruction on student reading achievement and compared it to the achievement of students in lower quality classrooms. They found that the achievement of the students in the high quality classrooms rose each year, while the achievement of students in the lower quality classrooms dropped each year. We know that effective classroom teachers have a greater impact on struggling readers than anything else, including having the right program (Allington & Johnson, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Allington (2002) explains, “It has become clearer that investing in effective teaching—whether in hiring decisions or professional development planning—is the most ‘research-based’ strategy available. If we are to hope to attain the goal of No Child Left Behind, we must focus on creating a substantially larger number of effective, expert teachers” (p. 2). Allington and Baker (2007) explain, “Children who find learning to read and write more difficult are best served not by identifying some label for them, but by designing and delivering sufficient and appropriate instruction and substantial opportunities to actually engage in high-success reading activities” (p. 85).

When exemplary teachers are studied, there are several attributes that they share which enable them to meet the needs of struggling readers. Based on the work of Linda Dorn (2007) as well as other prominent researchers in the field this section will identify the attributes of the classrooms of exemplary teachers and the structures that are in place to support the needs of struggling readers. First, exemplary teachers create literate environments for all children, environments that provide a wide range of learning experiences. Second, they organize their classrooms to meet a range of diverse learners.

Third, exemplary teachers use assessments to inform instruction and monitor the progress of struggling readers. Fourth, they differentiate instruction and use a workshop approach for reading instruction.

Creating Literate Classroom Environments

Dorn and Soffos (2007) explain, “Teachers create a literate environment by providing a wide variety of reading experiences, including rich and diverse opportunities for students to read, discuss, and write texts across the curriculum” (p. 1). When teachers create this type of learning environment, the result is an increase in the volume of reading that all children do each day. While this is beneficial to all students, it is especially beneficial to children who struggle with reading. Research shows that student achievement of elementary students (Allington, 1977; 1980; 1983; 1984; Allington and McGill-Franzen, 1989) is directly related to reading achievement. In these studies, it was shown that on average higher achieving students read up to three times more in a week than lower achieving students. In another study, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) found a significant relationship between the amount of reading children do and their achievement in reading.

One way exemplary teachers create literate learning environments is by creating classrooms that are print rich and where reading and writing are used for a wide variety of authentic, everyday purposes (Weaver, 1990). In a print rich classroom, a variety of practices are in place to promote authentic reading and writing. For example, the use of charts to support literacy growth by presenting functional print that is relevant to the child in his or her everyday life is a practice that exemplary teachers incorporate into their classrooms. An example of a chart displaying functional print might be a list of the states

found in New England or the counties of Maine. Exemplary teachers also use charts to support classroom communication by providing students with a daily classroom schedule to follow. Many of these classrooms incorporate the practice of having a morning message for students to read at the start of each day. Students are provided with a message when they arrive and are expected to read it, sign in, and then complete the task that was introduced within the morning message. Sometimes, the message serves as a prompt for students. For example, “Over vacation I went to...”

Along with teacher-generated charts, effective teachers understand the importance of displaying the writing of children at various stages of completion (PREL). One way to do this is by displaying charts that are co-authored between teachers and students. These charts serve as a means to review concepts and document learning and promote student investment in the learning process. In the classroom of an exemplary teacher, one would see stories that are written by children and written responses to questions related to something the class has read and is currently learning about. Effective teachers understand that creating a print rich environment is an integral component to creating a literate learning environment that supports the learning of all students.

Classroom Organization and Materials

Exemplary teachers organize their classrooms in a thoughtful manner so as to promote literacy development throughout the day. Exemplary teachers organize their classrooms to meet the needs of diverse learners, including selecting appropriate materials and working with the class as a whole group, small groups, and individual learners (Dorn & Soffos, 2007). Classroom schedules and routines are posted and are written in language that children are able to access. Charts are used to display

appropriate behaviors during Reading and Writers' Workshop as well as strategies for choosing appropriate books. Commonly used words are displayed in a Word Bank; so all students can access these words during reading and writing instruction.

Along with organizational structures that support learning, exemplary teachers spend time collecting materials that support the needs of all learners as they work to become effective readers. Exemplary teachers provide students with access to a wide variety of narrative and informational resources written at different reading and interest levels to help engage students daily in their in-school reading (Allington 2006; Sanacore & Palumbo 2009). Exemplary reading teachers understand that the amount of time spent reading in classrooms consistently accelerates the growth in reading skills and that struggling readers need opportunities to practice reading "easy" books at their reading levels, but they also benefit from working through more challenging texts (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Dudley-Marling 1997; Szymusiak & Sibberson 2001). They understand that children will make the most reading progress when their books are not too easy or too difficult and that by reading just-right texts, children are able to read fluently and comprehend better, thereby developing the traits and habits of proficient readers (Allington, 2006). Exemplary teachers know that children who read just-right books experience success and are therefore more likely to read with more stamina and engagement (Allington, 2006). Reading acceleration is possible for all children when the text/reading level is matched (O' Connor, Harty, Larkin, Sackor & Zigmond, 2002).

Classroom libraries should be filled with books at a variety of reading levels and be displayed in a manner so students can quickly find appropriately leveled books for

them to successfully read. Grouping of books into levels can make it easier for teachers, parents, and children to select books to read (Sibberson, Szymusiak & Kock, 2008).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) outline the characteristics of an effective classroom library:

- *Large supply of books.* A collection of about 300-600 books is recommended, depending on the grade level and number of copies of each title.
- *Variety of books.* The library should include books that range in difficulty, including a permanent set and a revolving collection of texts that are replenished regularly.
- *Variety of genres.* Traditional stories, fantasy, realistic fiction, historical fiction, information, biographies, etc.
- *High-quality books.* Books that are new, bright, and have eye-catching cover illustrations and titles will catch children's attention and keep them engaged.
- *Attractive setting.* Recommended design features include partitions, ample space, comfortable furnishings, bookshelves, and literacy displays and props.

Research by Neuman (1999) shows that when students have easy access to a range of texts (1) time spent reading increased by 60 percent, (2) literacy-related activities more than doubled, and (3) letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, concepts of print and writing, and narrative competence rose 20 percent.

Effective Use of Data To Inform Instruction

Exemplary teachers use formative and summative assessments to determine where to begin instruction. Typically, teachers at the intermediate levels have a variety of data sources available to them. For example, participants in this study received data from some combination of the following assessments: NWEAs, State of Maine Assessments, Student Reading Conferences, QRI and/ or Running Records. These participants also had access to student work in the form of portfolios.

With formative assessments, exemplary teachers then use data to make judgments about the quality of student responses (performances; student work) and using those judgments immediately (midstream in instruction) to guide and improve students' understandings and skills (Sadler, 1989). Exemplary teachers also use data to monitor student progress and to guide and plan instruction. For example, an exemplary teacher might use a running record to identify a student's reading level and determine whether he or she is ready to be reading at a higher text level or use a student's chapter summary to determine whether a child comprehends what he or she is reading. Roskos and Neuman (2012) say, "Formative assessment is a gap-minder because it helps the teacher to stay alert to individual students' reading development and to adjust instruction as needed before moving on" (p. 1).

Summative assessments allow teachers and schools to determine student learning relative to standards. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2007) say, "Summative assessments are tools to help evaluate the effectiveness of programs, school improvement goals, alignment of curriculum, or student placement in specific programs." Exemplary teachers use summative assessments to identify gaps in their instruction. For example, a summative assessment might indicate that fourth grade students have a difficult time

constructing a response on writing to a passage. Exemplary teachers would respond to this data by teaching students how to write a constructed response and providing students with opportunities to practice this skill.

Exemplary teachers collaborate with intervention teachers around students' progress and work collaboratively to build intervention plans for students. With struggling readers, exemplary teachers use summative and formative assessments to tailor in-class interventions to meet the needs of struggling readers.

Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiation is defined as an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom (Bearne, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999). When teachers differentiate instruction, there is an acknowledgement of various student backgrounds, reading levels, languages, and student interests and learning profiles (Hall, 2002). Differentiation is a pedagogical, rather than an organizational approach (Stradling & Saunders, 1993). Differentiation is a modification of teaching and learning routines to address a broad range of learners' readiness levels, interests, and modes of learning (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001).

Individuals learn in their "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). This term refers to a point of required mastery where a child cannot successfully function alone but can succeed with scaffolding or support. In that zone, new learning will take place. Effective teachers push the child into his or her zone of proximal development, coach for success with a task slightly more complex than the child can

manage alone, and push forward the level of independence. It is through repetition of such cycles that learners grasp new ideas, master new skills, and become increasingly independent thinkers and problem solvers. Current brain research indicates that students should work at a level of “moderate challenge” for learning to occur (Howard, 1994; Jensen, 1998). Students who encounter learning tasks at moderate levels of difficulty are more likely to sustain efforts to learn, even in the face of difficulty, than when learning tasks are too easy or too difficult (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993).

Assessing Best Practices in Reading Instruction at the School and Classroom Levels

The Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) model began in 1998 at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with the training of literacy coaches in seven high poverty schools in Arkansas (Dorn & Soffos, 2001; 2002). The model, which was originally called the Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model, was developed to redesign struggling schools by increasing student achievement. In 2006, the PCL model had been implemented in over 150 schools in ten states. The effectiveness of the model has been documented in numerous university reports.

Linda Dorn and Carla Soffos explain in their book, *Interventions That Work: A Comprehensive Intervention Model for Preventing Reading Failure in Grades K-3*, that The Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL) is used to assess the level of fidelity in which the Comprehensive Literacy Model is implemented in individual classrooms, entire schools, and the district as a whole. It is used to celebrate growth and build on strengths as well as to set goals for improvement while systemically

implementing the model. Dorn and Soffos further explain that the ESAIL can be used for

- pre-assessment to determine a school's readiness for implementing a comprehensive literacy model,
- periodic assessment to study a school's growth over time on one or more literacy criteria, and
- post-assessment to measure a school's improvement over the academic year.

Brain research has helped deepen educators' understanding of how children learn; educators also realize that schools in the United States are typified by academic diversity (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Meier, 1995). These demographic realities are intensified by (a) an emphasis on detracking to promote educational equity for students who might otherwise find themselves schooled in low-expectations environments, (b) an emphasis on mainstreaming of students with special education needs, (c) a reduction of special programs for gifted learners (Sapon-Shevin, 2000; 2001), and (d) an intent to reduce segregation of students with reading problems and to enhance literacy instruction in the regular classroom for all learners (Allington, 2003). McAdamis (2001) reported significant improvement in the test scores of low-scoring students in the Rockwood School District (Missouri) following the use of differentiated instruction. In addition to this tangible impact of the differentiated model, teachers in this study indicated that their students were more motivated and enthusiastic about learning.

Mixed-ability classrooms are likely to fall short of their promise unless teachers address the learner variance in learners in most public school classrooms (Gamoran & Weinstein, 1995).

In such settings, equality of opportunity becomes a reality only when students receive instruction suited to their varied readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences, thus enabling them to maximize the opportunity for growth (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

The reader now has an understanding of specific instructional practices that classroom teachers can incorporate to meet the needs of struggling readers at the intermediate levels. Teacher efficacy will now be explored and established as a construct with a focus on the impact it may have on a teacher's confidence and willingness to incorporate new practices into his or her classroom.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher Efficacy is defined as teachers' beliefs or expectations that they have the ability to affect student learning and bring about positive student change, even in those students who may be unmotivated or lack the appropriate social and academic characteristics (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Therefore, a teacher who has a high sense of efficacy believes effective teaching can positively influence student learning and has confidence in his or her own teaching abilities. The high efficacy teacher believes that all students can learn and want to do so and are willing to teach all students in the class and are determined not to accept student failure (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Cervone, 2000; Hoy & Davis, 2002; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Research by Ashton and Webb (1986) found that in contrast to high efficacy teachers, teachers with lower efficacy levels were related to a distrust of lower achieving students and a discomfort in lower achieving classrooms. Low efficacy

teachers tend to focus less on the instruction of the low achieving students, to push them less, and to be less willing to monitor their academic progress.

Foundational Research on Teacher Self-Efficacy

The majority of efficacy research can be connected back to three pieces of research that are considered foundational to the development of teacher efficacy and its relationship to student learning and achievement. Julien B. Rotter (1966) developed his Social Learning Theory or a belief that one's personality is a reflection of the environment and that one's personality is always changing. Rotter's research inspired a second piece of foundational research, the 1976 RAND Study in which researchers first studied teacher efficacy and developed a deeper understanding of how high levels of teacher efficacy beliefs lead to a teacher's belief that he or she could "control, or at least strongly influence, student achievement and motivation" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 202). In the RAND Study, researchers examined the success of certain reading programs (Armor et al., 1976) and found that teacher efficacy was strongly related to the variations found in student successes as related to the reading achievement of minority students (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). The RAND researchers discovered that there was a positive relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the reading achievement of minority students. Teachers who believed that they had the ability to influence a students' motivation and learning had students with significantly higher reading achievement than students whose teachers believed that they had little influence over student learning due to the environmental influences these children faced. The RAND researchers attributed teacher efficacy to two items from their survey: Item 1. "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really cannot

do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment" and Item 2. "If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student."

The RAND study furthered the idea that teachers with high levels of efficacy beliefs could control and/or influence student achievement and motivation. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) explain, "In the RAND studies, teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of these two statements. The sum of the scores on the two items was called teacher efficacy, a construct that purported to reveal the extent to which a teacher believed that the consequences of teaching—student motivation and learning—were in the hands of the teacher, that is internally controlled" (p. 205).

The RAND study inspired Albert Bandura's (1977) article "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change" in which Bandura developed another conceptual strand of efficacy based on social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1997), efficacy beliefs influence behavior. If a teacher has a high level of efficacy beliefs, this may lead to a higher level of attention and effort to accomplish or master a task. A low level of efficacy belief may lead to a lack of confidence related to a particular task and may limit the development of the skills necessary to perform the task (Bandura, 1997; Cervone, 2000; Cervone & Williams, 1992).

In *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* Bandura writes, "Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura continues to explain, "Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency. If people believe they have

no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen” (p. 3).

Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, and Larivee (1991) found that children with the same level of skill development in mathematics differed significantly in their math problem-solving success depending on the strength of their efficacy beliefs.

Correlates of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy levels are influential in classrooms, in both positive and negative ways. Practices of teachers with low levels of efficacy include: overusing worksheets, reading the script from a basal reading series, and becoming frustrated when a child is not learning a concept (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). If a teacher believes that he or she does not have the ability to effectively teach a certain topic or subject, he or she will be less effective as a teacher (Mayberry, 1971). Cooper, Burger, and Seymour (1979), found that teachers believed they had less control over students considered to be of low ability and, as a result, felt less able to influence how well they learned.

Teachers with higher levels of efficacy have been proven to use the most current instructional strategies and demonstrate a willingness to embrace innovations. Highly efficacious teachers are more likely to use inquiry and student-centered teaching strategies, while teachers with a low sense of efficacy are more likely to use teacher-directed strategies such as lecture or reading from the text (Czernaik, 1990). Teachers' sense of self-efficacy has been related to student outcomes such as achievement (Ashton and Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992) and motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). It has also been defined as “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977, p. 137), or as “teachers beliefs or convictions that they can influence how well

students learn, even those who will be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4). Teachers who have a high sense of efficacy believe effective teaching can positively influence student learning and have confidence in their own teaching abilities (Cervone, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Researchers have established strong connections between teacher efficacy and student achievement (Ashton and Webb, Gibson, & Dembo, 1984, Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Albert Bandura furthered our understanding of teacher efficacy with his concept and theory of self-efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). If a teacher has a high level of efficacy belief, this may lead to a higher level of attention and effort to accomplish or to master a task. A low level of teacher efficacy beliefs may lead to a lack of confidence related to a particular task and may limit the development of the skills necessary to perform the task. (Bandura, 1997; Cervone, 2000; Cervone & Williams, 1992; Williams, 1995).

Teacher Efficacy and Curriculum Area Instruction

Many researchers have studied the relationship of teacher efficacy to teaching practices within specific curriculum areas, and research confirms that a teacher’s level of self-efficacy can vary depending on the classroom situation or the content area that is being taught. Raymond (1997) documented that in math instruction, a teacher’s beliefs and practices were more closely aligned to beliefs about math content than to pedagogy. The Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (Riggs & Enochs, 1990) was designed to measure the efficacy of teachers in math and science, and Rubeck and Enochs (1991) found that teacher efficacy levels for teaching science were correlated with a preference

for teaching science. Science teaching efficacy was also related to the teacher's personal experience with taking science courses.

In mathematics, there have also been a variety of research efforts (Dossey, 1992; Kaplan, 1991; Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter, & Loef, 1989) describing a relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom actions in mathematics. These studies demonstrate that a teacher's beliefs about mathematics play a significant role in how mathematics is taught in his or her classroom. Enochs, Smith, and Huinker (2000) developed the Math Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument, (MTEBI) to measure the relationship of teacher efficacy levels and the teaching of mathematics. Thompson (1985) found that views held by teachers of mathematics play a significant role in the instructional strategies used. He explains, "Teachers views, beliefs, and preferences about teaching mathematics, regardless of whether they are consciously, or unconsciously held, play a significant, albeit subtle, role in shaping the teachers' characteristic patterns of instruction behavior" (p. 125).

Teacher Efficacy and Reading Instruction

In the area of reading, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) studied the relationship of teachers' beliefs and their instruction in regard to reading comprehension. Mokhtari and Szabo (2004) developed an instrument designed to measure a teacher candidates' efficacy relative to the teaching of reading. The statements used in developing the reading teacher efficacy scale were adapted from two existing instruments: The Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument and the Math Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument.

The Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) (Mokhtari and Szabo, 2004) contains sixteen items and two factors and is designed along a five-point Likert Scale with choices ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The RTEI was designed to measure two constructs: reading teacher self-efficacy, which examines teacher candidates' feelings about their ability to teach reading, and reading teacher outcome expectancy, which examines their beliefs about their ability to impact students' reading development. The total sample for the pilot testing consisted of 419 teacher candidates (386 female and 33 male). Their ages ($M = 23.6$; $SD = 7.2$) ranged from 18 to 40+ with 80% of the participants between the ages of 18 and 24. Szabo and Mokhtari believe the results lend support to the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument, indicating that the instrument has acceptable validity for use in this study to measure each participant's level of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy (RTSE).

In an effort to better understand the relationship between teacher efficacy and the content area being taught, researchers have studied and confirmed that a teacher's level of self-efficacy can vary depending on the subject area that he or she is teaching. Research shows that teachers can have high levels of efficacy for teaching math or science and have low levels of teacher efficacy for teaching reading or writing. For the purpose of this study, a modified version of the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) was used and scored to establish the reading teacher efficacy levels of each participant and to then identify eight participants with high levels of reading teacher efficacy who could participate in the qualitative phase of the study.

In this section, I described the relationship between teacher efficacy and instructional practices. I examined research that explained the connection between

teacher efficacy beliefs and a teacher's willingness to embrace and incorporate the most current instructional practices. This review of literature identified a gap in research related to teacher efficacy beliefs, the teaching of reading at the intermediate levels and how beliefs can sometimes inhibit effective classroom instruction for struggling readers. This review of the literature revealed that extensive research exists regarding the history of the struggling reader in America. It highlighted the impact of legislation focused on responding to struggling readers, described best practices, and focused on how classroom teachers can meet the needs of struggling readers. The following section presents the conceptual framework for this study based upon a historical perspective of struggling readers, the literature review, and the significance of teacher efficacy.

Conceptual Framework

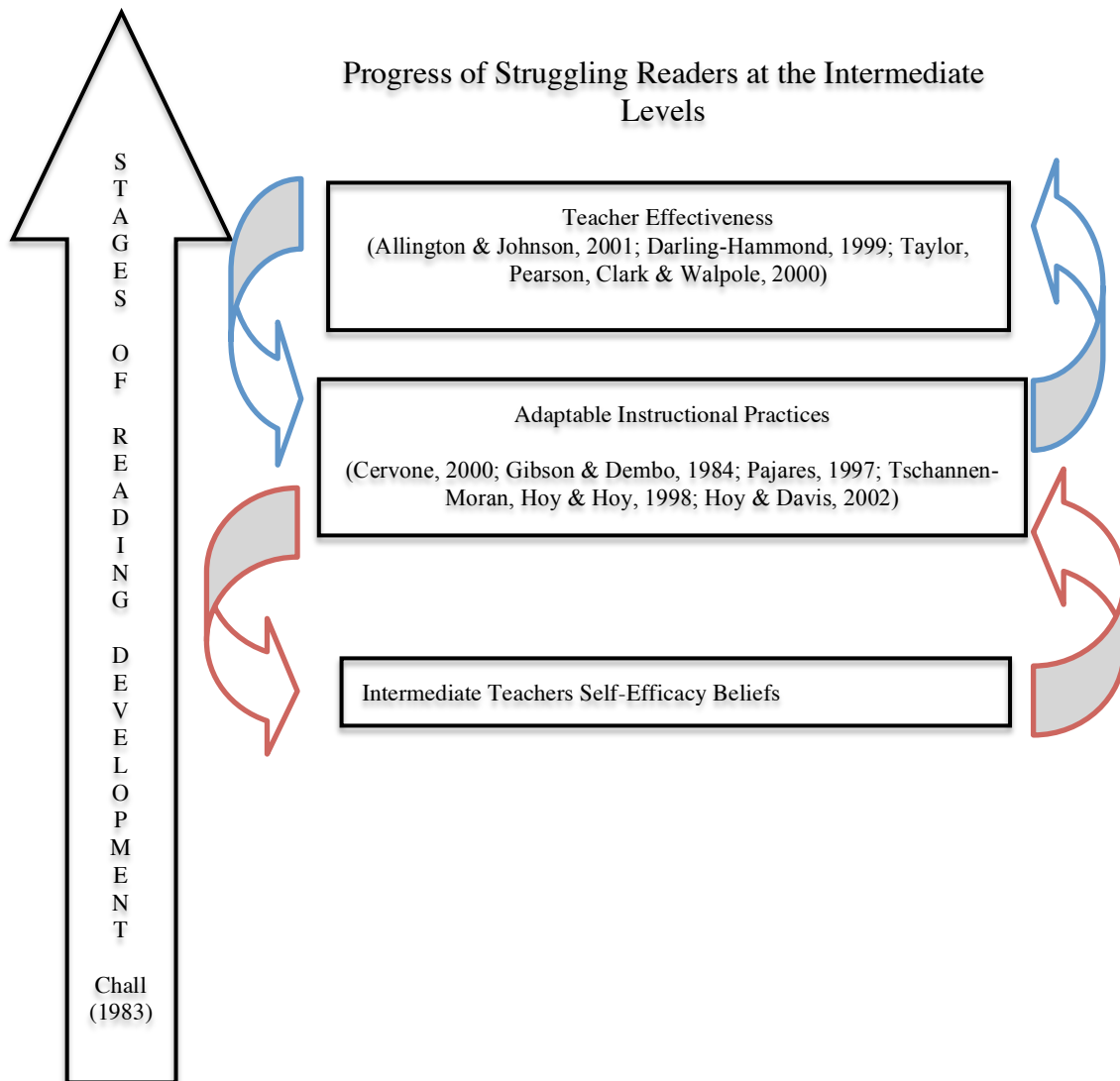
This study seeks to deepen our understanding of the relationship between teacher efficacy levels and reading instructional practices at the intermediate level, especially for struggling readers. The literature on struggling readers, teacher efficacy and its relationship to effective teaching practices, and best practices in reading instruction at the intermediate levels guided the development of the conceptual framework that, in turn, guided the analysis of the data that were collected in both phases of the study.

Research indicates that when readers struggle as they learn to read, they are likely to exhibit difficulties in one or more of these areas: Background experiences; oral language; decoding, including phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge; fluency; oral reading; and writing, vocabulary, comprehension, maintaining attention, motivation, vision, hearing, or other physical ability necessary for processing text (Chall & Curtis, 2003).

Figure 2.1 uses arrows to illustrate struggling readers who are moving through the stages of Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* (Chall, 1983) from the primary grades into the intermediate grades. When children struggle with "learning to read" at the primary levels and then enter the intermediate grades, their continued progress as readers is dependent on the effectiveness of classroom teachers and the programs they employ (Allington & Johnson, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000).

Since research shows that a positive relationship exists between teachers' self-efficacy level, their effectiveness as teachers, and their willingness to change practices to meet students' learning needs (Cervone, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hoy & Davis, 2002; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) further study is needed to determine if a similar relationship exists between reading teacher efficacy levels and teaching practices that support struggling readers as they move through the stages of Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* (Chall, 1983) and into the intermediate grades. Figure 2.1 illustrates that for struggling readers to make progress, they need to be supported by the cyclical relationship that exists between adaptive instructional practices and self-efficacy beliefs that contribute to overall teacher effectiveness.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework of Proposed Study



The conceptual framework takes into consideration the research on self-efficacy beliefs, adaptable instructional practices, and overall teacher effectiveness and explains how these relationships can impact the progress of struggling readers as they move through the intermediate grades. In the next chapter, I will describe how a sequential mixed method design with a defined two-phase approach is the most effective way to address my research questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between high reading teacher self-efficacy beliefs and the classroom practices that intermediate teachers incorporate into their classrooms to meet the needs of struggling readers. This study was guided by four research questions focused on the teaching of struggling readers at the intermediate levels.

Research Questions and Key Terms

RQ 1: What are the levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy of the teachers from intermediate schools in Maine that receive Title 1 Funds?

RQ 2: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading?

RQ 3: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?

RQ 4: To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools report that they employ best practices in literacy instruction so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?

Definitions of the key terms are

Intermediate schools. Schools that house only grades 3-5.

Title 1. A federally funded program (Special Revenue Grant) that provides additional basic skills instruction for low achieving students (in grades 1-8) in eligible schools.

Eligibility for Title 1 funds in Maine is based on having a minimum of 35% of students in a school meet the definition of impoverished. The definition of impoverished is based on one or more of the following criteria:

- Children ages 5-17 in poverty as counted in the most recent census data.
- Children eligible for free and reduced-priced lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.
- Children in families receiving assistance under the State program funded under Title IV, Part A of the Social Security Act (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).
- Children eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program.
- A composite of any of the above measures.

Struggling readers. Students experiencing significant difficulties learning to read. They are considered struggling based on: (a) their scores on state reading tests and/or (b) their scores on informal classroom assessments.

Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy. Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy (Szabo and Mokhtari, 2004) is defined as a belief in one's ability to teach reading effectively. Teachers with a score of 69 – 80 on the Reading Teacher Survey are teachers who are considered to be highly confident about their ability to teach reading to all students.

Core instructional practices in reading. Instruction in reading falls into one of five possible instructional types: (1) Classroom teachers instruct students with a core-reading program that serves as the primary reading program for the school; (2) Classroom teachers instruct students with a Reading Workshop approach to reading instruction; (3) Classroom teachers use a Guided Reading approach that enables a teacher to work with a small group of students; (4) Classroom teacher uses trade books that are connected to

thematic units of study to teach reading; and (5) Classroom teachers who combine any or all of the previously mentioned categories into their instructional practices in reading.

Best practices in reading instruction. Reading instruction is based on a differentiated approach to learning and is based on a workshop approach, with opportunities to learn in both small and whole groups. Data is used to inform instruction and provide instruction and interventions. Summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction, and data are used across the curriculum to monitor student progress and to guide and plan instruction. Space is carefully considered and designed for whole group, small group, and individual teaching and learning. Literature for read-aloud, big books, charts, poetry, and poetry notebooks are organized and accessible. Reading responses through writing or art are displayed on walls and in hallways. Learners are engaged in constructive interactions around purposeful literacy events.

Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL-Modified Version).

The modified version of Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels defines best practices in classroom-based reading instruction at the intermediate level.

The scale is based on four criteria: Creates a Literate Environment, Organizes the Classroom, Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Systemic Interventions, and Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning (Dorn & Soffos, 2007).

Research Design

This study used a mixed methods approach that provided a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between reading teaching self-efficacy beliefs and how teachers work with struggling readers in their classrooms. In a mixed methods approach, the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences

using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single program of inquiry (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). The rationale (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) for integrating or “mixing” the quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study is to draw from the strengths of the two, not to replace the value of quantitative or qualitative research. By combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, the researcher is able to provide a more complete analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

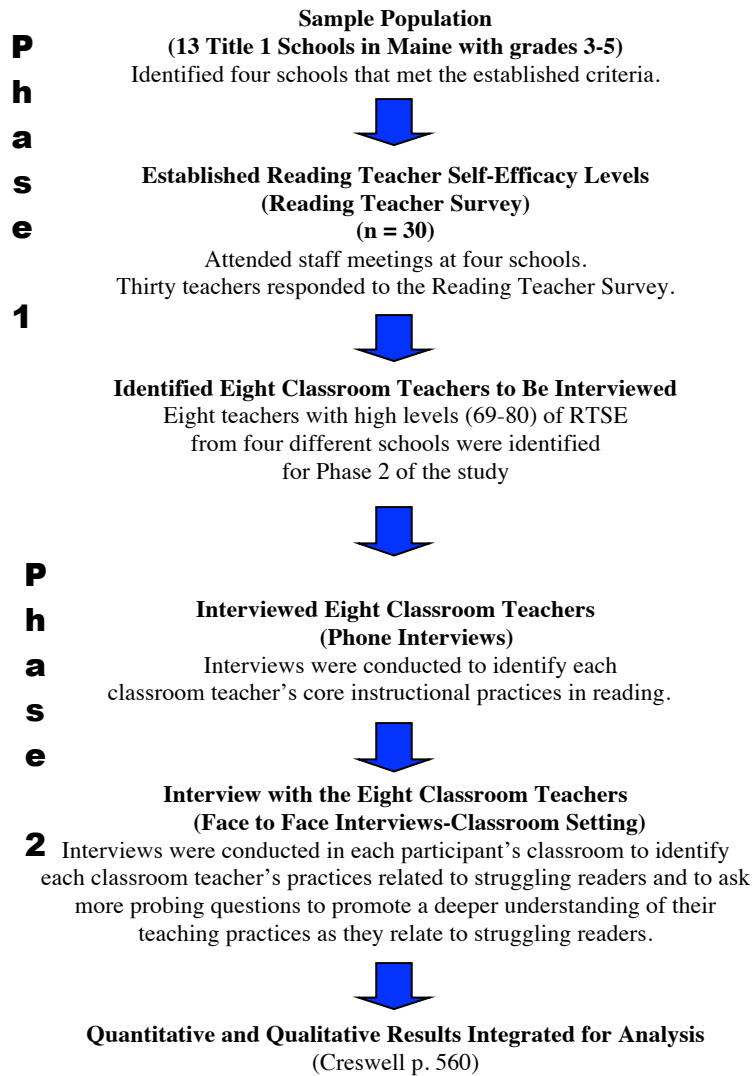
With a mixed method approach, the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (Creswell, 2003). Mixed method research is “an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions” and it is “an expansive and creative form of research, not a limiting form of research. It is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Mixed method research involves collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to better understand research problems. The collection of data involves gathering numeric information using instruments, like surveys, as well as information from interviews. The final database represents quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2003 p. 20).

A sequential mixed method design (Appendix A) with a defined two-phase approach was used with the rationale that the quantitative data of phase 1 answered RQ 1 and identified informants for phase two. The first phase was built on prior research that was conducted on teacher efficacy beliefs (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992). The survey allowed teachers to respond in a limited amount of time and provided time to reflect on their beliefs and practices as they related to struggling readers in a manner that was safe from colleagues’ judgment and/or criticism and answer more honestly and in a

manner that better reflected their actual beliefs and practices. The survey in this phase was confidential and provided the researcher with an opportunity to target a specific population of teachers who were selected and interviewed during phase two.

In phase two, qualitative techniques were incorporated to collect data through structured interviews in order to explore the extent to which reading teaching self-efficacy levels from the first phase were an accurate descriptor of the manner in which intermediate teachers worked with struggling readers. The qualitative data and analysis added to the quantitative results because they elaborated on the teaching practices at the intermediate level of high efficacy teachers and thus provided answers to research questions 2, 3 and 4. Figure 3.1 Depicts the phases of the study and the instrumentation and data collection involved in each.

Figure 3.1. Depiction of the Explanatory Design of the Study



Population and Sample

For this mixed method study, a survey coupled with one-on-one interviews were used to learn about the beliefs and practices of teachers and how those beliefs and practices related to how an intermediate teacher work to meet the needs of struggling readers. Schools were selected based on two criteria: an intermediate school in Maine receiving Title 1 funds. The first criterion, being an intermediate school in Maine, was selected for two reasons. First, during the process of developing the literature review, it became evident that there was a lack of research that focused on reading instruction for struggling readers at the intermediate levels. Second, this research focused on Maine schools in an effort to make participants more available for in person interviews in each participant's classroom while being a feasible travel distance for the researcher.

The second criterion, that a school must receive Title 1 funds, was chosen because there is a strong correlation between students who live in poverty and a lack of achievement in reading after the fourth grade (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990, p. 112). For a school to receive Title 1 funds, 35% of its students, at minimum, must meet one of the definitions of impoverishment. Since each school was a Title 1 school, there was a greater likelihood that each participant worked with struggling readers in his or her classroom.

To determine which schools in Maine met both of the established criteria, this researcher contacted the Maine Department of Education and was provided with a list of the intermediate schools in Maine. All of the schools except one received Title 1 Funds. One additional school, C.K. Burns, was not considered for participation because I served

as the principal. Teachers from the remaining schools were invited to participate. The location of the schools in Maine was not significant to the study.

Recruitment

To begin the process of recruiting participants, I sent an introductory email to eleven intermediate schools introducing myself and explaining that I was conducting research as a graduate student at the University of Maine. I explained that I was requesting the opportunity to explain my study at an upcoming staff meeting and leave my survey so each staff member who met the established criteria could consider completing it. My email explained the criteria for selecting individual participants for Phase 1, the quantitative phase, as follows: (1) classroom teachers who taught at an intermediate school in Maine that met the criteria for schools that were participating in the study, (2) classroom teachers who taught reading, and (3) had a minimum of three years of teaching experience so that each participant had an opportunity to develop his or her beliefs and practices related to reading instruction. In the cases where my initial email did not result in a response from a principal, I followed up with a phone call. I continued this process until four principals committed to my attendance at an upcoming staff meeting. My goal was to have 25 to 35 participants from four schools participate in the study.

Prospective participants on each faculty were informed that eight teachers, two teachers from each school, would be selected based on survey results for two individual voluntary interviews. The first interview would be conducted on the phone and the second interview would take place in person in the classroom of each participant. I explained that there was a section on the survey where teachers could check whether they

were interested in participating in the follow-up interviews and that each teacher who participated in the interviews would be presented with a \$50 gift certificate to Amazon at the completion of the second interview.

Table 3.1 indicates how the research questions are aligned with the literature and to the sources of data in each phase.

Table 3.1. Alignment of Research Questions, Literature, and Sources of Data

Phase 1		
Research Questions	Connection to the Literature and the Conceptual Framework	Data Collection and Focus of the Specific Data
RQ 1: What are the levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy of the teachers from intermediate schools in Maine that receive Title 1 Funds?	Teachers with higher levels of teacher efficacy are an important factor in school improvement (Dembo & Gibson, 1985)	Data collected from the administration of the Reading Teacher Survey. The focus of the data for this research question established teacher efficacy levels of each participant.
Phase 2		
RQ 2: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading?	Teachers with higher levels of efficacy have been correlated to the most current instructional strategies and a willingness to embrace innovations (Riggs & Enochs, 1990; Wenta, 2000).	Data collected from fully structured, one-to-one interviews over the phone.
RQ 3: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?	Teachers with higher levels of efficacy have been correlated to the most current instructional strategies and a willingness to embrace innovations (Riggs & Enochs, 1990; Wenta, 2000).	Data collected from semi-structured, one-to-one interviews in each participant's classroom. Participants also shared artifacts to share that reflected these practices.
RQ 4: To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy report that they employ best practices in literacy instruction so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?	Teachers with higher levels of efficacy have been correlated to the most current instructional strategies and a willingness to embrace innovations (Riggs & Enochs, 1990; Wenta, 2000).	Data collected from semi-structured, one-to-one interviews in each participant's classroom. Participants also shared artifacts to share that reflected these practices.

Phase 1-Instrumentation, Data Collection, and Analysis

Instruments. The reading teacher survey (Appendix B) consisted of two instruments: a background questionnaire and the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument. On the first instrument, I asked questions related to the demographics of the participants and included questions related to the number of years spent teaching reading at the intermediate levels, the grade levels taught, the number of years at each grade level, and the Reading Teacher Survey that was based on the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (RTEI; Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004).

Since the data from the Reading Teacher Survey were used to examine the beliefs of classroom teachers, and the Reading Teacher Survey was based on Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (Szabo and Mokhtari, 2004), analyses were completed on the RTEI to ensure that it was reliable. A reliability analysis (Stryker & Szabo, 2009) was done on each. It was found that for the RTSE subscale, the pretest alpha was .72 and the posttest alpha, .74. These results were high enough to consider the instrument reliable (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). A more detailed explanation of how Szabo and Mokhtari developed a valid and reliable measure in the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument can be found in Appendix C.

The Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument was created to determine teacher candidates' beliefs in their ability to teach reading effectively and their beliefs in their ability to positively impact students' learning of reading. The purpose of the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument was to determine the reading teacher self-efficacy levels of thirty intermediate teachers and then to identify eight classroom teachers with high reading teacher self-efficacy levels. The instrument contained sixteen items and was

designed along a five-point Likert Scale with choices ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The RTEI was designed to measure two constructs: reading teacher self-efficacy, which examined teacher candidates' feelings about their ability to teach reading, and reading teacher outcome expectancy, which examined teachers' beliefs in their ability to impact students' reading development.

However, for the purposes of this study, my analysis focused on only one of the two factors: Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy (RTSE). On the Reading Teacher Survey, participants responded to questions like:

I continually look for better ways to teach reading.

Even if I try very hard, I will not teach reading as well as I will teach other subjects.

Based on feedback from a piloted version of the RTEI, some questions on the Reading Teacher Survey were modified to reflect the work of teachers specific to the intermediate level. For example, Question #7 in the original survey read as follows:

When a low-achieving child progresses in reading, it is usually due to extra support offered by the teacher.

For the purposes of this study, Question #7 was changed to:

When a low-achieving child progresses in reading at the intermediate level, it is usually due to extra support offered by the teacher.

Data Collection. When I arrived at each of the four schools, I was introduced to the staff.

In each case, the principal explained to his or her staff that I was a graduate student conducting research for my dissertation. In two schools, my presentation was the first item on the agenda. In the other two schools, my presentation was the last item on the

agenda. In each school, I began by introducing myself and explaining my role as a principal of an intermediate school. I shared that I was conducting research on reading instruction in intermediate schools in Maine, and I was there to recruit participants who were willing to participate in a 15-minute survey. I explained that I would leave surveys and self-addressed stamped envelopes at the school so surveys could be completed at a convenient time for each participant. All participants were asked to provide informed consent indicating that they understood the risks of participating in the study and that they were under no obligation to participate.

There was a limited time commitment in Phase 1 for teachers, and the survey was provided at staff meetings and not sent via the mail. Thirty intermediate teachers of a possible thirty-three teachers participated in the survey. As a result, there was a higher response rate, 94 percent, than is typically found when using a survey. The results remained confidential.

Analysis. The data from all teachers who completed the survey were analyzed. The first part of the instrument, the background questionnaire, asked questions related to the demographics of the participants and included questions related to the number of years spent teaching reading at the intermediate levels, the grade levels taught, and the number of years of experience teaching at each grade level. I conducted an analysis of the descriptive statistics related to the respondents in order to summarize the data collected. For example, thirty teachers completed the survey (age: $M = 31$, $SD = 7.29$) with experience ranging from five years of experience to 35 years of experience (experience: $M = 8.4$, $SD = 7.05$).

Since the focus of Phase 1 of the study was to identify high efficacy intermediate teachers, the scoring rubric (Appendix D) that accompanied the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) was used to study the data on the Reading Teacher Survey and determine if participants had high beliefs (scores of 47-50), average beliefs (scores of 36-46), or low beliefs (scores of 10-35) of their ability to teach reading effectively.

Phase 2-Instrumentation, Data Collection and Management, and Analysis

Instruments. The instruments in Phase 2 were interview protocols involved in data collection and the ESAIL document used in analysis of this phase.

Interviews. The first interview followed a protocol (Appendix E) and was used in interviewing eight classroom teachers. I structured the interview with predetermined questions that were delivered in a set format (Robson, 2002). The interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions were designed to gather insights from each participant regarding RQ 2 and were conducted over the phone to limit travel throughout the state. I provided the questions to the participants prior to the interview and connected the questions to the Reading Teacher Survey (RTEI) (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004). The questions allowed participants to identify their instructional practices while asking each to reflect on his or her instruction in reading.

The second interview followed an in-depth semi-structured protocol (Appendix F) and was conducted in each participant's classroom. The interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes. The questions were provided to the participants prior to the interview. The specific topics discussed reflected aspects of the Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels Descriptions (Dorn & Soffos, 2007). The interview was flexible in nature and allowed for probing questions to be asked to follow up on what

each participant said. The interview provided each participant with an opportunity to expand on his or her responses from interview one and provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather insights from each participant regarding RQ 3.

To ensure that the interview protocol provided adequate coverage of each research question Table 3.2 was created.

Table 3.2. Alignment of Research Questions with Survey and Interview Questions.

Research Questions for Phase 1 (Quantitative)	Instrument	
RQ 1: What are the levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy of the teachers from intermediate schools in Maine that receive Title 1 Funds?	Entire Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument	
Research Questions for Phase 2 (Qualitative)	First interview questions	Second interview questions
RQ 2: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading?	#1, #2A, #2B, #3A, #3B, and #4	#3A, #3B, #3C, #6A, and #7
RQ 3: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?		#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7

ESAIL. The Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL) has ten criteria and was designed as an instrument to assess a school’s level of implementation in a comprehensive literacy model. The criteria in the ESAIL are focused on best practices in classroom reading instruction, school-wide practices to support reading instruction, and effective practices of reading coaches. On the ESAIL, teachers, schools, and literacy coaches are rated as Meeting, Approaching, or Below.

It has been used for multiple purposes: 1) a pre-assessment to determine a school's readiness for implementing a comprehensive literacy model; 2) a periodic assessment to study a school's growth over time on one or more literacy criteria, and 3) a post-assessment to measure a school's improvement over the academic year (Dorn & Soffos, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, the ESAIL was modified to serve as an instrument to assist in studying the practices of classroom teachers in reading as they relate to struggling readers. The modified version of the ESAIL utilized four of the original ten criteria: Criterion 1: Creates a Literate Environment, Criterion 2: Organizes the Classroom, Criterion 3: Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Research Based Interventions, and Criterion 4: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning. Under each criterion, participants were rated as Evidenced in Practice or Not Evidenced in Practice on descriptive statements such as: Reading responses through writing or art are displayed on the walls and in the hallways, and a variety of reading materials is enjoyed, discussed and analyzed across the curriculum. Since the other criteria from the original scale are related to school-wide practices to support reading instruction and effective practices of reading coaches, they were not incorporated into the modified version of the ESAIL.

Data Collection. In phase 2, I selected eight classroom teachers of the ten who had high efficacy scores for two follow-up interviews. The purposeful sampling strategy in selecting these teachers was extreme case sampling (Creswell & Plano, 2007) in which intermediate teachers were identified for having high levels of reading teacher efficacy based on the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument. Due to the sequential nature of the design, participation in the second phase depended on the results from the first phase.

The focus of the second phase was to define the reading teaching practices of the eight classroom teachers who were identified in the first phase. The first interview was conducted over the phone, audio recorded, and then transcribed. The second interview was face-to-face in each participant's classroom and was audio recorded. In both instances, I took notes in my reflective journal during and after the interview. All participants were presented with a \$50 gift certificate from Amazon for participating in phase two of the study.

Along with the interview transcriptions, another source of data was artifacts that teachers shared during their second interview. Prior to the interview, I asked teachers to be prepared to share artifacts that they use to support reading instruction and student learning in their classrooms. Some examples of these artifacts included: assessments, reading logs, classroom libraries, students' work, and established classroom routines and structures. For example, a teacher shared reading logs from students to illustrate how he or she promotes reading in his or her classroom and how children document their personal growth as readers. Pictures of artifacts were taken during the interview so that they could be viewed and analyzed later.

From my experience as a principal, I know that classroom teachers regularly share artifacts and classroom structures with colleagues and with principals to illustrate their instructional practices. For the purposes of this study, I believe that the opportunity to share artifacts and structures in the setting of their classrooms aided in each participant's ability to more clearly explain his or her instructional practices in reading. The collection of artifacts served as a method of triangulation and supported my placement of each candidate on the ESAIL.

I took several pictures in each classroom that I visited. The pictures allowed me to remember the unique qualities of each of the classrooms and provided me with evidence that supported my placement of each candidate on the ESAIL and supported my analysis. Photographs were taken of the overall classroom layout, the classroom library, bulletin boards, and posters. None of the pictures were taken at a proximity that allowed for the identification of student names.

My reflective journal and field notes were also used as a document source and provided additional data for my analysis. The journal allowed me to describe feelings and observations about conducting research in this area of study. According to Morrow and Smith (2000), the use of a reflective journal adds rigor to qualitative inquiry, as the investigator records his/her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process.

Data Management. I took several steps in managing the data. In step one, I created an interview folder for each of the eight candidates. Each folder was identified with a pseudonym on the outside to protect the person's identity. After each interview was transcribed, responses were reviewed to ensure that all questions were asked. Any missing data or clarifications were noted for either the second interview or the follow up phone call. Since I used a structured interview with predetermined questions in the first interview, and a semi-structured interview for the second interview with the questions provided to the participants before each, all questions were answered.

The second step in data management involved transcribing each interview within a few weeks of the actual interview. The immediacy of each interview transcription allowed me to more effectively reflect on each response. I typed each transcript using a

pseudonym for each participant and never used real names. During this process, I began to read and reread the transcripts and reflect on each. Transcripts were saved in a folder on the desktop of my computer according to interview number, date, and with an associated pseudonym. My computer is password protected. Hard copies of each participant's transcript were placed in interview folders that are stored in a locked file cabinet in my office.

The third data management step involved storing any documents related to each participant in the appropriate interview folder. The folders contain pictures of each classroom, the transcripts from each interview, and any materials teachers provided. Teachers provided me with copies of assessments and reading logs that students had completed. All documents provided or pictures that were taken had no identifiable student names.

In the fourth step, I created a participant profile for each teacher. These profiles were based on each participant's rank on the modified ESAIL document (Appendix G), my field notes, interview transcripts, and the participant matrices that were created throughout the interviews. The profiles allowed me to summarize each person's classroom practices based on interview responses, pictures of each classroom environment, and artifacts. These profiles depicted the teachers as teachers of reading and allowed me to organize material on each participant and organize my reflections of each participant.

Analysis. The analytic process of the qualitative phase of this mixed method study followed a general deductive approach of analyzing field notes, interview transcripts,

each participant's placement on the modified ESAIL, and the participants' profiles that were created throughout the interviews.

Teaching Matrices. Initially, I listened to each recorded phone interview. While listening, I made some initial notes and recorded some thoughts about possible categories for organizing the data. After this initial analysis was complete, each interview was transcribed so that I was able to read and reflect more deeply on the data. At this point, I began to assign preliminary codes to the transcripts. Then I began creating a teaching matrix for each participant based on the interview responses and my reflective journal. The matrix was organized in a table with each column representing a participant and each row representing a teaching practice that was identified through my initial analysis. Rows were added as more practices were identified. I organized and analyzed each teacher's core instructional practices in reading within each profile that was created.

I followed the same process as for the initial interview after the classroom interview and observation: listened to each interview, made some initial notes, recorded thoughts, transcribed it, and began to assign preliminary codes. Then, I added to the previously created teaching matrices based on the interview responses from the second interviews and my notes from my reflective journal. I used these further developed participant matrices to organize and analyze how each teacher recounted the instructional supports that they provided struggling readers in their classrooms. After both of these interviews, I sought feedback on the transcripts from participants and asked some clarifying questions to ensure that I was not missing something important from the transcription.

Assigning Codes. Deductive analysis was based upon my research questions, and a conceptual framework and codes were applied to all data. The first set of codes that was used to analyze responses to Research Question #2 was: Core Reading Program (CRP), Reading Workshop Approach (RWA), Guided Reading Approach (GRA), Trade books connected to thematic units (TBCTU), and Combined instructional practices (CIP).

These codes were based on the definition of core instructional practices identified in the Key Terms section. I examined data related to each teacher's description of his or her core instructional practices. During this process, I kept an open mind that a possibility existed that teachers could be using practices other than the practices identified as best practices in reading instruction in the Key Terms section.

The following were examples of codes that were used to analyze responses to Research Question #3 and were based on the definition of best practices in reading instruction identified in the Key Terms section: Differentiated Approach to Instruction (DAI), Reading Workshop Approach (RWA), Small and Whole Group Instruction (SWGI), Data informs instruction and systemic interventions (DIISI), Literature is organized and accessible (LOA), Displayed reading and writing (DRW), and Purposeful literacy events (PLE).

The following are examples of codes that were used to analyze responses to and observations of Research Question #4 and are based on the modified ESAIL (Appendix G): Literate environment (LE), Organizes the classroom (OC), Data informs instruction and systemic interventions (DIISI), and Differentiated approach to instruction (DAI).

Placement on ESAIL Criterion. Each high efficacy participant was ranked on the modified ESAIL document (Appendix G) based on my field notes, interview transcripts, and the participant matrices that were created throughout the interviews. This allowed me to summarize each person's classroom practices based on interview responses, pictures of each classroom environment, and artifacts that were shared during the second interview. Since the ESAIL served as a summative evaluation of each teacher's practices, I did not share the scale with them.

Interpretation. Next, I developed an interpretation of each participant's experiences as a teacher of reading at the intermediate level by examining each teacher's core instructional practices in reading, describing the instructional supports that they or their schools provided struggling readers in their classrooms, and the extent to which the teachers reported employing effective literacy practices to meet the needs of struggling readers.

Cross-Case Analysis. Throughout the analysis, I did a constant comparative analysis as the starting point for my cross-case analysis. After I created individual profiles, based on my matrices, I coded for similarities and differences across all participants, resulting in themes. The resulting themes included common practices or beliefs about how to effectively meet the needs of struggling readers. I left open the possibility that I may find no common practices or beliefs across the participants. During the cross-case analysis, I did not exclude divergent cases. In other words, if one participant did not fit within a discovered theme, I considered how to represent that teacher in a cross case analysis.

Ethical Matters

The ethical matters were addressed in an open and honest manner. It began with an explanation of the purpose of the study to the four school principals and to all possible participants. The surveys, along with self-addressed envelopes, were left with the teachers at the staff meeting and were completed later.

Teachers who did not wish to participate in the survey were not obligated to complete one.

In Phase 1 of the study, the names of the teachers who participated in the survey, as well as each participant's responses, remained confidential and are locked in a file cabinet until the completion of the study. Once the study is completed, the surveys will be destroyed. During Phase 2 of the study, the first names of participants were used for each interview and pseudonyms were used in the final draft of the dissertation to protect anonymity. All data are stored in a secure environment with this researcher being the only one with access to the information. Audio recordings, classroom pictures, and any copies of artifacts that are shared will be deleted at the completion of the dissertation.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness and consistency, the recommendations of prominent researchers in the field were followed. Multiple approaches of triangulation were used including the triangulation of methods and data sources as well as stakeholder checks to enhance the credibility of the findings by providing participants with a complete draft copy for review (peer review; Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Triangulation of methods was achieved by using the interview data to assess and verify the survey data, and by triangulating interviews, artifacts, and reflective journal entries before making any claims

about each participant's beliefs or practices or how each teacher works with struggling readers. With thirty participants from four schools participating in the survey, and with eight of those participants having been interviewed ($n = 8$) on two separate occasions, the multiple data sources add confidence to the trustworthiness of the findings.

Some of the participants provided limited responses to my questions during the interviews. Some participants would answer each question and would then expound on their responses. These participants were comfortable reflecting and sharing deeply on their instructional practices. Other participants were more reserved in their responses and less willing to provide detailed examples of their practices. Their responses tended to be limited to one-word answers and brief descriptions. As a result, there were some instances when participants elaborated and the majority of words included in the qualitative analysis are their own. With other participants, it was necessary for me to insert words to support the readability.

Prior to my interviews, I created a researcher's journal and wrote down all of my personal biases about teaching reading at the intermediate grade levels. I reflected on my own experiences, as a teacher and principal, and had an open dialogue with myself about what I believe is the most effective way to meet the needs of struggling readers. Throughout the process, I monitored my own subjectivity by reflecting on my biases within my researcher's journal. I considered my own subjectivity around the teaching of reading to struggling readers and documented these biases in my researcher's journal. During data collection, analysis, and writing, I kept my journal available. When I sensed a bias arising, I made a note of it. This process helped to keep my biases in check throughout my research. Since my role as a principal and teacher greatly affects my

perspectives on teaching and learning, I needed to be aware of my own biases in order to be open minded enough to objectively hear about each participant's practices and beliefs throughout the interview process.

It should be noted by the reader that I identified the following biases in my reflective journal at the beginning of my research. First, I believe that classroom teachers are the professionals who best able to meet the needs of struggling readers within a classroom setting. I do not believe that pulling students into small intervention groups outside of the classroom is the most effective way to meet the needs of struggling readers. Second, I believe that a workshop approach allows for differentiation and is the most effective way to meet the range readers in a classroom and grow engaged readers. I do not believe scripted reading programs allow teachers to effectively meet the needs of the range of readers that exist in intermediate classrooms.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the research questions and key terms. I defined the methodological approach that was followed and specifically highlighted the implementation, data collection, and analytical processes from both phases of the study. Ethical matters and trustworthiness were also addressed in this chapter. This study is specifically focused on the teaching of reading to struggling readers at the intermediate levels with the overarching goal being to deepen our understanding of the practices that highly efficacious intermediate grade teachers incorporate into their classrooms to support the needs of struggling readers.

CHAPTER 4

**READING TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY LEVELS AND THE CORE
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES HIGH EFFICACY TEACHERS
EMPLOY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS**

This chapter presents the results of the study as they relate to these research questions: What are the levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy of the teachers from intermediate schools in Maine that receive Title 1 Funds? In addition, it supplies the results of the second research question: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading? And how do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?

The chapter is separated into three sections. The first section, Reading Teacher Efficacy of the Sample Population, provides the reader with an analysis of the results of all the teachers who completed the Reading Teacher Survey as well as background information about each participant. The second section, Detailed Descriptions of High Efficacy Teachers, provides the reader with an understanding of why each participant was selected for the two follow-up interviews, including descriptive information about the individuals who were selected as highly efficacious intermediate level teachers. The third section, Core Instructional Practices of Highly Efficacious Teachers in Reading, describes the core practices of the eight high efficacy teachers who participated in the study.

The Reading Teacher Efficacy of the Sample Population

The Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) (Mokhtari & Szabo, 2004) contains sixteen items related to two factors and is designed along a five-point Likert Scale with choices ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The RTEI was designed to measure two constructs: reading teacher self-efficacy, which examines teacher candidates' feelings about their ability to teach reading, and reading teacher outcome expectancy, which gauges their beliefs about their ability to impact students' reading development. For the purposes of this study, analysis was focused only on reading teacher self-efficacy. On the Reading Teacher Survey, participants responded to questions such as:

I continually look for better ways to teach reading.

Even if I try very hard, I will not teach reading as well as I will teach other subjects.

During Phase 1 of the study, schools were selected based on two criteria: (1) an intermediate school in Maine; (2) must receive Title 1 funds. Each teacher who participated needed to meet two criteria: (1) be a classroom teacher who teaches reading and (2) have three or more years of teaching experience. Through quantitative data analysis, teachers with high levels of reading teacher self-efficacy were identified within two different settings: urban and rural. There were two schools from each of the settings. An analysis of the survey data provides an overall picture of each participant's teaching experience, education, and reading teacher self-efficacy levels.

The data from all teachers who completed the survey were analyzed. The first part of the instrument, the background questionnaire, gathered information related to the demographics of each participant: years teaching, grade levels taught, current teaching

assignment, the teacher preparation program they attended, and whether they hold a master's degree. The second part of the survey gathered information to determine their rating of Reading Teacher Efficacy as High, Average, or Low.

Appendix I consists of a table that provides the first name, a pseudonym, of each participant who completed the survey, the number of years of teaching experience of each participant, current teaching assignment, whether the participant was an education major in college or attended a post college teacher certification program, and each participant's reading teacher self-efficacy score. My analysis of the data of the 30 participants produced descriptive statistics that summarize the data collected. For example, 30 participants completed the survey, with teaching experience ranging from one year to twenty-eight years of experience ($M = 11.83$, $SD = 8.32$).

The focus of Phase 1 of the study was to identify high reading efficacy intermediate teachers. The scoring rubric (Appendix D) that accompanied the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) was used to analyze the data on the Reading Teacher Survey and determine the reading teacher efficacy beliefs of each participant: Low scorers had scores of 10-35; Average scorers had scores of 36-46; and High scorers had scores of 47-50.

Of the thirty teachers who completed the survey, 10 teachers scored in the 10-35 range (rating: $M = 32.85$, $SD = 3.76$) with a low rating; 10 teachers scored in the 36-46 range (rating: $M = 39.91$, $SD = 2.74$) with an average rating; and 10 teachers scored in the 47-50 range (rating: $M = 47.2$, $SD = 0.42$) with a high rating.

Teachers With Low Efficacy Scores

The teaching experience of the ten teachers with low efficacy scores ranged from one year to 14 years of experience ($M = 5.9$, $SD = 4.53$). All of the participants with

Low Reading Teacher Efficacy scores, except three, have experience teaching at multiple grade levels throughout their careers. Participants also currently teach in a variety of grade levels. Six participants teach fourth grade, three teach fifth grade, and one teaches third grade. Of the ten participants with Low Reading Teacher Efficacy scores, two obtained liberal arts degrees in college and then attended teacher certification programs after graduating and earned their teacher certification as part of a two-year program. None of the remaining eight participants have master's degrees, and nine are female. One participant completed the survey anonymously, so I was unable to identify whether a male or female completed it.

Teachers With Average Efficacy Scores

The teaching experience of the ten teachers with average efficacy scores ranged from four years to 38 years of experience ($M = 14.3$, $SD = 10.16$). All of the participants with an Average Reading Teacher Efficacy score, except two, have experience teaching at multiple grade levels throughout their careers. Participants also currently teach in a variety of grade levels. Five participants teach fifth grade; four teach fourth grade; and one participant teaches third grade. Of the ten participants with Average Reading Teacher Efficacy, three obtained liberal arts degrees in college and then attended teacher certification programs after graduating and earned their teacher certification as part of a master's program. The remaining seven participants do not have master's degrees and obtained their teaching certification through traditional undergraduate teaching programs. There are two males and eight females who received scores of Average on the Reading Teacher Efficacy Scale.

Teachers With High Efficacy Scores

The ten classroom teachers with High Reading Teacher Efficacy scores have teaching experience ranging from nine years to 28 years ($M = 15.3$, $SD = 6.36$). One participant has been teaching for twenty-eight years and another has been teaching for twenty-three years. Two participants have been teaching eighteen years. Two other participants have been teaching for thirteen years, and another has been teaching for twelve years. One participant has been teaching ten years and two others have been teaching nine years.

All of participants with High Reading Teacher Efficacy scores, except two participants, have experience teaching at multiple grade levels. All participants with High Reading Teaching Efficacy currently teach in a variety of grade levels. Two participants teach third grade; three participants teach fourth grade; and three participants teach fifth grade. Of the eight participants, all but two were in traditional undergraduate education programs. The two who did not attend traditional undergraduate programs obtained liberal arts degrees in college and then attended teacher certification programs after graduating.

Comparing Statistics Among the Efficacy Groups

I found commonalities among the three groups of participants in the Low, Average, and High Reading Teacher Efficacy score groups. Within each efficacy group, there were several participants who obtained master's degrees as part of their professional development. In the High Reading Teacher Efficacy Group, there were four participants who obtained master's degrees. In the Average Reading Teacher Efficacy score group,

there were three participants who obtained master's degrees. In the Low Reader Teacher Efficacy score group, there were two participants who obtained master's degrees.

Along with the professional development of the participants, there were commonalities in the teaching experience of participants in the efficacy groups. In the High Reading Teacher Efficacy Group, each intermediate grade is represented with two teachers teaching third grade, five teachers teaching fourth grade, and two teachers teaching fifth grade. In the Average Reading Teacher Efficacy Group, one teacher teaches third grade; four teachers teach fourth grade; and five teachers teach fifth grade. In the Low Reading Teacher Efficacy Group, one teacher is teaching third grade, six teachers are teaching fourth grade, and three teachers are teaching fifth grade. It should be noted that within each efficacy group, all intermediate grade levels were represented.

Along with commonalities, one difference was identified among the participants in the Low, Average, and High Reading Teacher Efficacy score groups. Within the High and Average Reading Teacher Efficacy Groups, the mean years of teacher experience is 15.3 and 14.3 years, respectively. However, in the Low Reading Teacher Efficacy Group, the mean of teacher experience is 5.9 years. Within this Low Reading Teacher Efficacy group, the teacher with the most years of experience is fourteen years, compared to thirty-eight years in the Average Reading Teacher Efficacy score group and twenty-eight years in the High Reading Teacher Efficacy score group. The Low Reading Teacher Efficacy score group has two teachers with one year of teaching experience, compared to four years in the Average Reading Teacher Efficacy Group and nine years in the High Reading Teacher Efficacy Group. Teachers with the highest efficacy scores had

the most experience teaching while the teachers with the least amount of experience teaching had the lowest efficacy scores.

Detailed Descriptions of High Efficacy Teachers

After the initial analysis was completed, participants who had high efficacy scores were invited to participate in Phase 2 of the study, which involved two interviews. Two teachers, although rated as having a high level of efficacy, declined participation in Phase 2. The eight remaining teachers agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the study. Table 4.1 presents demographic information about the participants in Phase 2 of the study.

Table 4.1. Demographics of Participants in Phase 2, High Efficacy Reading Teachers

Name	Years Teaching	Grades Taught	Current Teaching Assignment	Teacher Preparation Program	Master's Degree	Reading Teacher Efficacy Score
Diane	28 years	1, 2, 3,4, 5, 7 and 8	3	Undergraduate-Education	Yes	High
Liz	23 years	1,4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Jackie	18 years	1, 3, 4,5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Gale	18 years	5	5	Undergraduate Education	Yes	High
Cindy	13 years	2, 3	3	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High
Sandy	13 years	1, 3, 5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Don	12 years	4	4	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High
Barbara	10 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Kara	9 years	1, 3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Kelly	9 years	3, 4, 6	4	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High

Table 4.1 describes the participants who scored as having high reading teacher efficacy beliefs. Each participant is presented in order of experience: Diane is listed first with twenty-eight years of experience, and Kelly is listed last with nine years of experience. All eight participants who were identified for Phase 2 of this study are highly efficacious reading teachers who agreed to participate in the second phase of the study. All have been teaching for a minimum of nine years. Diane has been teaching for twenty-eight years. Jackie and Gale have been teaching for eighteen years. Cindy and Sandy have been teaching for thirteen years. Don has been teaching for twelve years. Barbara has been teaching for ten years, and the participant with the least experience, Kara, has been teaching for nine years.

Two of the eight participants, Don and Gale, have only taught a single grade level during their careers. The remaining six participants have taught several grade levels. Six of the eight participants obtained their teacher certification from undergraduate education programs, while the other two obtained their certification from post-college teacher certification programs. Five have obtained master's degrees.

Core Instructional Practices of Highly Efficacious Teachers in Reading

This section provides the results of the analysis related to the second research question that states, "How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy (RTSE) levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading?" Throughout this section, I present an overview of the core reading practices of teachers with high RTSE. During the first interview, these participants described their core practices in reading. During the second interview, participants explained these practices in greater detail. The first interview, conducted on the phone, provided a "first

look” at instructional practices in reading, while the second interview took place in each participant’s classroom and allowed the participants to further elaborate on their practices and provide supporting instructional artifacts. In one question, participants were specifically asked to, “Describe what I would observe during your reading block on a typical day if I entered your classroom.”

Overview of Students and Classroom Structures of High Efficacy Teachers’ Classrooms

This section provides the reader with an overview of each High efficacy participant’s classroom and the instructional practices that he or she employs. Table 4.2 summarizes the number of students in each classroom and indicates the number of students Above, At or Below grade level in reading. In addition, the table shows the instructional time spent on teaching reading, the type of external supports struggling readers receive from their classrooms, and the location of the school, rural or urban.

Table 4.2. Summary of Structures Related to Instructional Practices of High RTSE Teachers

Participants	Number of Students	Above Grade Level	At Grade Level	Below Grade Level	Instructional Time in Reading	External Support in Reading	Rural/Urban School Setting
Diane Grade 3	21	5	5	11	90 minutes daily	3-Special Education 4-Title 1	Rural Setting
Jackie Grade 5	22	4	12	6	195 minutes daily	(No external support was noted for students who are below grade level in reading.) 1-Gifted and Talented	Urban Setting
Gale Grade 5	22	10	8	4	195 minutes daily	(No external support was noted for students who are below grade level in reading.)	Urban Setting
Cindy Grade 3	18	3	12	3	60 minutes daily	3-Title 1	Rural Setting
Sandy Grade 5	16	3	10	3	90 minutes daily	3-Special Education 3-Title 1	Rural Setting
Don Grade 4	22	4	8	10	90 minutes daily	2-Special Education 4-Title 1	Urban Setting
Barbara Grade 4	21	5	9	7	45 minutes daily	(No external support was noted.)	Urban Setting
Kara Grade 4	20	2	9	9	90 minutes daily	5-Special Education 2-Title 1 2-Gifted and Talented 2-English Language Learners	Urban Setting

Note. The information in this table was self reported by each participant.

While some of these characteristics can change each year, the participants for this study shared that their classrooms are reflective of what their classrooms have typically looked like over their years of teaching. Class sizes in six of the eight classrooms were twenty or more students. Jackie has the most students of the eight participants, with twenty-two. Sandy and Cindy have fewer than twenty students, with sixteen and eighteen students, respectively.

In the majority of elementary classrooms, it is typical for teachers to have a range of readers. Some students can be two to three years ahead of established benchmarks in reading, while other students can be two to three years behind. The participants in this study all indicated that they have a range of readers in their classrooms, with each participant providing data to support this assertion. In seven of the eight classrooms, participants said that they have a range of two to five students who are above their grade level in reading. Gale was the exception, with ten students identified as being above grade level in her classroom. In seven of the eight classrooms, participants had a range of eight to twelve students who are at grade level in reading. Diane was the exception, with five of her twenty-one students identified as being on grade level. In five of the eight classrooms, participants have a range of three to seven students who are below grade level in reading. Outside of that range, Kara shared that she has nine out of twenty students below grade level. Don has ten out of twenty-two students who were below grade level, and Diane has eleven out of twenty-one students who were below grade level.

The amount of time each participant dedicates to reading instruction ranges from forty-five minutes a day to one hundred and ninety-five minutes a day. Barbara dedicates

the least amount of time to reading instruction, with her class spending forty-five minutes a day. Cindy has a reading block that lasts for sixty minutes each day. Four participants, Diane, Sandy, Don, and Kara schedule reading for ninety minutes a day. Jackie and Gale spend one hundred and ninety-five minutes a day. All participants shared that they teach reading every day.

In all classrooms except Gale's and Barbara's, students receive a variety of external supports in reading. Diane, Cindy, Don, and Kara noted that they have students who receive Title 1 support in reading that takes place outside of their classrooms. These four participants also said that they have students who have identified learning disabilities in reading and receive support from special education teachers outside of their classrooms and in resource rooms. Jackie and Kara were the only teachers who shared that they have students who receive Gifted and Talented support because they are ahead of established benchmarks in reading. Kara shared that she has two students who receive support in reading because they are English Language Learners. Typically, these supports happen outside of the classroom with small groups working in other locations in the school.

Differences Across Settings

As mentioned earlier in the study, there were participants who worked in urban and rural settings. When using this as a lens of analysis, there were some commonalities and differences noted between these two groups. The average class size differed between the two settings. In urban settings, the classrooms averaged twenty-one students, and the rural setting classrooms averaged eighteen students. There were some similarities and differences in the assessed reading grade level. In the urban settings, teachers averaged five students who were above grade level. In the rural settings, teachers averaged three

students who were above grade level. Urban and rural schools have an identical averaged of five students who are on grade level in reading. In the urban settings, teachers averaged seven students who were below grade level. In the rural settings, teachers averaged five students who were below grade level.

There was a notable difference between the time dedicated to reading in urban settings versus rural settings. In the urban settings, teachers averaged one hundred and twenty-three minutes of instructional time on reading. In rural settings, teachers averaged eighty minutes of instructional time on reading. The urban schools spent, on average, forty-three minutes more a day on reading instruction than the schools in rural settings. Classrooms in urban settings averaged three students who received external support, while classrooms in rural settings averaged five students. It should be noted that three participants in urban schools failed to mention external supports during their interviews, and this may have been inadvertent and led to the data being skewed.

Instructional and Assessment Practices of High Efficacy Teachers

This section provides the results related to the third research question that states, “How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?” Table 4.3 summarizes each participant’s instructional practices in reading, explains how each participant assesses student growth, and lists the time each participant dedicates to reading instruction. The practices identified in this table are important to analyze because the incorporation of them into a classroom is fundamental to a teacher’s ability to differentiate instruction and, in turn, meet the needs of struggling readers in his or her classroom. For example, teachers who incorporate elements of

Reading Workshop into their classrooms understand that the approach allows students to be taught at their instructional level compared to a basal reader where all students work from the same text. The assessment practices that were identified in the table are the practices that the participants shared as being the practices that they use in their classrooms and schools. The use of these practices are also critical to a teacher's ability to meet the needs of struggling readers through ongoing assessment that allows teachers to see growth over time and adjust their instructional practices for their struggling readers.

Table 4.3. Summary of Instructional and Assessment Practices of High RTSE Teachers

Participants	Elements of Reading Workshop (Mini-lessons)	Alternative Approach to Reading Workshop	Read-aloud	Independent Reading (Self-selection of appropriate leveled books)	Assessment to support instructional practices and student growth
Diane		Treasures Anthology (McGraw-Hill) Connections Workbook (Zaner-Bloser) The Day Book	√		NWEAs State of Maine Assessments
Jackie	Components of Reading Workshop (Organized within the structure of The Daily Five)			√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments Student Reading Conferences
Gale	Components of Reading Workshop		√	√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments Student Reading Conferences QRIs
Cindy	Components of Reading Workshop		√	√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments Student Reading Conferences DRA
Sandy		Journeys by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	√	√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments
Don		Guided Reading	√	√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments QRI
Barbara	Components of Reading Workshop	Guided Reading		√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments Student Reading Conferences QRI Running Records
Kara	Components of Reading Workshop (Organized within the structure of The Daily Five)		√	√	NWEAs State of Maine Assessments Student Reading Conferences QRI

Approaches to Teaching Reading

Five of the eight participants defined their instructional practices as being rooted in a Reading Workshop approach to instruction. In this approach, students learn to self-select a variety of texts that are appropriately leveled for their own reading levels. During mini-lessons, students learn effective strategies for comprehending fiction and non-fiction texts that students have self-selected and are reading independently. Reading Workshop provides students with authentic reading experiences that focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each student. The structure of Reading Workshop allows for a level of differentiated instruction. While students read independently, the teacher conferences with students to assess student comprehension and determine if students are applying skills learned during class mini-lessons and to assess accuracy and fluency. Reading Workshop emphasizes the importance of students being engaged in the texts that he or she is reading. Two of the five participants whose practice is rooted in Reading Workshop, Jackie and Kara, described their approach as being structured based on the Daily Five, a framework that supports the elements of Reading Workshop with a more formalized structure.

Of the eight participants with high RTSE, Diane, Sandy, and Don were the only participants who described their instructional practices in reading as being based upon something other than Reading Workshop. Diane is required by building and district leadership to teach from the reading/language arts program, the *Treasures* Anthology by McGraw-Hill, which is described by the publisher as a research-based, comprehensive Reading Language Arts Program. Diane's district instituted this reading program several years ago as a means to improve reading scores district wide. When the program was

introduced, teachers were expected to teach the program in its entirety. Three years after its adoption, teachers use *Treasures* as their core reading instruction and are permitted to supplement the program in other instructional ways.

Similar to Diane, Sandy is expected to teach a prescribed reading/language arts program, the *Journeys* Anthology by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The publisher describes *Journeys* as a research-based, comprehensive English Language Arts program designed to provide instruction that is focused on realistic pacing and manageable resources. Sandy's district adopted the reading program for the same reasons Diane's district adopted *Treasures*: to improve test scores in reading. According to Sandy, teachers are expected to teach the program as it is designed. Sandy made no reference to the district allowing teachers to supplement the program as Diane described in her interview.

The instruction found in reading anthologies is fairly standardized across publishers. Each student has a textbook filled with stories and the teacher introduces each story to the class. For example, students may be asked to make a prediction about the story based on pictures and other relevant information. The students might read the story independently, with a partner, or as a whole class. The program provides worksheets that correspond to each story. Students are asked to complete worksheets as a means to practice new skills and for the teacher to assess each student's understanding of the text. Reading anthologies also provide a variety of resources that allow teachers to differentiate their instruction. For example, *Journeys* anthology provides leveled readers that correspond to the topic of the original story.

Each story is leveled, Struggling, On-Level, or Advanced, so students can access text on their appropriate independent reading level.

Don describes his classroom reading instruction as being a Guided Reading approach. In Guided Reading, the teacher divides the classroom into groups based on the reading levels of his or her students. The teacher selects texts that are at the appropriate instructional level for each group of students. For example, in the Guided Reading approach, the class might be learning about explorers. The teacher organizes several groups around a predetermined text related to this unit of study. These texts are matched to the group members' reading level. Each Guided Reading group meets with the teacher throughout the week to discuss the text, practice reading aloud, and share written work related to the text.

Don did note that the district and his principal expected teachers to transition to a Reading Workshop approach with students doing more self-selection of books. Don shared that he intended to make that change in his practice, but he expressed some reservations. Don was concerned that, due to some behavioral challenges, his students would not be able to sit independently and read while he holds reading conferences with students and works with small groups.

Reading aloud to students each day is another practice that the majority of participants with high RTSE employ in their classrooms. In this practice, the teacher reads aloud to students for a variety of reasons. Some teachers use picture books as a model text and as a way to introduce one of the elements of a story. For example, a teacher might read *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen as a way to introduce plot development and conflict resolution. Many teachers see read-aloud as an

opportunity to increase sight vocabulary, model a love of reading, and provide teachers with an opportunity to expose students to the various genres.

Six of the teachers with High RTSE described read-aloud as being part of their daily practice. Diane, Gale, Cindy, Sandy, Don, and Kara all described how they incorporate read-aloud each day. Diane and Sandy, the two participants who are required to teach from an anthology, use read-aloud as an opportunity to reach their diverse population of readers by exposing them to a variety of texts that they would not be able to access independently. Gale also shared that read-aloud allows her to expose students to literature that they would not choose or be able to read independently on their own. Gale described read-aloud as her most effective teaching strategy. Cindy and Kara incorporate read-aloud as a means to introduce a text that they are using as part of an overall unit. Don, the participant who most strongly voiced support of read-aloud as an instructional practice, shared that read-aloud provides teachers with an opportunity to model fluency.

Jackie and Barbara were two of the eight teachers with High RTSE who did not describe read-aloud as being part of their instructional practice. It is difficult to determine if this due to a philosophical belief or if both participants simply forgot to mention read-aloud as part of their instructional practices because they were not prompted by me.

Another instructional practice that the majority of teachers with High RTSE incorporate into their classrooms is time for independent reading. Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Sandy, Don, and Kara shared that they dedicate time each day for students to read independently. For Jackie, Gale, Cindy, and Kara, independent reading is a cornerstone practice of Reading Workshop. Independent Reading allows students to practice reading

skills and strategies they have learned, provides teachers with the opportunity to conference with students to assess growth, and allows students the opportunity to build reading stamina within the context of a book that is self-selected and at an appropriate reading level.

Sandy and Don shared that they dedicate time each day to students reading independently. Neither teacher follows a Reading Workshop approach, but it was evident that both teachers value dedicating time each day for students have time to read books that interest them.

Diane and Barbara failed to mention that independent reading was part of their instructional practice. It is feasible that independent reading with students' self-selecting books is not a focal point of Diane's daily literacy instruction due to the fact that she is required to teach from *Treasures*, the anthology published by McGraw-Hill. The nature of an anthology is that the publisher provides all the materials; they tend to be prescriptive in nature and do not allow time for students to read self-selected books independently. It is more difficult to understand why Barbara did not share that independent reading is part of her instructional practice because she provided evidence to support that Reading Workshop is the instructional practice that she follows. Similar to Barbara's lack of sharing regarding the role read-aloud plays in her classroom, I was unable to determine if she forgot to share that independent reading takes place in her classroom or if independent reading is not part of her instructional practice.

Assessment of Student Progress in Reading

All of the participants with High levels of RTSE discussed the importance of using data to effectively inform their instruction in reading. The schools of all eight

participants assess their students to develop a “big picture” view of reading achievement and to follow each individual student’s growth. Since the schools administer the Northwest Evaluation Assessments (NWEAs) in Reading and Mathematics in the fall and then again in the spring, teachers are able to identify areas of growth and concern for each student and respond through changes to their instruction. The one exception to the fall and spring administration of the NWEAs was at Cindy’s school, where Title 1 students take the NWEAs in the winter as well as the fall and spring, but others do not.

The participants shared that the NWEAs are used in a variety of ways in their schools and classrooms. One way that the schools use the NWEAs is to assess whole school progress in reading across the grade levels. NWEA data are also used to compare and contrast the growth of students within the school, district, state, and country. The NWEAs are also used by schools participating in this study to identify struggling readers and determine if students qualify for an external support such as Title 1 or Special Education Services. If a student qualifies and begins to receive these supports, additional administrations of the NWEA help determine if these students are benefitting from the support they are receiving.

The NWEAs are also utilized at the classroom level for teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the readers in their classrooms and respond with the appropriate small group instruction. For example, a student may be able to independently read a book at a higher level than his peers, but may not be able to comprehend the words that he is reading. The results of the NWEAs identify specific weaknesses in reading and provide teachers with information so they can respond with the appropriate instruction. The other “big picture” assessment that all participants administer is the state authorized

assessment. The state authorized assessments are a series of reading and mathematics achievement tests, administered annually in all Maine schools in response to federal requirements. These assessments are given to all students in grades three through eight. All participants shared that they use the data from these assessments to analyze student achievement and compare progress to established learning targets. All participants provided examples of how the NWEAs and the state assessments are used in their classrooms and schools to support student learning.

The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) is an informal reading inventory that Gale, Don, Barbara, and Kara use in their classrooms to assess student growth in reading. Leslie and Caldwell (1995) describe the QRI as “an individually administered, informal reading inventory designed to provide diagnostic information about the conditions under which students can identify words and comprehend text successfully and the conditions that appear to result in unsuccessful word identification, decoding and/or comprehension” (p. 1). The QRI is designed to assess a student’s oral reading accuracy, rate of reading, and comprehension of passages read orally and silently. The QRI is an assessment that can easily be administered in a traditional classroom setting by a teacher. The participants who administer the QRI describe it as an easy-to-use and accurate assessment of student growth in reading.

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), like the QRI, is another formative reading assessment that allows teachers to evaluate the reading performance of students. The DRA is a standardized reading assessment designed to determine a student’s individual instructional level in reading. Students read passages to a teacher and then are expected to retell what happened, either orally or in writing. From an

instructional standpoint, the DRA allows teachers to determine a student's engagement, reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension level. The DRA also provides teachers with valuable information for differentiating instruction, assisting struggling readers, and monitoring student growth. Cindy was the one participant who shared that she administered the DRA to students in her classroom.

Running Records are an individualized formative reading assessment designed to provide a graphic representation of a student's oral reading levels with information about the appropriate use of reading strategies. The use of running records provides teachers with information to document reading progress, identify areas where students need further instruction, and match students to appropriately leveled books. Barbara was the one participant who described her use of running records. She provided examples of how she uses these assessments to track student progress in reading, especially those students who struggle with reading.

Patterns that Emerged Regarding Core Reading Practices of High Efficacy

Teachers

There were two patterns that emerged regarding the core reading practices of high efficacy teachers. The first pattern is related to the similarities that exist among each high efficacy teacher's instructional practices. These have been organized under the following headings: Combinations of Reading Teaching Strategies, Ongoing Assessment, and Changes in Instructional Practices Over Time. The second pattern that emerged is related to the influences on each participant's instructional practices. These influences have been initially categorized under the following heading: Responses to Influences on

Instructional Practice and then further organized under the subheadings: Compliant, Independent, and Collaborative.

Similarities Among High Efficacy Teachers

Combinations of Reading Teaching Strategies. Several similarities arose among all of the participants, and it is evident from examining each participant's instructional practices that each teacher uses a combination of instructional practices—some that are expected by their schools and others they value from their own professional experience. For example, Diane explained how she uses the district required *Journeys* anthology for reading instruction while incorporating her own instructional strategies such as students reading independently in appropriately leveled texts. Regardless of the instructional expectations placed upon these high efficacy teachers, all eight incorporated their own instructional strategies into their classroom reading instruction.

Ongoing Assessment. Along with their willingness to combine various instructional strategies, all highly efficacious teachers in this study assess reading growth throughout the year and modify their instruction to address the range of readers in their classrooms. This is the case even if some of these students receive their reading instruction outside of the classroom from special education teachers or Title 1 teachers. All participants shared a variety of data, both formal and informal, that they collect throughout the year to identify the reading levels of each of their students, whether they were above, at, or below grade level. When asked, all participants could provide evidence of each of their students' strengths and weaknesses as readers.

The participants were then able to explain how it was their responsibility to use the data to match appropriate instruction to each student. Some of the participants, like

Diane, shared that she felt that it was her responsibility as a classroom teacher to use data and to appropriately match instruction to each student's needs regardless of whether they receive their primary reading instruction in her classroom or from special education or Title 1 teachers. Kara explained the value of the QRI. "If I had to choose one assessment, the QRI is the best tool because I can see what words they are having trouble with. I can see first-hand what strategies they are using to figure the word out. Being right there, one on one, you can ask them what strategies they are using."

Changes in Instructional Practice Over Time. During the interviews, each participant described a typical day of reading instruction in his or her classroom. Their responses allowed for two patterns of analysis. The first pattern examined how each of the participant's practices changed over time. In reflecting on their practices, each participant acknowledged that the reading instruction that they provide to students has changed throughout their careers. Two of the eight participants, Diane and Sandy, reflected on their practices and expressed frustration that they are no longer as responsive to student needs as they were when they began their teaching careers. The other participants, though, explained how their practices are now more in line with best practices than they were when they first began their teaching careers. They shared a variety of examples that demonstrate how their practices have grown and how they are now better able to meet the wide range of needs of the students in their classrooms.

Diane is one of the two participants who said that her practices are less developed and aligned to best practices than when she began teaching:

I was working with (literacy experts) Don Holoway and Marie Clay and teaching with Nancy Atwell at the time. So, you can imagine that a basal reader is not even

close to the work I was doing. But, I would not say that what I am doing now is even close to what I did all of my life. I mean I used to run a publishing center for the primary school. It is not the same. I'd like to hope that the (basal reader) doesn't have to be completely part of my life for the next five or six years that I have left because I do not think it is best practice for most kids. If I had an above average class, I would not want to do this (teach this way) at all. If I had an average class I would not want to (teach reading) this way at all. If I had an above average class, I could prove to them that I should not have to use it. I have taught in the district for 18 years, so they know me well. These kids have been so low, and the vocabulary builds on the year before. I guess I am ok with teaching from the basal reader even if my teaching is not as rich as it was in the past.

Sandy, the other participant who shared that her practices are less developed than when she began her career, attributes the change to all the focus on high stakes testing. She says,

My practices (over the years) suffered and I was not able to teach the way I know and research supports is the best way to teach reading. Have the students in my classes done better on the test? I guess. But, do they have a passion for reading? No, they go through the motions of reading, filling out the worksheets, and getting them done. Am I helping children develop a lifelong love of reading? No.

While Diane and Sandy believe that their practices were more effective when they began teaching, the six other participants shared that they have grown as reading teachers.

Jackie is a participant who believes her practices are stronger now than when she began teaching. Jackie shared, "I like this approach [reading workshop] because students

are reading high interest books and are not reading from a basal type textbook like how I learned to read. They are reading in books that are interesting to them and that they are able to read.” Gale stated, “My reading instruction now compared to when I started teaching is way more meaningful to students. It is just way better. My instruction is based on student needs and not me just trying to cover a reading curriculum and get through a book.” Cindy explained,

Once I got Lucy Calkins for my curriculum, it made a world of difference in my reading instruction, in terms of organizing the reading block and really emphasizing the needs of individual students. It (the curriculum) really helped me to create an atmosphere of learning. It really helped me with that. It helped me to be more focused on individual student learning and not on teaching to the middle and hoping the struggling readers can keep up while boring my learners at the other end of the spectrum.

Don explained his development by sharing a practice that he has incorporated into his classroom over the past few years, “One thing that has changed and increased is that I read-aloud to students. I know how important it is for children, all children, to hear me read.” Barbara explained that prior to teaching, she had one methods class and that she had to actually teach reading herself to really learn how to teach reading effectively to students and that she has grown in this area over the years by working with colleagues and trying new things. She offered, “My practice has evolved by consulting resources on my own and reading about different strategies that I can use in my classroom.” Barbara explained that the longer she has taught, the better she has become at meeting the range

of readers and matching appropriate instruction to their needs as learners. “I was able to move from a one size fits all approach to meeting the needs of my individual readers.”

On this topic, Kara said,

When I first started teaching, I taught in an affluent area. We did not do guided reading groups, and there were no expectations. You would flounder and figure things out on your own and hope for the best. Instruction was very loose and not structured. Personally, I do not do well without guidance. I like freedom, but I want some guidance and expectations around what needs to be taught. Now, I am here, and it is my 10th year and things are a lot more structured. I think that having the range of readers has forced me to develop instructional skills that I did not have before because in an affluent area, everybody could read well. Now, I am more effective with my reading instruction because I need to be.

All participants acknowledged that their instructional practices have changed over time. Two participants believe, as a result of district initiatives, their practices are not as effective as they were when they began their teaching careers. The remaining six participants believe their practices have grown over time and they are better aligned with best practices than when they began their careers. However, it was noted that regardless of the instructional practices participants were using, there was an effort made by all participants to recognize the range of readers in their classrooms and embrace instructional practices that meet the needs of all of their students.

Responses to Influences on Instructional Practice

A second pattern arose from analysis of each participant’s description of a typical day of reading instruction and the influences on each of the participant’s instructional

practices. All of the participants described how they respond to influences on their instructional practices and those influences have been divided into three categories: Compliant, Independent, and Collaborative.

The first category, Compliant, describes two participants who attribute instructional mandates as the greatest influence on their core instructional practices. “You must use this reading series and complete all of the chapters by the end of June.” The second category, Independent, describes one participant who credits her own core instructional practices with her own independent learning. She cites professional reading, classes attended, and her own professional development as having the greatest impact on her core instructional practices in reading. The third category, Collaborative, describes the learning of five of the participants who explain how their instructional practices are a reflection of their having the ability to be collaborate with colleagues and school administration.

Compliant. Diane and Sandy fall in the category “Compliant.” Both participants described the influence leadership, both building and district, had on their practices. In both cases, they explained how district leadership was responding to low test results by instituting a curriculum that all teachers were required to follow.

Diane spent much of the interview lamenting what her practices in reading instruction once were compared to what they are now. Diane explained that at the start of her teaching career her instructional practices were more aligned with best practices. At that point in her career, they had been influenced by the course work she completed as she pursued her master’s degree in literacy. Now, when Diane reflects on her instructional practices she attributes them to the influence of a leadership approach where

school and district leadership is saying, “This is what you must teach and how you must teach it.” Many of these practices that were shelved were aligned to best practices, but because students were not scoring high enough on tests they were abandoned for the anthology.

With this new program, teachers are required to follow a very strict instructional approach. They needed to complete the textbook by the end of the school year. “We needed to complete all of the spelling that went along with it, all the paperwork, and all the grammar work that went with it. As teachers, we found that it to be overwhelming. We generated 30 pages of paper, per child, per week.” Diane shared that many of the teachers pushed back against the anthology, but she relented and decided to follow it. Diane described the anthology as being fairly successful, especially for her low achieving readers. She shared, “I now believe that if you are going to get a whole group of low kids, you need to have something that is pretty structured.”

While Diane acknowledged that there were certain benefits to teaching from the anthology, she expressed frustration with the approach that district leadership imposed on the teachers and felt in the end her only choice was to comply with the mandate. This was evident when Diane described the curriculum coordinator from her district.

Our curriculum coordinator is a real textbook person, she likes to know that things are orderly; these are the way things are going to be. She does not put a lot of faith in the idea that if I am doing a reading group and I have 20 kids that I can differentiate instruction to meet each student’s needs. I do not think she has faith that everybody in all the classrooms has the ability to differentiate their reading instruction for a variety of learners in our classrooms.

When Diane was then asked to reflect on building leadership and the role they played in this switch in instructional practices, she said,

Principals are not reading teachers. They want good scores, but they have not done the research around how young children learn to read. They just want it to be done every day, they want the scores, and they just want to move on. It is a complicated conversation to have with them (principals).

Similar to Diane, Sandy shared a story of how she was influenced by the district mandates. She complied and was forced to move away from the instructional practices that she had been using and were best for teaching all students. Sandy explained how her instruction was once more aligned to best practices, but that now she believes test scores were shaping her district's direction with reading instruction and that had impacted her classroom. "My district became nervous about their scores and jumped right to solutions without looking at the practices that were in place. They adopted a basic reading program that they felt would provide 'big bang' results on the test."

Sandy expressed frustration with her district's reasoning in moving to *Journeys*. "Before they bought *Journeys*, I told everyone that would listen that it was a bad idea. We know we have students who are struggling on a test. But, it did not make sense to rework everything and adopt a whole new curriculum." Sandy also reflected on how this curriculum shift by the district impacted her classroom instruction. "That did not seem to make much sense to me. I mean we had a lot of very good, researched-based practices in place. So, now we scrapped everything. I was mad basically that this was happening. Nobody seemed to care."

Like Diane, Sandy acknowledged that there were certain benefits to teaching from the anthology, but also expressed frustration with the district's approach and her need to comply. This was evident when Diane reflected on the curriculum that had been imposed on the teachers and the impact that it has on students who are learning to read.

Nobody can convince me that *Journeys* is what's best for children and their learning. It doesn't promote a joy of reading. I find that the kids who excel do well with whatever you give them. And, the children who struggle, struggle with whatever you give them. It is not the program. It is the effectiveness of the teacher.

Independent. Cindy, in her personal reflections on herself as a teacher, described a pattern I called "Independent." Cindy described her growth as a teacher of reading by focusing on where she began, where she is, and how she arrived in her current place as a teacher. Most of the participants shared that they learned from professional development and courses that they had taken, but Cindy said she was primarily influenced by her own initiative at learning effective instructional practices. "I entered teaching later in my career. I had a graduate course in literacy then a methods course in teaching reading. Everything else is what I picked up along the way." Cindy continued to explain why she believes she was always able to grow. "I have always been supported by administration and allowed to grow professionally. It was not so much what they provided me with training. They provided me with trust so that I could learn about how best to teach students."

In turn, Cindy believes that she has been able to pass her learning onto other teachers.

I think that I have been helpful to colleagues. As far as what we are expected to teach, we have a scope and sequence. At different times teams will also put out some other materials that teachers can refer to. Then, when we meet at grade level, our curriculum is mapped out for us instead of everybody going in different directions. We have that to refer to and to be honest I do not refer to it a lot. I just do not. Although, I feel that I cover a lot of the scope and sequence that we are expected to cover. I use Lucy Calkins reading curriculum, and I know it is more rigorous than we are expected to cover. I purchased it myself. I have never used a traditional basal reader and since I have been here, there has never been an expectation to use one. Nobody really tells me how to teach. They may tell others, but they do not tell me.

Collaborative. This pattern describes how five of the participants elaborated on what influenced their practice. Jackie, Gale, Don, Kara, and Barbara described their growth as teachers being the result of teachers and school administration working together to improve instructional practices in reading. Barbara explained how being collaborative with her grade level team supported instruction, “We talk as a team. We look at our data and figure out four areas (four people at a time) that our kids are struggling with at the moment. We did two, three week periods of reading instruction where we focused on word identification and how to make an inference.” As a result, there were two consistent themes that appear to support collaboration: consistent assessment practices and a more standardized approach to reading instruction. These five discussed at length

the standardized approach to reading instruction and the assessment practices in place in their schools and districts.

Consistent Assessment Practices. Jackie explained, “We assess kids on the NWEAs and the QRIs, determine their reading level, and their strengths and weaknesses as readers and writers.” Barbara reflected on the assessment practices in their school, “If students are identified as Title 1, or not meeting the standard, then I use running records to more regularly track a child’s progress. There are also assessments that are done in the classroom, both informal and formal assessments. I also assess students through guided reading groups, discussions, book conferences with how things are going with each student’s comprehension. Everybody in the school takes the QRI.”

One area of assessment that Kara thinks her school could improve is in having consistent data that travels from grade to grade. She explained how this practice would better support collaboration:

We look at data as a school, and it’s different for third grade. I feel like because this is a [intermediate] school with third, fourth, and fifth grades in this school, the data collection kind of starts in this school. Then we are really good about the data, but before that we do not have much on our readers when they arrive. The fact that there are different tests at second grade has been frustrating for third grade teachers especially, since we’ll get the DRA and it will give us a score and it will tell us what it relates to but we often find that it is not even close to what the QRI would they would test out at a QRI. The discrepancy in the two tests has been frustrating for third grade teachers. Now, all the schools are going to be K-4 schools, so one of the benefits, is going to be having one test that will follow them

all the way, one test not DRA and QRI. Hopefully, there will be better communication because we will all be in one school.

The consistent assessment practices found within schools allow teachers and school leadership to collaborate with a focus on the reading growth of students. The data that are generated from school and district-wide assessments provides teachers with a common language and in turn a common manner in which to collaborate.

Standardized Reading Instruction. Gale, Jackie, Don, Kara and Barbara all discussed practices that reflect a Reading Workshop model of instruction. Gale explained that in her school,

We are asked to follow a reading/writing workshop model. We do not have a program to follow per se; no there really is not a program to follow. We have been repeatedly told that reading workshop is the best model. We have been repeatedly told that reading/ writing workshop model is what we should be using. Don explained how his practices are in line with the other teachers in his school: We have a writing program that we need to follow, but we do not have one for reading. Other classrooms have the same elements in their reading programs as I do. All classrooms have classroom libraries that are organized by authors, genres, and series.

The other participants made similar comments with each describing classroom practices that involve conferencing with students and using mini-lessons that teach students reading skills that they are expected to incorporate into their daily practice. All participants stressed that these were school-wide expectations.

Jackie explained further the different resources that teachers have available to keep their instruction current.

There are more online resources, videos, and songs that go along with what we are reading. My practice is more current and students relate to it better. My kids are strong readers now because I am more passionate about teaching reading and they can definitely feel that.

Standardized instructional and assessment practices allow teachers to more effectively collaborate because they provide teachers and schools with a common language on which to reflect. Gale, Don, Jackie, Kara, and Barbara reflected on the importance being collaborative, both with other teachers and with administrators, played in developing their instructional practices in reading. Gale explained,

There were two main reasons for changes in my literacy practices. The first was getting my master's (in literacy). This helped me to use all the resources that were out there to make a stronger reading program. The second influence on my practices was my principal. The professional development that he provided for our staff and the collaboration that led to.

Don explained how he collaborated with his principal to improve instruction in his classroom.

One thing our principal stressed to me was the importance of read-aloud being a powerful learning tool. It can help with sight vocabulary, foster a greater love for learning, and help with fluency. That particular year I actually increased how much I read-aloud to my students.

Teachers took leadership roles in an effort to change instructional practices in schools. Jackie shared, “Last year, another teacher came up with all of these literacy centers. So, was that was another way to really be able to focus on the different genres of literature in a really fun way. In those centers we have an example, instruction sheet, and many examples of literature within that genre.” Jackie went on to explain how this teacher created these centers and then collaborated with other team members to improve and grow the idea across the school.

This section provided an overview of the core reading practices of teachers with high RTSE. Participants described their core practices in reading over two interviews and provided supporting instructional artifacts to support their claims that these core practices were in place in their classrooms.

Chapter Summary

The first section, Reading Teacher Efficacy of the Sample Population, provided the reader with a description of the results of all the teachers who completed the Reading Teacher Survey including background information about each participant. This analysis provided the necessary information to identify each participant as having Low, Average or High Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy. Within each efficacy group, there were similarities found. First, there were teachers who obtained master’s degrees as part of their professional development within all three-efficacy groups. Second, all three intermediate grade levels were represented in all three-efficacy groups.

Along with commonalities, the difference that was identified among the three groups of participants was the mean years of teaching experience. Teachers with the most

experience teaching had the highest efficacy scores while the teachers with the least experience teaching had the lowest efficacy scores.

The second section, Detailed Descriptions of High Efficacy Teachers, presented a description of the participants with high reading teacher efficacy beliefs. Each teacher in this group is a veteran teacher with a minimum of nine years of teaching experience. The majority of teachers in this group, six of the eight, have teaching experience within multiple grade levels. Six of eight participants obtained their teaching certification through traditional undergraduate programs while two obtained their certification through programs that they attended after college having worked in other careers. Four of the eight teachers obtained master's degrees as part of their professional development.

The third section, Core Instructional Practices of Highly Efficacious Teachers in Reading, describes the core practices of the eight high efficacy teachers who participated in the interviews. The data indicated there were several similarities found among the teachers' classrooms. For example, each teacher typically teaches twenty students. And, within those twenty, he or she typically has a range of readers who can be below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level. The students who are above or below grade level can be two to three grade levels ahead or two to three grade levels below established benchmarks in reading. The teachers in all eight classrooms teach reading every day. In six of the eight classrooms, readers received some type of external support in reading either through Title 1, special education or gifted and talented.

When the classrooms are examined through a rural versus urban lens, there are some commonalities and differences between the two. The classrooms in rural and urban settings have a similar number of students who are on grade level in reading. However,

when I examined the amount of instructional time dedicated to reading, schools in urban districts spent on average forty-three minutes more on reading instruction than districts in rural settings.

The fourth section, *Patterns that Emerged Regarding Core Reading Practices of High Efficacy Teachers*, identifies the instructional similarities that exist among the eight participants and the factors that have contributed to teachers employing them.

One pattern that became evident was that each participant uses a variety of instructional practices. Some are practices they have incorporated into their classrooms based on their own professional development or work with colleagues and others are practices their districts and schools require them to use. All the participants assess the reading growth of their students throughout the school year using a variety of assessments. Six of the eight participants shared that their practices have developed throughout their careers and are better aligned with best practices than when they began teaching. However, there were two participants, Diane and Sandy, who believe their practices were better aligned with best practices when they began teaching. Diane and Sandy believe they are less effective now because they are required to use a basal reader that requires all students to be instructed at the same reading level through the same text.

Another pattern that arose is in how each participant responds to the environmental factors that contribute most significantly to their current instructional practices. These environmental factors were placed in one of the following categories: Compliant, Independent, and Collaborative. Two participants, Diane and Sandy, shared that their compliance with district mandates had the biggest impact on their instruction. One participant shared that the biggest influence on her instruction was her own desire to

grow coupled with an administration that trusted her professional judgment. The remaining participants attributed being collaborative with colleagues as having the biggest impact on their instructional practices.

Chapter Five takes a deeper look at each participant's practices, the effectiveness of these practices based on the modified Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL) and how they relate to each participant's work and overall ability to respond to the needs of struggling readers.

CHAPTER 5

HOW HIGHLY EFFICACIOUS INTERMEDIATE TEACHERS EMPLOY BEST PRACTICES IN READING INSTRUCTION FOR STRUGGLING READERS

Chapter 5 provides the results related to the fourth research question which states, “To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of reading teacher self-efficacy (RTSE) report that they employ effective literacy practices as measured by modified ESAIL levels so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?” The chapter examines each participant’s practices as they relate to his or her ability to meet the needs of struggling readers by comparing and contrasting his or her practices to the Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL). After a summary of the data, the exposition contains a deeper analysis of the implementation of the best practices described by the ESAIL. The chapter concludes with an analysis of several environmental factors that impacted the ability of the participants to incorporate best practices into their classrooms as measured by the ESAIL.

An Analysis of High Efficacy Teachers’ Practices Using the Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels

Assessment Using the ESAIL

The ESAIL is typically used to assess the level of fidelity to the Comprehensive Literacy Model is implemented into individual classrooms, entire schools, and a district as a whole. For the purposes of this study, the ESAIL was modified to serve as an instrument to assist in examining the practices of individual classroom teachers in reading as they relate to struggling readers. The modified version of the ESAIL utilized four of the original ten criteria with each criterion having descriptors to further identify what

each criterion should look like in instructional practice. Since the other criteria from the original scale are related to school-wide practices to support reading instruction and effective practices of reading coaches, they were not incorporated into the modified version of the ESAIL.

After interviews and observations, each high efficacy participant's practices were rated on the ESAIL in one of three ways: a \checkmark representing Practice Shared with Evidence to Support, a V representing a Practice Verbally Shared, an NS/O indicated Not Shared or Observed. A — indicated that it was not possible for the participant to demonstrate the descriptor was in place.

For example, in Criterion One: Creates a Literate Environment the first descriptor states: Reading responses through writing or art are displayed on walls and in hallways. During the two interviews that were conducted, I was looking for evidence that the participant had this instructional practice in place. If a participant provided evidence that this was in fact part of his or her practice then it was noted in Table 5.1. However, it was not enough for a participant to state that he or she has incorporated a practice from the ESAIL. The participant was expected to provide tangible evidence that the practice was in place. In the above-mentioned example, it would not be enough for a participant to simply say, "Oh, I always display student responses to reading in writing on my back bulletin board." While the statement could be mentioned during either interview the participant also needed to show evidence that the practice was implemented. For example, the participant would need to show a bulletin board display or a classroom portfolio with each child's writing. If a teacher shared a practice and evidence to support it, the participant received a \checkmark .

In some cases, teachers mentioned practices but did not provide artifacts to support their claims. In these instances, the participant received a V representing a practice that was verbally shared with no artifacts for support. In other cases, teachers never verbally referenced a descriptor or provided artifacts to support it. In those instances, the participant received a NS/O. If it was not possible for this researcher to observe a descriptor, for example, “Respectful talk and attitudes are promoted and used among all learners,” then the participant would receive a — indicating that it was not possible for the participant to demonstrate the descriptor was in place. It should also be noted that teachers were not provided with the ESAIL document prior to the interview and, therefore, were not “tipped-off” about the desired responses.

Below the reader will find the modified ESAIL document divided into four separate tables. Each table provides the first name of each participant and a compilation of the data collected from each criterion of the ESAIL document. Each table is listed in descending order from left to right with teachers with the most descriptors met towards the left side of the table and the teachers with the fewest descriptors met to the right. The cells that are highlighted with light grey coloring indicate high levels of implementation; the cells with a darker grey coloring indicate moderate levels of implementation; and the cells with the darkest grey coloring indicate the lowest levels of implementation.

ESAIL Criterion One: Creates a Literate Environment. Table 5.1 is entitled Analysis of Criterion One: Creates a Literate Environment. Under this heading, there are ten statements describing a classroom that meets the criteria of a literate environment. The practices that illustrate Criterion One describe classroom environments that emphasize the importance of literacy: speaking, reading and writing for all students. Participants

were rated on eight of the ten descriptors in Criterion One and could not be rated on “respectful talk” and “elaborated discussions” since students were not present during any of my observations. Aside from those two descriptors, all participants were assessed on the tangible evidence of the remaining eight descriptors during the second interview that took place in each participant’s classroom.

Table 5.1. Analysis of Criterion 1: Creates a Literate Environment

	Diane	Gale	Kara	Cindy	Jackie	Barbara	Don	Sandy
1. Reading responses through writing or art are displayed on walls and in hallways	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	√	NS/O
2. Writing drafts are organized in writing portfolios, and final drafts are displayed on walls and in hallways.	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	V	NS/O
3. Variety of reading materials is enjoyed, discussed and analyzed across the curriculum.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4. Co-constructed language charts embrace student language and are displayed on walls and in students' notebooks.	√	√	√	√	NS/O	√	V	√
5. Tables, clusters of desks, and work areas are arranged to promote collaborative learning and problem solving.	√	√	√	√	NS/O	√	√	√
6. Problem-solving is collaborative (pairs or groups) and talk is purposeful.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
7. Engagement is maintained by meaningfulness and relevance of the task.	√	√	√	NS/O	√	√	√	NS/O
8. Respectful talk and attitudes are promoted and used among all learners.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9. Elaborated discussions around specific concepts are promoted and students' thinking is valued and discussed.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. Environment is conducive to inquiry-based learning and learners are engaged in constructive interactions around purposeful literacy events.	√	√	√	NS/O	√	√	√	√

Note. √ represents a descriptor with supportive evidence. V represents a descriptor that was verbally shared with no evidence provided. NS/O represents a descriptor that was not shared or observed. A — represents a descriptor that a participant was unable to demonstrate due to the nature of the descriptor.

As Table 5.1 indicates, three of the eight participants, Diane, Gale, and Kara provided evidence to support that all eight of the descriptors for Criterion 1: Creates a Literate Environment were present in their classrooms. One participant, Don, provided evidence for six of the descriptors and verbally shared that the other two were part of his classroom instructional practices, but he provided no artifacts to support these claims. Four participants, Jackie, Cindy, Sandy, and Barbara were unable to provide evidence for two or more of the descriptors in Criterion One.

In this section, I provide the reader with a picture of what a literate environment looks like for students by focusing on some of the practices that Diane, Gale, and Kara shared. Then, I will focus on the other participants and identify some of the descriptors that were lacking from their classroom instructional practices.

Upon entering Diane's, Gale's, and Kara's classrooms, one would see that reading responses through writing or art are displayed on their classroom walls. One piece that was on display in Diane's classroom was a student's comparison of George Washington to King George. In Gale's classroom, she shared a student journal with responses to various prompts that were connected to the book *The Miraculous Journeys of Edward Tulane*. Kara had two wall displays with student writing. One display had a collection of student acrostic poems, and the other was a display of completed stories that students had recently published.

Writing drafts were also organized in writing portfolios. While these portfolios all looked different—some in three ring binders and others in folders, they all were collections of student writing that demonstrated growth over time. Diane shared several student portfolios where students were expected to reflect and explain their learning in

science. Gale shared reading journals that contained multiple drafts of writing pieces that students were working to complete. All three teachers made a commitment to students' writing and then displaying their writing on walls or in portfolios.

It was also evident that problem solving occurs in collaborative pairs (or groups) and the talk is purposeful. Diane explained how she matches students to work collaboratively, so they can problem solve in writing. She explained, "When my struggling readers return from their specialized instruction in reading, I pair them up with a stronger writer to provide peer feedback. I think that kind of interaction between students, even if a child is not ready to do that kind of writing, he or she is certainly able to listen and offer some ideas to the other students." Diane shared how she organizes her peer partners and tracks who has worked with whom. Diane believes strongly that collaborative learning supports the growth of all students.

In these classrooms, students are engaged in their learning. Students' products, regardless of a student's ability, demonstrate student engagement. Gale explained how she maintains student engagement in reading. She stated,

I do lots of fun activities around books; sometimes we will use our ipads to create videos connected to books students are reading. Instead of doing a book report, they can act out a book. My students love this! One of the kids did a *Hunger Games* board game, and then all the kids can play the game and become engaged in the book. They might not be ready to read it themselves, but they know at some point they would like to read it.

Kara promotes student engagement through read-aloud, "Well, I keep going back to the Daily 5 because usually the kids who struggle do not really want to read, but they are

motivated to read with a friend. So they are not only motivated to read but they are getting to hear what a good reader sounds like or getting to practice reading aloud to somebody. They are engaged when they might not otherwise be engaged in reading.”

Don provided evidence of having six of the eight descriptors from Criterion One in place in his classroom. With regard to some descriptors, Don provided some rich evidence of his instructional practices. However, with regard to two descriptors, “writing drafts are organized and displayed” and “co-constructed language charts are displayed on walls and in students’ notebooks,” Don shared that these descriptors are part of his practice, but he did not provide any artifacts to support this claim. Don did not share any journals that had student writing compiled in one place, and I did not see any charts in his classroom, either on the walls or his easel when I visited.

Similar to Don, there were four participants who did not provide evidence of having all eight descriptors in place in their classrooms. Jackie, Cindy, Sandy, and Barbara provided evidence of not having at least two of the eight descriptors from Criterion One in place in their classrooms. Sandy and Barbara both failed to present evidence either verbally or in the form of artifacts that support that they organize writing in portfolios or that they display writing or reading responses on walls in classrooms or in hallways. Sandy and Cindy were the only two participants that did not present evidence that student engagement is maintained by meaningfulness and relevance to task. Cindy was the only participant of the eight participants in the study who was unable to present evidence that her classroom environment was conducive to inquiry-based learning and learners are engaged in constructive interactions around purposeful literacy events.

In Jackie's classroom, there were no observable co-constructed language charts displayed on walls or in student notebooks. Jackie was also the only participant who did not arrange student seating in a way that promotes collaborative learning and problem solving. Her students' desks were arranged in rows, and she did not share whether she valued student collaboration nor did she provide any examples of how she promotes collaboration with her students.

None of the participants provided evidence indicating that respectful talk and attitudes are promoted among all learners or that elaborated discussions around specific concepts are promoted and students' thinking is valued and discussed. No students were present during the second interview, and teachers were unable to demonstrate that those practices were in place.

I learned that while there was a range of implementation in Criterion One, all of the participants demonstrated to some degree that they had created literate classrooms for their students. These participants provided evidence supporting the claim that their classrooms were focused on the growth of their students as readers and writers.

ESAIL Criterion Two: Organizes the Classroom. Table 5.2 is entitled: Analysis of Criterion Two: Organizes the Classroom. Under this heading, there are ten statements describing a classroom that meet the criterion of a classroom that is organized to support a literate learning environment. Participants were rated on ten of descriptors in Criterion Two. None of the eight participants were able to show evidence for descriptor five, "student logs were organized across the curriculum."

Table 5.2. Analysis of Criterion 2: Organizes the Classroom

	Gale	Jackie	Cindy	Kara	Barbara	Don	Sandy	Diane
1. Teachers' schedules are displayed and routines are clearly established.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2. Classroom space is carefully considered and designed for whole group, small group and individual teaching and learning.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
3. Teachers' workspace and instructional materials are organized for teaching across the curriculum.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4. Students' materials are organized and easily accessible.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5. Students' logs are organized and reflect integrated learning across the curriculum.	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
6. Classroom libraries contain an abundant amount of reading material across genres, authors and topics.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
7. Literature for read-aloud, familiar/independent reading material, big books, charts, poetry, and poetry notebooks are organized and accessible.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
8. Book tubs housed in classroom library are clearly labeled according to genre, topic and/or by author.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
9. Literacy corner tasks are organized and are designed to meet the needs of groups and individual learners.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
10. Summative and formative assessments are organized for instructional purposes and documentation.	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O

Note. √ represents a descriptor with supportive evidence. V represents a descriptor that was verbally shared with no evidence provided. NS/O represents a descriptor that was not shared or observed. A — represents a descriptor that a participant was unable to demonstrate due to the nature of the descriptor.

Table 5.2 shows five of the eight participants, Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, and Kara, provided evidence to support that nine of the ten descriptors for Criterion Two were in existence in their classrooms. One participant, Don, provided evidence of seven of the nine descriptors. Two participants, Sandy and Diane, provided evidence for four of the descriptors in Criterion Two.

The descriptors found in Criterion Two describe how classrooms should be organized to promote literacy learning at the elementary levels. Many of the descriptors found in this criterion are visible upon entering a classroom. As shown in Table 5.2, there were four descriptors that were evident in each participant's classroom. In all classrooms, teachers' schedules and routines were clearly displayed for students. In some classrooms, the schedule was written on the board and appeared that it would be updated each day. In other classrooms, there were different forms of laminated charts. On all schedules, reading blocks were identified as being from sixty to ninety minutes in length. All schedules had student independent reading times listed.

All participants organized their instructional materials so that they were prepared to teach literacy across the curriculum. In some instances, the evidence for this descriptor was found in classroom libraries where student books are categorized by genre. Jackie shared a book tub containing biographies and explained that when she teaches integrated social studies and writing units students are expected to pick a biography, read it, and then create a book review of their book. By organizing her library in this manner, students are able to efficiently browse book titles to support their learning across the curriculum.

Another descriptor that was found in all eight classrooms was that space was carefully designed for whole group, small group, and individual teaching and learning. Jackie explained her classroom design as follows, “We are set up so we can meet with small groups. Students can access the listening center, and computers are available that students can work on. Each computer is bookmarked so students have things they can work on that are connected to where they are as readers.” In all cases, teachers had clearly defined teaching areas for small group instruction such as a small table surrounded by chairs or a whiteboard easel with space on the carpet for students to gather.

All classrooms had systems for organizing student materials so they were easily accessible. Jackie shared her writing area where there were student writing folders, mini white boards, markers, and dictionaries. These materials were situated on a table that was easily accessible to students. In Gale’s classroom, her materials were organized at the center of each work group so that each individual member of the group could access the materials.

Reading materials and how these materials are made available to students are at the core of descriptors six through eight. Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, Don and Kara organized their classroom libraries in a manner so that students can easily access books that are a good match for their interests as well as their abilities. They demonstrated that their classrooms are organized to meet the needs of diverse readers and are organized and reflect integrated learning. While their libraries were organized differently, all six classrooms had significant similarities. Books were divided by genre and clearly labeled so students could quickly and easily find books that they wanted to read. Jackie explained

the structure of her library, “Baskets are categorized by topics. I hold baskets out of the library and keep them in storage. Then, I let the students choose a basket to add to the library. The basket they choose is based on their interest level and it is added into the library for all students to access.”

A variety of reading materials were available and organized so that students could access them. In each classroom visited, various book baskets were clearly labeled so students are able to access books based on their interests and the readability of the various texts.

Four of the eight participants, Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, and Kara, provided evidence that summative and formative assessments are organized for instructional purposes. They shared a variety of systems that they maintain to keep student data accessible throughout the year. Some participants shared binders that were tabbed with each student’s name and data that supported that particular student’s growth. Others shared file folders with corresponding information about each student. Gale shared a calendar that she uses to log her conferences with each student and any observational data she collects.

The greatest discrepancy in the implementation of Criterion Two exists in descriptors five through ten. Descriptor five, “student logs are organized and reflect integrated learning across the curriculum,” was the one descriptor that none of the participants provided evidence to support its presence in their classrooms. With regard to the other descriptors, the data collected support the assertion that five participants, Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, and Kara, have integrated descriptors five through ten into their classrooms. Don provided evidence that he has integrated five through nine, but he failed

to share evidence of descriptor ten, “assessments are organized for instructional purposes and documentation.”

Diane and Sandy were unable to provide any evidence to support that descriptors five through ten were present in their classrooms. There was no observable method for organizing classroom libraries in either classroom. While student books were stored on shelves, they were not divided by genre or clearly labeled so students could find books that they wanted to read. Neither classroom library had any apparent organizational structure. It should be noted that there were far fewer books for students in Diane’s and Sandy’s classrooms, and neither was able to provide evidence that their materials were organized in a manner that meets the needs of their various leveled learners. Unlike the other classrooms, book baskets were not available so students could access books based on their interests and readability. No literature was shared related to class read-aloud books or independent reading choices that students were making. Similar to Don, Diane and Sandy also failed to provide evidence that summative and formative assessments were organized for instructional purpose.

I noted that while there was a range of implementation in Criterion Two, all of the participants, except two, demonstrated high levels of implementation in organizing their classrooms and provided some evidence of their commitment to meeting the needs of all students. For example, their classroom libraries were organized with books that were appropriate for the range of readers, and their classrooms were arranged to accommodate whole, small, and individual instruction.

I also noticed that the participants who were required to use scripted programs did not demonstrate the same levels of organization in their classrooms as the other

participants. For example, their classroom libraries were not organized with books that were appropriate for the range of readers that existed in their classrooms and there was no evidence of literature for read-aloud, independent reading material, big books or poetry that were organized and accessible. There was also no evidence that formative and summative assessments were organized for instructional purposes and documentation.

ESAIL Criterion Three: Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Systemic

Interventions. Table 5.3 is entitled: Analysis of Criterion Three: Uses Data To Inform Instruction and To Provide Systemic Interventions. Under this heading, there are five statements describing a classroom that meet the criteria of a teacher who uses data to inform instruction and to provide systemic interventions for students who might be struggling to learn concepts. Participants were rated on four of the five of descriptors in Criterion Three. None of the eight participants were able to show evidence for descriptor five, “teachers collaborate with intervention teacher/s around student/s progress and collaboratively develop a plan of action.” Since there was no evidence that supported the notion that the any of the participants work in schools that subscribe to a Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM), participants were not rated on this descriptor.

Table 5.3. Analysis of Criterion 3: Uses Data To Inform Instruction and To Provide Systemic Interventions

	Diane	Jackie	Gale	Cindy	Kara	Barbara	Don	Sandy
1. Summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2. Data are used across the curriculum to monitor student progress and to guide and plan instruction.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O
3. Summative and formative assessments are used to tailor in-class interventions to meet the needs of struggling learners.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
4. Data are used to plan a Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM), including Reading Recovery in first grade and small groups for other needy readers across grades.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. Teachers collaborate with intervention teacher/s around student/s progress and collaboratively develop a plan of action.	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O

Note. √ represents a descriptor with supportive evidence. V represents a descriptor that was verbally shared with no evidence provided. NS/O represents a descriptor that was not shared or observed. A — represents a descriptor that a participant was unable to demonstrate due to the nature of the descriptor.

In Table 5.3, five of the eight participants, Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, Kara and Diane, provided evidence to show three of the four descriptors for Criterion Three were in existence in their classrooms. Don provided evidence for two of the descriptors while Sandy provided evidence of one descriptor in Criterion Three.

The practices that illustrate Criterion Three include how classroom teachers use data to inform their instruction and provide interventions to students who may need further instruction. Table 5.3 shows one descriptor was evident in each participant's classroom. All teachers provided evidence of the following: summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction. Gale explained, "I am constantly checking (each student's reading progress) and making informal observations. With those, and all the more formal assessments students are given, I have a very good picture of where each of my children is in reading. If a child is struggling, I know it and respond to their needs." Gale continued, "When you do your QRI (Qualitative Reading Inventory), three-minute assessment, or your running record, you see that and know that those are the things you would work with them one to one. Or, you would bring the data to the literacy specialist or our team and share what you have been doing and see if there is more that you could try."

Diane was given credit for these descriptors in Criterion Three because she referenced data and explained how it was used to inform instruction in her classroom. She shared individual data sheets related to students and explained how that information led them to provide appropriate interventions for their struggling students.

Sandy and Don did not provide an organizational system that allowed them to regularly access this data and continue to compile and track data throughout the year. For

this reason, they were not given credit for the descriptor in Criterion Three, “summative and formative assessments are used to tailor in-class interventions to meet the needs of struggling readers.”

Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, and Kara also provided evidence that they use data to inform in-class interventions. Cindy uses data and then responds to what the data are telling her. “I conference with each student at least one time a week. Then, I pull together strategy groups based on student needs. So, there might be a small fluency group as a result of the data that I have collected.” All of these participants shared data, like running records, and notes from their intervention groups that documented their small group instruction.

None of the participants were able to provide evidence that data are used to plan a Comprehensive Intervention Model. However, it is this researcher’s belief that not having a Comprehension Intervention Model in place is less of a reflection on each participant’s instructional practices and more of a reflection of where each school is in how it responds to struggling readers.

The last descriptor in Criterion Three is “Teachers collaborate with intervention teacher/s around student/s progress and collaboratively develop a plan of action.” All of the participants discussed the instruction and interventions that are provided to students in their schools. In some of the schools, participants described student interventions as being provided by Title 1 teachers and/ or educational technicians and consisting of students being pulled out of class for a period of time each day to work on remedial skills in reading. In the other schools, participants described a similar type of pullout support along with classroom-based intervention blocks that are provided by classroom teachers

who work as a team. It should be noted that this was a difficult descriptor to score in that each participant had elements of the descriptor in his or her practice, but none of the participants provided sufficient evidence that there was collaboration between the intervention teachers and the classroom teachers. However, when the teachers provided interventions within the classrooms, there were more collaboration and data-focused discussions evident.

When examining Criterion Three in its entirety, Don was one of two participants who were unable to provide sufficient evidence that descriptors were present in his instructional practices. Don provided evidence for descriptor one, “summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction,” and for descriptor two, “data are used across the curriculum to monitor student progress and to guide and plan instruction,” but for none of the other descriptors. Sandy, another participant who was unable to provide sufficient evidence for Criterion Three, provided evidence for descriptor one, “summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction,” and none of the other descriptors.

I observed that while there was a range of implementation in Criterion Three, all of the participants, except two, demonstrated that they use data to inform instruction and provide systemic interventions. These participants provided evidence that they regularly use assessments to determine what their students know or do not know. They also provided evidence that they use assessments to determine which students would benefit from working in intervention groups because some of their skills lag behind their peers. The participants’ strength in this criterion further shows their commitment to the growth of all of their students in reading.

ESAIL Criterion Four: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning. Table 5.4 is entitled: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning. Under this heading, there are ten statements describing a classroom that differentiates instruction so as to meet a wide range of learners. Teachers who adapt instruction to meet the needs of an individual or small group in order to create the best learning experience possible are differentiating instruction. Participants were rated on seven of the ten descriptors in Criterion Four. They were not rated on writing being taught as a process, a writing continuum being used to meet student needs, and inquiry based learning opportunities being promoted across the content areas.

Table 5.4. Analysis of: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning

	Gale	Cindy	Kara	Jackie	Barbara	Don	Sandy	Diane
1. Schedules include a workshop approach to learning across the curriculum.	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
2. Explicit mini-lessons are tailored to meet the needs of the majority of students across the curriculum.	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
3. Daily small group reading and writing instruction is provided to meet the diverse needs of students.	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	√	√
4. Daily one-to-one reading and writing conferences are scheduled with students.	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
5. Prompts are used to activate successful problem-solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension.	√	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O
6. Writing is taught as a process, including composing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. A writing continuum is used to meet student needs, plan instruction, and monitor progress over time.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8. Quality literature is read, enjoyed and analyzed across the various workshops.	√	√	√	√	√	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
9. Mentor texts and notebooks are used as resources across genres.	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O	NS/O
10. Inquiry based learning opportunities are promoted and arranged across the content areas.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. √ represents a descriptor with supportive evidence. V represents a descriptor that was verbally shared with no evidence provided. NS/O represents a descriptor that was not shared or observed. A — represents a descriptor that a participant was unable to demonstrate due to the nature of the descriptor.

Table 5.4 indicates that Gale, Cindy, and Kara provided evidence to support that they implemented six of the seven descriptors for Criterion Four: Uses a Differentiated

Approach to Instruction. Jackie and Barbara provided evidence that they implemented four of the seven descriptors, and Diane, Sandy, and Don provided evidence for one of the seven descriptors.

In this section, I will provide the reader with an understanding of what a classroom looks like with a differentiated approach to instruction by looking at the instructional practices of Gale, Cindy, and Kara. Then, I will focus on the other participants and describe where their practices related to differentiation were lacking. It should be noted that in this criterion participants were weakest in that there were no descriptors that all participants provided evidence to support.

Gale, Cindy, and Kara provided evidence that their “schedules include a workshop approach to learning across the curriculum.” In each of these classrooms, the workshop approach is central to reading instruction. Cindy was one of the few participants who went deeper with her explanation of reading workshop and its effectiveness as an approach in other content areas.

I believe that I promote reading in my classroom through my mini-lessons. I really feel that if you were to walk in during reading workshop, kids are really engaged. Even my principal has said that students are engaged in our reading block. My mini-lessons are connected to our learning in reading and are based on where we need to improve. I have never ever felt that kids were not engaged and really enjoying reading during my reading workshop. I believe the same can be said for my math workshop. I connect student lessons to where they are and the areas they need to improve in.

In interviews it was evident that Gale, Cindy, and Kara taught explicit mini-lessons tailored to meet the needs of the majority of students. Cindy explained how her reading block implements this practice each day.

My reading block goes for an hour. I typically begin by explaining the reading goal for that day and repeat what we focused on from yesterday. The next part of the lesson is modeling. I might be modeling, jotting down my thinking. I might be using a graphic organizer that they eventually have and they might use. Clipboards, post its, they are jotting their thinking down after modeling what I am thinking. They would be jotting down their thoughts, turning and talking with their reading buddies, I might ask them to turn and talk. At the end of the mini-lesson, 20 minutes or a bit more, they go off and they are independently reading in their self-selected texts and practice strategies.

Gale explained how mini-lessons are a strategy that promotes student engagement. “Students can be challenged during the min-lesson to take their learning to another level because it is individualized for students.” Kara shared, “Mini-lessons are based on what I need to do and what I observe and see that kids need.”

Cindy then shared how daily small group reading instruction and conferences were provided to meet the diverse needs of students in reading. Cindy provided a reading conference template and lesson plans to support this claim.

I hold conferences with three students on a daily basis. Sometimes we pull together strategy groups based on conferencing or what I am observing. Then, we gather back in the meeting area for a few minutes after working. Today, we were working

on inferring so a few children shared words they had found and the inferences they had made while they were reading.

Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Kara, and Barbara “use prompts to activate successful problem solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension.” Kara explained how she prompts students.

So, when I am checking in with them [students], I will say, “What do you notice about yourself as a reader?” They might respond, “Really good, I can read all the words.” I might share, “I am noticing is that you are having a hard time showing me that you understand what you are reading, so a strategy for you might be stopping and checking for understanding.”

Jackie shared how she prompts students to deeper thinking. “I also have different responses that we do as a group sometimes. We’ll do things like summarize, this is one of the ways (artifact) that we can summarize a narrative text.”

In these classrooms quality literature is read, enjoyed, and analyzed across the various workshops. Kara explained that she sees read-aloud as an opportunity to promote reading and share the importance of reading great literature. “I promote reading because I love it so much and my enthusiasm comes through. I share with them all of this great literature by reading it aloud and by telling them what I am reading myself.”

Gale explained that why she believes that reading aloud to students is her most effective instructional tool.

My best teaching tool is my read-aloud book. All my struggling readers, advanced readers, they are hearing the same thing at the same time. I am reading *The Hunger Games* right now, that would be a book that they [struggling readers]

cannot read very easily on their own or at all. But, with read-aloud they are given an opportunity to enjoy a great book like everyone else. While I am reading aloud, I am going over café strategies, going over vocabulary, asking about characters, setting.

Jackie and Barbara provided evidence for four of the seven indicators. Similar to Gale and Cindy, they provided evidence that “daily small group reading and writing instruction was provided to meet the diverse needs of students, daily one-to-one reading and writing conferences were scheduled with students and prompts are used to activate successful problem-solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension.”

The one significant difference between the practices of Cindy and Gale and the practices of Jackie and Barbara was found in their inability to provide evidence that they include a workshop approach across the curriculum and that they tailor mini lessons to meet the needs of their students across the curriculum. While Jackie and Barbara provided evidence of these two indicators in their reading instruction, neither of them provided evidence that they took a similar approach to instruction in content areas like science and social studies.

Diane and Sandy, the two teachers required to teach basal reading programs adopted by their districts, provided evidence for one of the seven descriptors from Criterion Four in their classrooms. Both provided evidence of tailored mini-lessons and daily small group instruction to meet the diverse needs of students. Sandy shared that there was an emphasis placed on providing daily reading instruction to meet the diverse needs of students. The biggest challenge is that the instruction is connected to a textbook series and not individually self-selected texts. Sandy provided a glimpse into her reading

block when she explained, “The rest of the group (reading block) would be a combination of read-aloud, reading lessons, and work in our anthology. As the other kids start coming back from their Title 1 and Special Education, they need more reading. Then I do another reading lesson with the students returning because they need more reading instruction.”

Don also provided evidence of one of the seven descriptors from Criterion Four in his classroom and explained how prompts are used to activate successful problem solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension. Don also provided verbal evidence that daily small group reading instruction and conferences are part of his classroom. He shared, “You can see that if I do not individualize my reading instruction some students will make no progress because they are in texts that they are unable to read. At times, I feel kind of conflicted because if I stop looking at them and reading as closely with them then they will regress.”

Don provided evidence for how he prompts higher order thinking and deeper comprehension through poetry. He shared the poetry he reads each day and explained, “After we take our motor break, I read a poem, like a poem from Shel Silverstein. I read the poem twice and then we talk about it. Typically, I try to tie in some kind of literacy skill. Can someone give me a summary of this poem? What was the main idea?”

None of the participants referenced the use of mentor texts in their reading instruction. The use of mentor texts is a strategy where a teacher will use a story as a way to model a reading strategy. For example, a teacher might read *Two Bad Ants* by Chris Van Allsburg as a way to teach students how to make inferences while reading. While there were a variety examples of how participants use read-aloud as an opportunity

to model reading strategies, there were no specific examples of how teachers might incorporate picture books into their instruction.

In summary, when I examined Criterion Four, Diane and Sandy were two of three participants who were unable to provide sufficient evidence that the criterion's descriptors were present in their instructional practices. Sandy and Diane provided evidence for descriptor two, "explicit mini-lessons are tailored to meet the needs of the majority of students across the curriculum," and for descriptor three, "daily small group reading and writing instruction is provided to meet the diverse needs of students," but for none of the other descriptors. Don, another participant who was unable to provide sufficient evidence for Criterion Four, provided evidence for descriptor five, "prompts are used to activate successful problem-solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension" and descriptor eight, "quality literature is read, enjoyed and analyzed across the various workshops." None of the other descriptors from Criterion Four were present in his instructional practices.

I concluded from the analysis of Criterion 4, Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning, that this was the most challenging criterion from the ESAIL for participants to demonstrate was part of their instructional practice. Some of this appears to be related to the curriculum choices that were made by the schools and districts. For example, Diane and Sandy were both required to teach from scripted programs.

Summary of How Highly Efficacious Intermediate Teachers Employ Best Practices

In Reading Instruction For Struggling Readers

The first section, Criterion One: Creates a Literate Environment, describes the practices that illustrate literate classroom environments and emphasize the importance of

speaking, reading, and writing for all students. Three of the eight teachers who participated in the study demonstrated strength in this criterion by sharing evidence that they met all of the eight descriptors assessed. All participants had a minimum of five descriptors represented in their classrooms with all participants demonstrating the following: a variety of reading materials were discussed and enjoyed, classrooms were set up to promote collaboration, and problem solving is collaborative.

Diane, Gale, and Kara demonstrated that eight of the eight descriptors were present in their classrooms. Jackie, Cindy, and Barbara demonstrated that six of eight descriptors were present in their practice. Jackie did not share evidence that “co-constructed language charts were displayed on the walls,” or that “work areas are arranged to promote collaborative learning and problem solving.” Cindy and Barbara failed to share evidence that “reading responses were displayed,” and that “writing drafts were organized in writing portfolios.” Sandy demonstrated that five of eight descriptors were present in her practice, but she failed to share evidence that reading responses were displayed, writing drafts were organized in writing portfolios, and that engagement is maintained through meaningfulness and relevance to task. Don verbally shared that he had eight of the eight descriptors in his classroom, but he was only given credit for having six descriptors in place. He verbally shared that he followed these practices: “writing drafts are organized or displayed,” and “co-constructed language charts are displayed on the walls,” but he did not provide any artifacts to confirm this claim.

In examining Criterion One, it is evident that the participants were generally successful in Creating a Literate Learning Environment in their classrooms and that these practices were at the core of each participant’s classroom.

The second section, Criterion Two: Organizes the Classroom, describes a classroom that meets the criterion of a classroom that is organized to support a literate learning environment. As a whole, participants were rated as moderately successful in this criterion because none of the participants were able to share evidence that demonstrated that all descriptors in this criterion were evident in their classroom practices.

Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Don, Barbara and Kara were the most successful participants in this criterion by demonstrating that eight of the nine descriptors were evident in their classroom practices. These teachers provided evidence that schedules are displayed and routines are clearly established; space is carefully considered; teachers work space is organized for teaching across the curriculum; students' materials are organized and easily accessible; libraries contain an abundant amount of reading materials; libraries are clearly labeled and organized; literacy corner activities are organized; and summative and formative assessments are organized for instructional purposes. None were able to provide evidence of the following: student logs are organized and reflect integrated learning across the curriculum.

Two participants, Diane and Sandy, did not provide evidence that they were able to organize their classrooms in a manner that best meets the needs of struggling readers. Both were similar to the other participants in that they had their daily schedules displayed, classroom space organized, and students' materials organized and easily accessible. However, Diane and Sandy provided no evidence that any of the other descriptors from Criterion Two were found in her practice. They were unable to provide evidence that students logs were organized and reflected integrated learning, classroom

libraries contained an abundance of student reading materials, literature for read-aloud, big books, and charts were organized and accessible, books tubs were housed and clearly labeled, literacy corner tasks were organized and designed to meet the needs of individual learners.

The third section, Criterion Three: Uses Data To Inform Instruction and To Provide Systemic Interventions, describes a classroom teacher who uses data to inform instruction and to provide systemic interventions for students who might be struggling to learn concepts. Diane, Jackie, Gale, Cindy, Barbara, and Kara demonstrated strength in this criterion by sharing evidence that they met three of the four descriptors referenced in Criterion Three. All participants provided evidence that they use summative and formative assessments to determine where to begin instruction and how data are used across the curriculum to monitor student learning and shared how summative and formative assessments are used to tailor in class interventions. Sandy and Don were unable to share evidence that they used assessment data to tailor in-class interventions for their struggling learners. Nor, was Sandy able to provide evidence that data was used to monitor student growth and plan for instruction. None of the participants provided evidence that they collaborate with intervention teacher/s around student/s progress and collaboratively develop a plan of action.

Like Criterion One, it was evident that Criterion Three: Uses Data to Inform Instruction and Provides Systemic Interventions were generally evident in each participant's classroom practices.

The fourth section, Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning, describes a classroom that differentiates instruction so as to meet a wide range of learners. In

Criterion Four, unlike Criterion One where all eight teachers demonstrated strength in this criterion by sharing evidence that they met all the descriptors referenced in the criterion, only Gale, Cindy, and Kara were able to provide evidence that they met six of the seven descriptors identified in this criterion. Jackie and Barbara provided evidence of four of the descriptors, and Diane, Sandy, and Don provided evidence for one of the seven descriptors. Don, Diane, and Sandy were able to provide evidence that one descriptor was evident in their classrooms. Don provided evidence for “prompts are used to activate successful problem solving strategies” and Diane and Sandy provided evidence for “daily small group reading and writing instruction is provided to meet the diverse needs of students.” Don, Diane, and Sandy were unable to provide any evidence that the other six descriptors were evident in their practice.

In examining Criterion Four, it was evident that there was a greater range in the participants’ incorporation of differentiation into their classrooms when compared to the other criteria found in the ESAIL document. Although five participants showed evidence of six of the seven descriptors, Criterion Four had the largest number of participants, three, with low implementation levels.

Rating the Implementation of Best Practices In Reading Instruction For Struggling Readers by Highly Efficacious Intermediate Teachers

This section provides more interpretation related to the fourth research question which states, “To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of reading teacher self-efficacy (RTSE) report that they employ effective literacy practices as measured by modified ESAIL levels so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?” Table 5.5 displays the number of descriptors that indicate a high, average, or low level of implementation of

each criterion. Each criterion was examined, and a determination was made of whether a participant was a high, moderate, or low implementer based on how many descriptors were present in each participant’s classroom practice.

Table 5.5. Number of Descriptors Indicating a High, Average, or Low Level of Implementation of Each ESAIL Criterion

	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4
High (Descriptors met)	7 or 8	8, 9, 10	4	6 or 7
Moderate (Descriptors met)	5 or 6	6 or 7	3	4 or 5
Low (Descriptors met)	≤ 4	≤ 5	≤ 2	≤ 3

In Criterion One: Creates a Literate Classroom, a participant who provided evidence for seven or eight of the descriptors was rated with “High Implementation” for that criterion, while a participant who provided evidence for five or six descriptors for Criterion One was rated with Moderate Implementation, and if a participant had four or fewer descriptors present, he or she was rated with Low Implementation. Although providing evidence of all indicators in the four criteria considered on the ESAIL is the most desirable level of implementation, these scores are based on the number of indicators in each category of the group studied. For a participant to receive a High rating, he or she would have had to present evidence of > 75% of the descriptors in each domain. For a Moderate rating, he or she would have had to present 51%-75% of the descriptors in each domain. And, for a Low rating the participant would have presented ≤ 50% of the descriptors in each domain.

Table 5.6. Participant Implementation Rates Within Each Criterion

Participant	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4
Diane	High	Low	High	Low
Jackie	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
Gale	High	High	High	High
Cindy	Moderate	High	High	High
Sandy	Low	Low	Low	Low
Don	Moderate	High	Low	Low
Barbara	Low	High	High	Moderate
Kara	High	High	High	High

Chapter 5 presented data related to each participant’s instructional practices in reading and their alignment with the ESAIL, more specifically the following four criteria: 1) Creates a Literate Learning Environment, 2) Organizes the Classroom, 3) Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Systemic Interventions, and 4) Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning. The descriptions presented in Chapter 5 resulted in major observations about this cohort of high efficacy teachers. Some of these observations include: a) Six of eight teachers with high levels of teacher efficacy were either highly or moderately successful in implementing best practices in instruction identified in Criterion One: Creates a Literate Learning Environment and in Criterion Three: Uses Data to Inform Instruction and Provides Systemic Interventions; b) Six of eight teachers with high levels of teacher efficacy were highly successful in implementing best practices identified in Criterion Two: Organizes the Classroom in a manner that is most effective at meeting the needs of struggling readers; c) Teachers with high levels of reading teacher

efficacy were more likely to struggle with the implementation of Criterion Four: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning than any of the other criteria studied.

Table 5.6 summarizes how successfully each participant, as an individual teacher, has implemented the ESAIL Criteria into his or her classroom. After analysis was conducted, teachers were rated in one of three ways: High Implementation, Moderate Implementation, or Low Implementation.

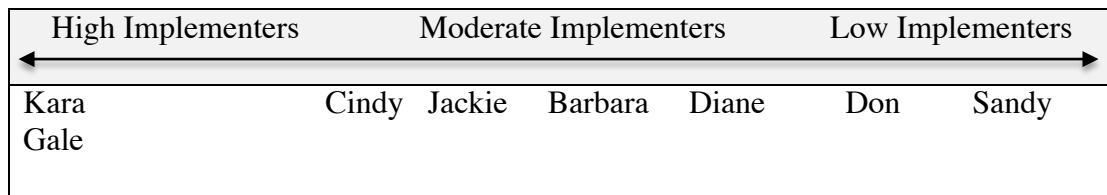
Table 5.7. Summary of the Implementation of the ESAIL Criteria

Participant	High Implementation	Moderate Implementation	Low Implementation
Gale	1,2,3,4		
Kara	1,2,3,4		
Jackie	2 and 3	1 and 4	
Cindy	2, 3 and 4	1	
Barbara	2 and 3	4	1
Diane	1 and 3		2 and 4
Don	2	1	3 and 4
Sandy			1,2,3,4

Table 5.7 shows which participants most successfully demonstrated the implementation of the four criteria into their classrooms and which participants did not. Two teachers, Kara and Gale, were rated as being high implementers in each of the four criteria. Three teachers, Jackie, Cindy, and Barbara, were rated as being high implementers in three of the four criteria. However, it should be noted that while Jackie and Cindy were rated as moderate implementers in Criterion One, Barbara was rated as a low implementer of Criterion One. This difference in rating resulted in their separation on the continuum described below. One teacher, Diane, was rated as being a high implementer in two criteria. Don was rated as being a high implementer in only one of the four criteria. Sandy was the only participant, who was not rated as a high implementer in any of the four criteria.

Another way to display these data is found in Figure 5.1. This illustrates a summary of the practices of each participant when compared to the ESAIL criteria. Each participant was rated and placed on the continuum of implementation. Participants were placed on the continuum as a high implementer, moderate implementer, low implementer, or somewhere in between one of these ratings.

Figure 5.1 Continuum of Implementation of ESAIL Criteria One through Four



High Implementers

One sees that Kara and Gale were the two participants who were at the high end of the continuum with a rating of high in all four criteria of the ESAIL. For these reasons, Kara and Gale are considered High Implementers. With regard to both participants, it was evident that there were some differences between the two related to professional experience. Gale has taught for eighteen years and has only taught fifth grade. Kara has taught for half that number of years, nine, and has taught at three different grade levels during her career. Kara does not have a master’s degree, while Gale has a Master’s in Literacy. Both teachers did receive undergraduate degrees in education and currently teach in urban settings.

However, when focusing on instructional practices, there were many similarities between the two. At the core of their instruction, both teachers follow a reading workshop approach and have classrooms where children self-select books based on interest and their individual reading levels. They promote literature in their classrooms

by reading aloud to students and by providing students with time each day to read independently. Both teachers use assessment data to design mini-lessons that are designed to meet students' learning needs.

When both teachers reflected on their growth as teachers and their ability to meet a range of learners, they cited teachers and school administration working together to improve instructional practices as the main reason for their own personal growth. The one significant difference between Gale and Kara was the amount of time spent on reading instruction. Gale shared that she spends one hundred and ninety-five minutes per day while Kara shared that she spends ninety minutes per day. This significant difference in instructional time may be attributed to Gale's belief that teachers are teaching reading throughout the day, across all curriculum areas.

Moderate to High Implementers

Moving across the continuum towards those who are between moderate and high implementers, there are two teachers, Jackie and Cindy who were rated as being high implementers in three of the four criteria. On the fourth criterion, Jackie and Cindy were rated as being moderate. For these reasons, Jackie and Cindy are considered moderate to high implementers.

There were some differences related to professional experience between Jackie and Cindy. Jackie obtained education degrees as part of her undergraduate education and Cindy obtained her degree through a teacher certification program after graduating from college. Cindy has a master's degree and Jackie does not.

Instructionally, there were some similarities and differences between both of these participants located in this section of the continuum. Both teachers have classrooms that

are organized to promote literacy learning at the elementary levels. They also demonstrated that they use assessments, both formative and summative, to inform their instruction and provide interventions for their struggling readers. At the core of their instruction is a reading workshop approach, and they provide students with time to read self-selected books independently. Jackie and Cindy indicated that read-aloud was evident in their practice.

Along with the similarities among the practices of Jackie and Cindy, there were two differences. One was the amount of time dedicated to reading instruction. Cindy spent sixty minutes a day while Jackie spent one hundred and ninety-five minutes daily. Another difference is Jackie teaches in an urban setting while Cindy teaches in a rural part of the state. Jackie and Cindy were both rated as moderate in Criterion One and were missing different descriptors from that criterion.

When examining the instructional practices of Jackie and Cindy, moderate to high implementers compared to Kara and Gale, high implementers, it was evident that there were differences. Jackie's classroom displayed no evidence of co-constructed language charts. These charts are intended to capture the essence of each mini-lesson while serving as a reference for students throughout the year. Without this evidence, it was difficult to assess what instructional topics had been covered in reading during that academic year. It also should be noted that the desks in Jackie's classroom were arranged in rows making it difficult to envision collaborative learning and problem solving taking place on a regular basis in her classroom. In Gale and Kara's classrooms, there were language charts found posted in their classrooms and on easels in their meeting areas, and their students were grouped in small desk clusters to support collaborative work.

Cindy, another moderate to high implementer, failed to provide student work samples that showed that student engagement was maintained or that her classroom environment was conducive to inquiry-based learning. She provided no evidence that learners were engaged in constructive interactions around purposeful literary events. In comparison, Gale and Kara provided several examples of how they engaged their students in reading. They shared projects and units of study based upon books they were using as a read-aloud in class or had read as part of their book clubs.

Moderate to Low Implementers

As we move further down the continuum towards low implementers, Barbara, Diane, and Don are listed. Barbara was a high implementer in three criteria, and a low implementer in one. Diane was rated as a high implementer in two criteria and a low implementer in two. Don was rated as a high implementer in one, a moderate implementer in one, and a low implementer in two criteria. Barbara was rated as high in Criterion Four: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning while Diane and Don rated low in Criterion Four.

There were also some differences related to professional experience between Barbara, Diane, and Don. Barbara and Diane obtained their education degrees as part of their undergraduate education, and Don obtained his degree through a teacher certification program after graduating from college. Diane has a Master's Degree in Literacy and Barbara and Don do not. Diane teaches in a rural setting while Barbara and Don teach in urban settings.

When examining their instructional strategies, I found differences among Barbara, Diane, and Don. Barbara used a Reading Workshop approach, and Diane and Don

followed an instructional program other than reading workshop. Diane taught from an anthology, and Don taught using a Guided Reading approach to instruction. Barbara taught reading for forty-five minutes a day. Diane and Don spent ninety minutes a day on reading instruction.

When the instructional practices of Barbara, Diane, and Don were compared to Kara and Gale, it was evident there were differences across the criteria. While Kara and Gale were high implementers in all four criteria, Barbara, Diane, and Don had a mix of high, moderate, and low implementation scores.

Barbara's classroom displayed no evidence of reading responses or writing drafts that were organized in writing portfolios or displayed on walls in her classroom or in hallways. She failed to provide student work samples that showed that her students were expected to share their ability to comprehend text through writing.

Diane and Don provided limited evidence showing that they effectively supported the range of readers that existed in their classrooms. Diane's classroom library was not organized with books for independent student reading, and she did not share any books that she had used to read-aloud to students. Their classroom schedules did not reflect a Reading Workshop approach and they did not provide any evidence that they held reading conferences with each student. Don provided no evidence of mini-lessons that were tailored to meet the needs of students or that small group instruction was provided to meet the diverse needs of students.

Gale and Kara provided several examples of how Reading Workshop was at the core of their instructional practices by sharing examples of how they organized their students for conferences, designed mini-lessons, and provided small group instruction to

meet the wide range of learners in their classrooms. They shared projects and units of study based upon books they were using as a read-aloud in class or had read as part of their book clubs.

Low Implementer

Sandy was the only participant who was rated Low on all four criteria on the ESAIL, and this explains her placement on the Continuum of Implementation. Sandy has taught for thirteen years at multiple grade levels. She obtained an undergraduate degree in education, teaches in a rural area, and does not have a master's degree.

At the core of Sandy's reading instruction is the expectation that she teach a prescribed reading/language arts program, the *Journeys* Anthology by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. She described her reading instruction as students reading all the same stories from a textbook and then answering questions in worksheets. Sandy was one of three participants who did not provide evidence that her schedule includes a workshop approach for teaching across the curriculum.

When Sandy reflected on her growth as a reading teacher, she expressed frustration that she is no longer as responsive to student needs as she was when she began her teaching career. She shared that her instructional practices in reading were less developed than when she began her teaching career, and she attributes this to the district and school administration's response to low district scores on high stakes testing.

When comparing the instructional practices of Sandy, a low implementer, to Kara and Gale, high implementers, it was evident that there were significant differences in their instructional practices. Sandy was responsible for teaching a program. She was expected to keep up with the instructional pace of the other teachers in her school and

have students complete the corresponding worksheets for each chapter. Due to the structure of the program, Sandy was unable to place much emphasis on developing a joy of reading in her students.

In comparison, Kara and Gale promoted literature in their classrooms by reading to students each day and by providing students with time each day to read independently. Their classroom libraries were organized and contained a variety of book titles to satisfy a range of interests and abilities. Both teachers demonstrated that they had the ability to meet the range of readers that existed in their classrooms by using assessment data to design mini-lessons that met individual student's learning needs.

Summary of Analysis and Rating of Teachers on the ESAIL

This chapter presented an overview and analysis of the data related to each participant's instructional practices in reading and their alignment with the ESAIL and more specifically the following four criteria: 1) Creates a Literate Learning Environment, 2) Organizes the Classroom, 3) Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Systemic Interventions, and 4) Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning.

The analysis of the data from the ESAIL indicated that seven of the eight teachers incorporated some of the instructional practices that are necessary to meet the needs of struggling readers as measured by the ESAIL. Regardless of the length of time that these participants have been teaching, whether they teach in a rural or urban setting or obtained a master's degree, all of these high efficacy teachers incorporated some of these instructional practices into their classrooms.

The high implementers incorporated the majority of the indicators of the ESAIL by using a variety of reading materials so that books were enjoyed, discussed and

analyzed across the curriculum. Students collaborated in classrooms that were organized in a manner to support reading instruction by recognizing the need for all students to work with classmates of all abilities in whole and small groups. These high implementers used data to plan instruction, monitor student progress, and inform future instruction. At the core of their instructional practices was the idea that students should be met where they are as readers and supported in their growth.

The moderate implementers incorporated many of the indicators of the ESAIL, but were missing some as well. While there was no consistent pattern to what indicators were missing, all of the moderate implementers were missing several indicators from all four domains. Some participants did not provide evidence that supported that they taught mini-lessons. Others failed to provide student samples that illustrated student engagement or that students were able to share their ability to comprehend text through writing. As a whole, these moderate implementers appeared to understand the need to meet students where they were as readers, but for different reasons had yet to incorporate many of the indicators into their practices.

The low implementer incorporated some of the indicators of the ESAIL, but provided no evidence for many of them. There was no evidence that there were high levels of individual student engagement in reading or that quality literature was read and enjoyed across the curriculum. The classroom library had limited texts, and there was no system of organization recognizing the different reading abilities of the students in her classroom. She provided no evidence that she used data to inform instruction or to provide interventions for student who were struggling to read. Since this participant was responsible for teaching reading from a structured program that she was expected to teach

with fidelity, her ability to implement many of the indicators found in the ESAIL was limited.

As a group, the one area where teachers with high levels of reading teacher efficacy struggled was with classroom differentiation. While all participants incorporated some aspects of differentiation into their classrooms, there were no descriptors that were identified as being present in all of their classrooms. Aside from the area of differentiation, it was evident that most of these highly efficacious teachers implemented many practices that were aligned to the ESAIL and supported the growth of struggling readers in the classroom.

None of these high efficacy teachers provided an indication that they believed in or had been influenced by the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn.” There was no evidence to support the notion that the intermediate teachers in this study viewed teaching the range of readers in their classrooms as something other than their responsibility.

However, we are still left wondering why a group of high efficacy teachers, who believe they are effective reading teachers, were not all high implementers as measured by the ESAIL. Why did a range of High, Moderate, and Low implementers exist within this group of high efficacy teachers? If these are the practices that support the learning of all readers, why were they not all present in each high efficacy teacher’s classroom? Below, I identify several environmental factors that impacted the instruction of each high efficacy teacher. The presentation of these factors provides the reader with a deeper understanding of each participant’s ability to incorporate best practices into his or her classroom as measured by the ESAIL.

Range of Implementation of Literacy Practices:

Interplay Among Environmental Factors and Individual Responses

Environmental factors refer to circumstances outside of a participant's control that influenced the instructional practices of high efficacy teachers. The participants viewed environmental factors as either supportive or confounding to their instructional practices and were identified under the following headings: Curriculum Choices, Influence of Leadership, and Learning and Collaborating with Colleagues. There were a variety of responses to these environmental factors that became evident through analysis. Some participants embraced these environmental factors when they were aligned to their personal philosophies about teaching reading. Other participants pushed back against them or reluctantly embraced them because they felt as if they had no other choice. In some instances, participants identified these environmental factors as having the biggest impact on their most current instructional practices in reading.

Along with the environmental factors that influenced the instructional practices of the participants, there was also a deeper inter-play that existed among these environmental factors and how individuals responded to them. As noted in Chapter Four, participants were categorized as belonging to one of three groups: Compliant, Independent, and Collaborative. The Compliant participants believed that their response to mandates was the most significant factor in their core instructional practices. The Independent participant believed that the most significant factor in her core instructional practices was in how she responded to her principal's trust to develop her own instructional practices; the Collaborative participants believed that the most significant

factor in their core instructional practices was in how they responded to working in schools where learning together was promoted.

Curriculum Choices

Curriculum choice was one of the environmental factors that impacted the instruction of high efficacy teachers. All of the teachers at the higher end of the Continuum of Implementation taught in districts and schools that adopted curriculum, like Reading Workshop, that was aligned to best practices and reflected a commitment to the range of readers that existed in their classrooms. Kara and Gale were high implementers and shared how they benefitted from districts that supported instructional practices that were aligned with the needs of struggling readers. These participants shared examples of frameworks of instruction as well as the materials that had been purchased to support the range of readers that existed in their classrooms.

The teachers at the lower end of the Continuum of Implementation worked in districts and schools that made programming decisions that negatively impacted teachers' abilities to meet the range of readers in their classrooms. Diane and Sandy, two implementers at the lower levels of the continuum, taught in districts and schools that required that they teach from a scripted curriculum with strict implementation guidelines. They faced a choice between teaching from these programs with fidelity, as was expected by their district and school administration, or straying from their programs and incorporating practices that better reflected the needs of the readers in their classrooms. Diane explained, "Three years ago because the test scores were so low in the district, the district purchased a curriculum we were required to teach. We were forced to shelve many of the instructional practices that we were using."

Diane and Sandy described the adoption of their district's reading curricula as something they were given to teach in response to low reading scores. Neither participant made reference to a program selection process or discussion that took place between administration and teachers about the adoption of the program. Sandy and Diane were compliant in their response to the new program and accepted that the instructional practices that they were expected to use were not up for discussion. "Just follow the program and everything will work out" was the message that these teachers heard.

Sandy described her instruction in reading as a list of lessons and worksheets she needed to cover each week. These were not practices that invited discussion with colleagues and appeared to stifle discussion and collaboration. Since Diane and Sandy were required to comply with district mandates, they were less able than other high efficacy teachers to provide examples of instructional practices that were aligned with best practices and supported struggling readers.

With that said, participants complied with mandates differently. Diane was rated as moderate implementer while Sandy, with many similarities, was rated as a low implementer. Both of these participants worked in schools where they did not consider their principals to be educational leaders. Their districts embraced instructional programs without talking with teachers about their benefits before they were purchased. The programs were viewed as "teacher proof" by district administration, could be taught by all teachers, regardless of their experience, and were chosen in response to low-test scores. As a result, their schools or districts offered no professional development or time to collaborate with colleagues.

When Diane and Sandy were asked to elaborate on their core instructional practices, it was evident that their rating was the result of their response to these instructional mandates. Diane, the participant who was rated more highly, pushed back against the decision-making process and made demands on leadership about what grade level materials she would use. She refused to teach the program with fidelity and supplemented it with many of the instructional strategies that she had used throughout her career. She demanded a range of materials to meet the range of learners in her classroom. Sandy, the low implementer, taught the program as it was intended and abandoned many of the practices that she once used. Although she expressed frustration with the program, eventually she complied and taught the program the way she was told to teach it.

Cindy, the Independent who was a moderate implementer, was free to choose curriculum and instructional methods she deemed best. Fortunately, she had learned about Best Practices on her own and had the opportunity to employ them.

Influence of Leadership

Leadership was another environmental factor that impacted the instruction of the high efficacy participants. All of the participants referenced the positive and negative influence that leadership, school and/or district, played on the instructional practices in their classrooms.

Several teachers, high and moderate implementers, shared how they benefitted from school cultures where their principals were educational leaders who promoted best practices in reading instruction. For example, several described how they learned from their principals about the importance of reading aloud each day to their students. These teachers believed that their instructional practices developed because they collaborated

with educational leaders who embraced the practices identified in the ESAIL document and understood a leader's role in supporting the growth of teachers. In these schools, teachers and principals collaborated on learning about, planning for, and implementing effectively solid literacy teaching practices to benefit all students.

Cindy believed she benefitted from her principal's leadership approach, which was to trust her to implement instructional strategies that best met the needs of her students. Cindy implemented instructional strategies based on the learning she acquired while pursuing her Master's Degree in Literacy. She implemented a variety of best practices and purchased her own materials to support them. Cindy explained how being viewed by school leadership as an independent learner influenced her instructional practices in reading. Cindy described what it was like to work in a school where her principal never told her how to teach reading. She was supported by her principal to "learn to how to best teach" her students. She explained that learning and collaborating with colleagues did not have a significant influence on her instructional practices and the greatest impact on her practices was the confidence her principal indicated he had in her.

In Cindy's case, the experience of being independent did not have the same negative influence on her instruction that forced compliance had for Diane and Sandy. Cindy responded to the trust she was given to make appropriate decisions about her curriculum and was inspired to continue to develop her reading instruction throughout her career. The experience of being independent provided Cindy with the confidence to make instructional decisions that better supported struggling readers. She purchased the *Units of Study in Teaching Reading* by Lucy Calkins with her own money, which provided her with the structure to follow a Reading Workshop Model. This structure

helped Cindy to create an atmosphere of learning and be more focused on individual student learning in reading.

When school and/or district administrators did not have an understanding of best practices in reading instruction, they made instructional changes that negatively impacted teachers and students. Diane and Sandy explained how their instructional practices in reading were negatively impacted by school and district leadership. They shared examples of their instructional practices prior to their districts' mandated changes to instruction. On the surface, their practices appeared to be better aligned with the ESAIL than the practices they were now expected to employ in their classrooms.

These teachers described their principals as leaders who did not take an active role in reading instruction in their schools. They viewed their principals as leaders who did not have a deep understanding of reading instruction at the elementary level and were simply enforcing district expectations that their principals did not fully understand themselves. In these instances, leadership negatively influenced the selection and implementation of instructional practices.

Learning and Collaborating with Colleagues

Another environmental factor that impacted a high efficacy teachers' ability to employ best practices in reading instruction was whether or not teachers were provided with the opportunity to learn in their schools and districts. In the schools where the high to moderate implementers taught, the opportunity to learn was a formal part of the school's culture. These teachers, and their students, benefitted from cultures where teachers learned with and from their principals. They cited professional books like *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and *Reading With Meaning* by Debbie Miller

that were focal points of their school-based professional development. These teachers shared artifacts like the district-wide instructional expectations along with specific examples of the professional development that had been provided for them so they could develop new instructional strategies to better meet the needs of their students. They shared examples of how they learned to collaborate with colleagues, track student progress in reading, and provide interventions that met the needs of their struggling readers.

Kara and Gale, high implementers, shared examples of how a collaborative school environment influenced their instructional practices. These collaborative teachers responded to the opportunity to learn with their principals. This collaboration led to changes in their instructional practices and allowed each of them to learn how to better meet the needs of students. District leadership collaborated with principals and teachers and provided resources, like books for their classroom libraries that met the range of readers in their classrooms. Kara and Gale shared examples of using data in collaborate with other teachers and designing instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers.

When teachers collaborated with school leadership, the implementation of best practices appeared to occur more quickly and more fully. Collaboration with school leadership provided teachers with the opportunity to work through challenges with implementation and to learn with and from colleagues. Scheduled collaboration time afforded teachers and leadership the necessary time to use data to identify struggling readers, inform instructional practices, and develop interventions for students who were not benefitting from instruction.

These high efficacy teachers valued the time they were provided to work with colleagues. They shared that this collaboration time was valuable because it allowed teachers to navigate new instructional expectations, review data, discuss student progress, share resources, and plan for instruction. In the schools where the high implementers taught, collaboration was an expectation of the school's leadership team and a formal part of the school's culture. Collaboration was honored with time for teachers to meet during and after school each week. These teachers shared examples of how working collaboratively benefitted their instructional practices as well as the students that they taught.

In the instances when leadership was directive about programming, the response of participants was to comply by following the program as expected. Diane lamented a lack of collaboration with her principal and described him as someone who knew nothing about teaching reading. She also described her curriculum coordinator as a textbook person who did not trust teachers to be able to teach a range of readers in their classrooms.

Cindy, who was categorized as Independent, described a school environment where she was trusted to institute practices that met the needs of her students. Working independently, Cindy learned about the practices that she wanted to implement, purchased the necessary materials, and designed an instructional block that reflected best practices in reading instruction. Although, Cindy described no formal structure for collaboration in her school, this teacher was willing to serve as a resource for teachers in her building who wished to further develop their own instructional practices in reading.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented data related to the fourth research question, “To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of reading teacher self-efficacy (RTSE) report that they employ effective literacy practices as measured by modified ESAIL levels so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?” The chapter examined each participant’s instructional practices as they related to his or her ability to meet the needs of struggling readers. The data presented significant information about high efficacy teachers and three environmental factors: Curriculum Choices, Influence of Leadership and Learning and Collaborating with Colleagues that can impact a high efficacy teacher’s ability to meet the needs of struggling readers. Along with these structural influences, an inter-play existed among them and resulted in the individual responses to the expectations for teaching literacy in their schools.

Chapter Six provides a summary of the study by elaborating on the major observations identified in Chapter Five. The chapter considers the relationships among these major observations and elaborates on the findings in a discussion of their connection to the literature on teacher self-efficacy and teaching reading especially to struggling readers. It suggests some implications for school and district leaders, teacher preparation programs, and other researchers.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter begins by revisiting the problem that was established in Chapter 1. I present the design of the study, its limitations, and the findings. I then explain how each finding connects back to the literature and the conceptual framework. The discussion concludes with the original conceptual framework along with additions based on new learning from the study. The chapter discusses the implications for educators, higher education, and policy makers. It introduces possibilities for further research.

The problem as Chapter 1 describes is that when schools and classroom teachers are unable to successfully intervene on behalf of struggling readers, students continue to struggle in reading, as well as other academic areas, throughout their academic careers. A misinterpretation of Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* was introduced as possibly contributing to the inability of intermediate teachers to effectively respond to the needs of struggling readers. Teacher efficacy is put forth as a possible explanation for how teachers may overcome this longstanding misinterpretation. Since there is a gap in the research related to reading teacher efficacy and its relationship to teaching practices and the way classroom teachers work with struggling readers at the intermediate levels, this study sought to explore the literacy practices of teachers with strong beliefs in their reading teaching efficacy.

Design

The overarching goal of this study was to deepen our understanding of the practices that highly efficacious intermediate grade teachers incorporate into their

classrooms to support the needs of struggling readers. The following four research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: What are the levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy of the teachers from intermediate schools in Maine that receive Title 1 Funds?

RQ 2: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy levels in Title 1 schools describe their core instructional practices in reading?

RQ 3: How do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools describe the instructional supports that they provide in their classrooms for struggling readers?

RQ 4: To what extent do intermediate teachers with high levels of Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy in Title 1 schools report that they employ best practices in literacy instruction so as to meet the needs of struggling readers?

A sequential mixed method design with a defined two-phase approach was used.

The first phase was the quantitative phase where numeric data were collected using a paper survey to determine the reading teacher efficacy levels of thirty participants. In the second phase, I explored the relationship between high reading teacher self-efficacy beliefs and the classroom practices that intermediate teachers incorporate into their classrooms to meet the needs of struggling readers. The sequential mixed method design allowed me to explore the instructional practices in reading of eight highly efficacious teachers.

Setting

For this mixed method study, schools were selected based on these criteria: an intermediate school in Maine that receives Title 1 funding. Intermediate schools were

selected because during the process of developing the literature review, it became evident that there was void in the research focused on reading instruction for struggling readers at the intermediate levels. Furthermore, this research focused on Maine schools in an effort to make participants more available for an interview in each participant's classroom.

The second criterion, that a school must receive Title 1 funds, was chosen because research shows that there is a strong correlation between students who live in poverty and a lack of achievement in reading. Since each school was a Title 1 school, there was a greater likelihood that each participant had experience working with struggling readers in his or her classroom.

Thirteen intermediate schools in Maine were identified by the Department of Education. One of the thirteen schools was exempted because I was the principal during the data collection phase and another school was exempted because it did not receive Title 1 funds. The remaining eleven school principals were contacted via email and phone where I requested that I present my study and recruit participation at an upcoming staff meeting. Four principals eventually agreed to my request and allowed me to seek participation in my study in their schools.

Participants

The prospective candidates were teachers who taught reading at the intermediate level in Title 1 Schools in Maine. Individual participants who wished to participate in Phase 1 of the study were required to meet the following criteria: be a classroom teacher who teaches reading and have three or more years of teaching experience. It should be noted that two participants completed the survey with each only having taught for one year. Because of this, they were eliminated for consideration from Phase 2. In the

second phase, eight classroom teachers were selected for two follow-up interviews. The purposeful sampling strategy in selecting these teachers was extreme case sampling (Creswell & Plano, 2007) in which intermediate teachers were identified for having high levels of reading teacher efficacy based on the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument. Due to the sequential nature of the design, participation in the second phase depended on the results from the first phase and focused on examining the reading teaching practices of the eight classroom teachers who were identified in the first phase because of their high levels of reading teacher efficacy. Eight classroom teachers were selected for one structured and one semi-structured interview.

Data Collection

The Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (Mokhtari & Szabo, 2004) was created to determine teacher candidates' beliefs in their ability to teach reading effectively and their beliefs in their ability to positively impact students' learning of reading. Szabo and Mokhtari field-tested the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) with a group of teacher candidates and determined that it was a valid and reliable instrument. For this study, I slightly modified the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument to determine the reading teacher self-efficacy levels of thirty intermediate teachers and to identify classroom teachers with high reading teacher self-efficacy levels for participation in phase two, the qualitative phase. The survey consisted of two instruments: a background questionnaire and the modified Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument. The first instrument asked questions related to the demographics of the participants and included questions related to the number of years spent teaching reading at the intermediate levels, the grade levels taught, the number of years at each grade level. The

data from all teachers who completed the survey were analyzed to provide descriptive data about the sample to determine efficacy levels of individual participants.

In the second phase, eight classroom teachers were selected for two follow-up interviews. The purposeful sampling strategy in selecting these teachers was extreme case sampling (Creswell & Plano, 2007) in which intermediate teachers were identified for having high levels of reading teacher efficacy based on the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument. The interview questions were based on the Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL) and were designed to allow participants an opportunity to provide a verbal description of their teaching and share artifacts that supported the descriptions of their instructional practices. Eight classroom teachers were selected for these interviews. The first interview allowed participants to describe their instructional practices in reading each day, provide an overview of the diverse needs of their readers, and reflect on the growth of their instructional practices over time. This interview was conducted over the phone and then transcribed. The second interview was face-to-face in each participant's classroom and the questions focused on the instructional practices that were in place to support struggling readers. In both instances, the researcher audio recorded the interview, photographed artifacts, and took notes during and after the interview in his reflective journal.

Data Analysis

Data were organized and notes and thoughts about possible categories for organizing the data were made while listening to each recording of the first and second interviews. Once each interview was manually transcribed, I sought feedback from the participants on the transcripts and then codes were assigned. As I reflected more deeply

on the data, I developed profiles of each participant's core instructional practices in reading. Next, each participant was ranked on the modified ESAIL document based on my field notes, interview transcripts, and the participant matrices that were created throughout the interviews. This allowed me to summarize each person's classroom practices based on interview responses, pictures of each classroom environment, and artifacts that were shared during the second interview.

Limitations

The overall focus of the study was to explore the extent to which high efficacy reading teachers employed instructional practices considered to be the most effective in meeting the needs of struggling readers in the intermediate grades. It should be noted that the intent of this study was not to assess high efficacy teachers' success at teaching reading to struggling readers. The sequential mixed method methodology used in this study yielded useful data. As with all studies, however, the results are shaped by several limitations.

Thirty participants completed the survey and, after analysis, ten teachers were identified as having high efficacy scores, ten were identified as having average efficacy scores, and ten were identified as having low efficacy scores. Of the ten with high efficacy scores, eight agreed to be interviewed for the study. I attempted to overcome selection bias by encouraging participation from as many people as possible when I visited each school. I explained my study, shared the surveys and then left the surveys along with self-addressed stamped envelopes for participants to complete at a later date. Teachers were able to complete the survey confidentially, in a limited amount of time and apart from the judgment of others. I also stressed to prospective participants that the

survey was the first step in the data collection process and that teachers were under no obligation to continue in the study after completing the survey.

The first limitation of the study is related to the small sample of four Maine intermediate schools. Thirteen intermediate schools in Maine were identified by the Department of Education. One of the thirteen schools was exempted because it did not receive Title 1 funds and another was exempted because I was the principal. The remaining eleven school principals were recruited to participate. Ultimately, I was satisfied with the four school principals who responded in a reasonable amount of time and agreed to allow me to recruit teacher participation at a staff meeting. I am confident that a greater emphasis on recruiting would have resulted in a more robust number of participants. No comparison of these four schools to other intermediate schools in Maine or beyond was done; consequently, I am unable to generalize the results of this study to either population.

In an effort to address a selection bias that may be the result of participants volunteering for the study, I attended a staff meeting at each of the four schools and teachers were given an opportunity to learn about my study and complete the Reading Teacher Survey. It is difficult to say whether teachers participated because they already viewed themselves as effective reading teachers or if they chose not to participate because they saw themselves as ineffective reading teachers. By voluntarily electing to participate, there is some likelihood that these teachers viewed themselves as successful and do not represent a cross-section of all intermediate teachers. It is unlikely that teachers felt compelled to complete the survey because I left it for teachers to complete on their own time. I believe I received a good cross-section of participants for the study

because I had an excellent response rate of ninety-four percent and participation from two rural and two urban schools in Maine.

The second limitation arises from the reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews. Surveys can produce great variance in how participants understand and respond to questions. Participants report on their personal beliefs, and it is difficult to say how accurately they assess themselves. In an effort to address these concerns, I created the Reading Teacher Survey that was based on the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004). Analysis was completed to ensure that the instrument was reliable. I piloted the survey, along with my adaptations, with classroom teachers prior to using it for this study.

While the interviews provided participants with an opportunity to describe in detail their instructional practices, I was only able to analyze the information that was shared with me. Some participants were extremely talkative and provided an abundance of information, while others were more reserved and did not expand very much on their responses. Second, it can be challenging to say with certainty that a participant's professed instructional practices during an interview accurately reflect the practices employed in a classroom. Participants may have self-reported that their instructional practices reflected many of the best practices highlighted in the ESAIL, but without observing each participant teaching students, it could be difficult to say if what was shared in the interview was accurate.

In an effort to address some of the limitations of interviews, I conducted two of them. The first interview was on the phone with questions focused on each participant's instructional practices. The second interview was conducted in each participant's

classroom and was focused on aspects of the ESAIL. This provided each participant with an opportunity to expand his or her responses from the first interview while allowing me to probe their instructional supports for struggling readers. Most importantly, I encouraged teachers to share artifacts to validate the claims they had made during both interviews. In some cases, a participant might not have directly referenced an instructional practice, but the classroom setting provided evidence affirming that a practice was in place. While the presentation of artifacts does not allow the researcher to say with full certainty that each participant taught the way they asserted, the artifacts certainly helped to bolster their claims. And while a fuller treatment of this study's questions would require observations and more interviews, for the purpose of this study, these methods proved to be reasonably trustworthy.

The third limitation was related to my own subjectivity about teaching reading at the intermediate levels. As a school principal, I have developed strong feelings about the most effective ways to teach reading which were addressed in Chapter 3. In an effort to address this identified bias, I consulted with my dissertation advisor and committee members. I also monitored and considered my own subjectivity around the teaching of reading during the period of data collection. I was aware of my own biases and sought to be as objective as possible in documenting a participant's practices or beliefs. My data were triangulated by using the interview data to assess and verify the survey data, and by triangulating interviews, artifacts, and reflective journal entries. My reflective journal allowed me to record reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about each participant's responses and allowed me to keep my identified bias "front and center" during the analysis of data.

Along with triangulation, I compared the instructional practices that were shared to the modified ESAIL document. This allowed me to compare each participant's practices to a standard other than my own. I believe that the comparison of these data sources to the ESAIL added confidence to the trustworthiness of these findings. To the extent that I was unable to monitor my beliefs about reading instruction, the findings of this study may lean toward my belief that classroom teachers who differentiate instructional practices that are rooted in a reading workshop approach are the most effective at meeting the needs of struggling readers.

This study faithfully followed a well-designed methodology that yielded sufficient, comparable data for analytic purposes. Further thematic distinctions were apparent and permitted the establishment of some findings. Nevertheless, limitations should remind us that they are not irrefutable conclusions about the instructional practices of these high efficacy teachers. Further study addressing these limitations through more interviews, direct observation of teachers working with students, and an examination of actual learning gains of struggling readers would be recommended.

Findings and Discussion

As discussed in Chapter One, we are left wondering whether intermediate teachers with a high sense of teacher efficacy are more likely to move past an established mental model and work effectively with struggling readers in the classroom setting. This section examines this wondering more deeply while enumerating five findings from this research study. These findings were identified through analysis described in Chapters Four and Five. The section begins with a statement of the findings and followed by a discussion of how these findings speak to the research goals that were identified in

Chapter One and how they relate to the conceptual framework. The data analysis led to these five findings:

1. There was no evidence that the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn,” held true for these teachers.
2. There is a range of implementation of instructional supports and best practices among high efficacy intermediate teachers of reading.
3. A directive leadership and programmatic approach can negatively influence literacy instruction.
4. Collaboration among teachers and leaders positively affect literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers.
5. Differentiation of instruction is a key practice that intermediate literacy teachers find most challenging in supporting the learning of struggling readers.

This study was built on the earlier efficacy work of Tschannen, Moran, and Hoy (2001) and the reading teacher efficacy work of Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) and focused on the teaching of reading to struggling readers at the intermediate levels. Specifically, the study was designed to explore whether and how high efficacy intermediate teachers incorporate best practices in reading instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers. The results of this study support previous literature on high efficacy teachers and lead to some new findings related to environmental factors that impact a teacher’s ability to successfully implement instructional strategies that support struggling readers in their classrooms. This discussion section elaborates on the observations presented in Chapters Four and Five and includes relevant discussion of existing research on this topic.

No Evidence That the Mantra Exists for These High Efficacy Teachers

There was no evidence that the mantra, In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn, held true for these teachers. I referenced this mantra throughout the study and was concerned that this mantra had become popularized and contributed to an inability or unwillingness of many intermediate schools and teachers to effectively teach reading to students who struggle learning to read.

Through analysis, I found no evidence to support my assertion at least among teachers with high reading teacher efficacy. The high efficacy teachers who participated provided no indication that they believed in or had been influenced by the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn.” Teachers shared many examples of how they worked to support their students who struggled as readers. None of the participants blamed students’ lack of achievement on the previous year’s teacher, the students themselves, or the types of support these struggling readers received from other professionals like Title 1 teachers or Special Education teachers.

Research demonstrates that high efficacy teachers are more likely to believe that effective teaching can positively influence student learning and have confidence in their own teaching abilities (Cervone, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Hoy & Davis, 2002). Therefore, it is not surprising that high efficacy teachers have more confidence in their abilities and are more likely to embrace an opportunity to teach the range of readers that exist in their classrooms. Research further shows that high efficacy teachers are more likely to embrace instructional practices that meet the needs of struggling readers. Classroom teachers, as well as pre-service teachers who have high teacher efficacy, use a greater

variety of instructional strategies and materials (Riggs & Enochs, 1990; Wenta, 2000). However, among the teachers in the study there was considerable range in their implementation of what is considered best practice in literacy instruction. There were cultural and leadership aspects in their respective schools that had an influence on their practices.

Range of Implementation of Instructional Supports and Best Practices Among High Efficacy Teachers of Reading

The finding that there is a range of implementation of instructional supports and best practices among high efficacy intermediate teachers of reading is another finding. In the introduction of this study, I asserted that teachers and school leaders viewed the primary grades or initial stages of reading development as being solely focused on decoding words, while viewing the intermediate grades as a time for students to learn how to comprehend what they are now able to read. Finnian (2008) explains, “By third grade, and especially in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, expectations for accomplishment change. In relation to academic accomplishments, students are expected to use basic skills developed in the primary grades to learn more complex material” (p. 120). This study was designed to look specifically at those with strong reader teacher efficacy beliefs and determine if those beliefs translated into effective practices for struggling readers.

The modified version of the ESAIL defines best practices in classroom-based reading instruction at the intermediate level and is based on four criteria: Creates a Literate Environment, Organizes the Classroom, Uses Data to Inform Instruction and to Provide Systemic Interventions, and Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning (Dorn &

Soffos, 2007). The use of the ESAIL helped establish that a range of implementation existed among the participants. Some participants made assertions that instructional practices were in place but did not provide artifacts to support their assertions. Other participants failed to mention instructional practices that were identified on the ESAIL. I learned that while these high efficacy teachers shared similar perspectives on the most effective practices for teaching reading and meeting the needs of struggling readers, they presented a range evidence to support that these instructional practices were in place in their classrooms as measured by the ESAIL.

The next sections elaborate on some of the differences between these high efficacy teachers and their ability to implement instructional practices that impact struggling readers.

A Directive Leadership and Programmatic Approach Can Negatively Influence Literacy Instruction

At the outset of this study, I wondered whether a high efficacy teacher could rise above environmental factors such as the leadership of a principal or the choice of a curriculum. I have learned that environmental factors exist that impact teachers regardless of their efficacy levels. Being a high efficacy teacher does not guarantee teachers will incorporate the most effective instructional practices for struggling readers into their classrooms. Influences outside of a teacher's classroom can impact, both positively and negatively, a high efficacy teacher's ability to implement instructional practices that best meet the needs of struggling readers.

In Chapter 5, some of the environmental factors that participants noted were established: curriculum choices, learning and collaborating with colleagues, and the

influence of leadership. The impact of these environmental factors is more significant when considering that research tells us that exemplary teachers, who incorporate research-based best practices into their instruction and focus on the lowest achieving students, see significant gains in their learning (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001).

The Impact of Directive Leadership. Directive leadership and a programmatic approach can negatively influence literacy instruction is a finding. Leadership was an environmental factor that impacted the instruction of the high efficacy participants and, to a certain extent, accounts for the variations in the other two categories: programming and professional development. All of the participants referenced the positive and negative influence that leadership, school and/or district, played on their instructional practices. When reading teachers perceived that school and/or district administrators did not have an understanding of best practices in reading instruction, the administrators made instructional changes that negatively impacted teachers and students. Two of the participants explained how their instructional practices were negatively impacted by leadership, and they shared examples of their instructional practices prior to their districts' mandated changes to instruction.

On the surface, their former practices appeared to be better aligned with the ESAIL than the practices they were now expected to employ in their classrooms. These teachers described their principals as leaders who did not take an active role in reading instruction. They viewed them as leaders who did not have a deep understanding of reading instruction. These school leaders enforced district expectations, without input from teachers, that the leaders did not fully understand themselves. In these instances,

leaders negatively influenced the selection and implementation of instructional practices in reading.

Several teachers shared how they benefitted from school cultures where their principals were educational leaders who promoted best practices in reading instruction. For example, several shared how they learned from their principals about the importance of reading aloud each day to their students. These teachers believe that their instructional practices developed because they collaborated with educational leaders who embraced the practices identified in the ESAIL document and understood a leader's role in supporting the growth of teachers.

Teachers who view their principals as educational leaders who create school environments where teachers are comfortable discussing instruction and engaging in instructional and transformational behaviors are more likely to differentiate instruction in their classrooms (Goddard, Neumerski, Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2010). When researchers studied instructional practices in writing, they found that principals with strong knowledge of and belief in effective writing practices helped teachers with their writing instruction (McGhee & Lew, 2007). Principal instructional leadership was related to frequent use of student-centered teaching (Quinn 2002). Other researchers found principal leadership had an indirect, positive effect on student proficiency on the English language arts state assessment when the principal fostered collaboration and community around instruction (Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010).

In a review of the literature on instructional leadership, it was noted that principals in productive schools demonstrated instructional leadership both directly and indirectly (Murphy, 1990). Other studies reveal that principals who are removed from

instructional concerns are unlikely to influence teachers' instructional competence (Printy, 2008). While Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore (1995) after an analysis of several studies, found there was “no evidence of effective schools with weak leadership” (p. 17). Many of the participants in this study referenced, on a number of occasions, the positive impact that their principals had on their instructional practices in reading.

Research supports the importance of sharing leadership in schools and avoiding a directive approach to leadership. Instead of bringing about “quick fixes” or change that is short-lived, schools that involve teachers in decision making are flexible and better able to develop sustainable improvements that last over time because teamwork and shared leadership allows schools to build professional capacity to solve problems and make decisions expeditiously (Senge, 2000). Copland (2003) explains, “Key within that understanding is the notion that the distribution and sharing of leadership, built through shared inquiry into improving student learning, provides a policy direction for moving beyond narrow role-based strategies that have defined school leadership for decades” (p. 394). Dimmock (1995) took this view even further by stating, “The traditional top down linear conceptions of leadership and management and their influence on teaching and learning have become inappropriate” (p. 295).

The Impact of a Programmatic Approach. The choice that school and district leaders make about curriculum is one of the environmental factors that I found impacts the instruction of high efficacy teachers. The teachers whose practices best reflected the needs of struggling readers taught in districts and schools that adopted curriculum that reflected a commitment to the range of readers that existed in their classrooms. However, the teachers whose practices were more limited in their ability to meet the needs of

struggling readers taught in districts where the adopted curriculum had more of a one-size-fits-all approach that provided limited opportunities to differentiate instruction while engaging students as readers.

Several of the participants shared that they moved away from best practices in reading instruction after their districts made changes to reading curriculum in response to low standardized test scores in reading. Research supports this trend across the country, not just in Maine. Griffith (2008) explained, “The drive for standardized curricula has left many children unprepared and teachers disillusioned about their profession” (p. 121-133). Nelson and Harper (2006) call this approach the “Cliff Notes” method to education, which leaves little room for deeper levels of thinking and “processing which shortchanges the students by providing an impoverished educational experience” (p. 7).

The effectiveness of these scripted programs has been questioned as some evidence indicates they have not been found to meet the needs of individual students. The publishers of scripted reading programs convince districts and teachers that “it’s all in there,” and if they just follow the program all the needs of students will be met. Many believe that the move to scripted programs causes teaching and learning to be at a superficial level. This was evident in my interviews with several of the participants in this study. Dresser (2012) explains, “Today, effective and creative teacher designed instruction is being replaced by scripted reading programs. These programs are changing the role of the teacher in the classroom from teachers to mere transmitters of knowledge” (p. 72).

The participants in this study who faced a move to scripted programs expressed frustration throughout their interviews but ultimately became resigned to teaching the

program in some fashion. Research supports the notion that teachers respond to scripted programs in different ways. Sometimes, they are trapped between the expectations of the district and what they believe is right for their students (MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004).

Other motivated and knowledgeable teachers who are asked to relinquish their views on best practices to follow a scripted program feel overwhelmed and frustrated. Some of the teachers fight back and try to design more individualized curriculum, but they later surrender after they are admonished for not following the school's adopted scripted program (MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004).

Collaboration Among Teachers and Leaders Positively Affects Literacy Practices

The finding that collaboration among teachers and leaders positively affects literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers is a substantive finding that comes out of this research. The influence of leadership in supporting a collaborative learning culture among teachers impacted the instruction of the high efficacy participants. Teachers who were high implementers worked in schools where teachers learned from each other. They spent time regularly learning with other teachers and their principals. Throughout their interviews, participants shared examples of how they collaborated within their schools to improve instruction, track student progress in reading, and provide interventions that meet the needs of their struggling readers.

Research supports the idea that collaboration with colleagues in a school setting leads to instructional improvement. School based professional development provides first-hand support while teachers are in the process of teaching the curriculum (Veenman & Denessen, 2001). Five of the eight participants shared that the most significant

influence on their instructional practices was their collaborative work with colleagues and school administrators. The opportunity for participants to learn in their schools was an indicator for whether they employed best practices in reading instruction.

Collaboration that is connected to the curriculum of the school and focuses on how to enact strategies, use materials, and administer assessments associated with the curriculum is far more effective than workshops that focus on general pedagogical strategies in promoting change in teacher's practice (Cohen & Hill, 2008). In this study, participants who worked in schools where they followed scripted programs felt that the greatest influence on their instructional practices was school or district mandates. When these occurred, teachers eventually complied with the mandates. The result was stifled discussion and less collaboration among staff members. They described their teaching environments as individual and isolating.

One participant believed that working independently and being trusted by her principal had the greatest influence on her ability to implement best practices in reading instruction. She designed instruction that derived from her learning from graduate school, her own reading, and professional development that she attended outside of her district. She appreciated not having to wait for colleagues to catch up to her instructional practices and being allowed to move forward on her own. While this teacher was willing to share with colleagues, there was no formal structure in place. As a result, it was difficult to determine how much such communication happened.

There is no research that supports allowing teachers to embrace their own curriculum and work in isolation from colleagues is an effective way to improve instructional practices. While this participant viewed this treatment as the reason for her

success, it should be noted that she was not rated as a high implementer of best practices in reading instruction. One is left wondering if collaborating with colleagues might have supported the development of this participant's instructional practices as well as the practices of her colleagues as a whole.

Teachers in this study who demonstrated the highest levels implementation of best practices in reading described collaboration as an expectation of the school's leadership team and a formal part of the school's culture. Various studies support the notion that collaboration in schools fosters teachers' ability to improve their instruction. Professional learning in schools emphasizes three key components: collaborative work and discussion among the school's professionals, a strong and consistent focus on teaching and learning within that collaborative work, and the collection and use of assessment and other data to inquire into and evaluate progress over time (Eaker, R., & Keating, J. 2011; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995)

Fullan argues that change is facilitated when teachers are able to interact with one another. Collaboration increases teachers' ability to analyze and improve classroom practice and is a factor in increased job satisfaction (Fullan, 2007). These planned opportunities for collaboration among teachers have the potential to foster reflection on what happened as changes are implemented and to enhance their understanding of new practices (Hollingsworth, 1992; Hunsaker, & Johnston, 1992; Nias, 1987). Furthermore, they can serve as a beginning for analyzing and overcoming perceived cultural constraints to change (Peterman, 1993). The variations in levels of implementation and the influence of school structures and expectations reinforce the notion that belief in

one's ability to teach reading and, in this case, struggling readers is dependent on other factors.

The Challenges of Differentiation for These High Efficacy Teachers

Another finding from this study is that differentiation of instruction is a key practice that intermediate literacy teachers find most challenging in supporting the learning of struggling readers. The good news is that knowledgeable instructional leadership, appropriate instructional programming, and opportunities to collaborate as professionals have the ability to positively influence the instruction struggling readers receive. However, this good news is dampened by the results indicating that practices that lead to consistently meeting the needs of struggling readers, even among high efficacy teachers, continue to be elusive when focused on the level of differentiation in classrooms is examined.

Participants from this study, who were rated as high implementers on the ESAIL, demonstrated across the curriculum that they were able to respond to the range of learners that exists in their classrooms. They provided examples of how they differentiate for their struggling readers in other content areas by providing examples of appropriately leveled texts and organizers that they use to support student learning. Participants, who were rated as moderate to low implementers, did not provide evidence that they explicitly teach lessons to support the range of readers or that they meet daily with students in reading/writing conferences.

Primary grade struggling readers have difficulties in one or more of these areas: back-ground experiences; oral language; decoding, including phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge; fluency; oral reading; and writing, vocabulary, comprehension,

maintaining attention, motivation, vision, hearing, or other physical ability necessary for processing text (Chall & Curtis, 2003). If children enter the intermediate grades without fluency as a reader, their continued progress as readers is dependent on the effectiveness of classroom teachers and the programs they employ (Allington & Johnson, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000).

Despite heightened awareness and extensive literacy training that has occurred in recent decades, differentiation remains a stumbling block. The major challenges to differentiation include limited preparation time, large class size, teachers' heavy workload, lack of resources, teachers' lack of skills in differentiation, and teachers' lack of motivation to differentiate (Scott, Vitale & Masten, 1998; Westwood, 2002). Many teachers hesitate to weave differentiated practices into their classroom methods because they believe that they lack time, professional development resources, and administrative support (Hootstein, 1998). Other teachers believe differentiation is another bureaucratic mandate that will pass like other mandates that have come and gone (Carolan & Guinn, 2007).

Teachers who work with struggling learners have concerns about how differentiation might result in their students doing less or highlighting their struggles for other students to see. According to Tomlinson (2006), "Teachers attempt to differentiate instruction by giving struggling learners less to do than other students and by giving more advanced students more to do than other learners. It is not helpful to struggling learners to do less of what they do not grasp" (p. 41). Schumm and Vaughn (1995) suggest that general education teachers reject adapting instruction for individual learner needs because they feel doing so calls attention to student differences.

Study participants indicated that they have an understanding of the importance of differentiating their reading instruction in their depictions of instructional practices. The most often cited reason for not differentiating was related to lack of or the adoption of certain teaching materials. In some cases, participants shared needing to purchase their own materials or borrowing materials to meet the range of readers in their classrooms. Others shared how the instructional materials chosen by their districts limited their ability to differentiate in their classrooms. Teachers using scripted programs had the same textbook to use with all of their students regardless of their reading levels. One participant struggled in trying to differentiate in reading because he was concerned about being able to manage student behavior.

While all the participants demonstrated that they understood the importance of differentiating reading instruction, and expressed frustration when they could not do it, the majority of participants stopped there and provided limited evidence that they differentiated instruction in other content areas. Three participants shared evidence that demonstrated that they differentiated instruction in other content areas, but with the other five participants, the importance of differentiation appears to begin and end with reading instruction.

Connections to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework linked personal experience and research on struggling readers, teacher efficacy and its relationship to effective teaching practices, and best practices in reading instruction at the intermediate levels. It focused on the movement of struggling readers through Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* (Chall, 1983) from the

primary grades into the intermediate grades and questioned whether a long held mantra could be interfering with this movement.

As an educator, I have heard on many occasions the mantra “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn” that is identified in the conceptual framework, and I wondered about its connection to a misunderstanding of Chall’s *Stages of Reading Development* (Chall, 1983). My findings show that there was no evidence that this mantra holds true for the high efficacy teachers in this study. The teachers provided no indication that they believed in or had been influenced by this mantra or that they view teaching the range of readers in their classrooms as something other than their responsibility. These high efficacy teachers have an understanding that every year they have students with a range of reading abilities who need access to instructional strategies that support their growth as readers. My conceptual framework reflects this finding in that it depicts struggling readers moving through Chall’s *Stages of Reading Development* when high efficacy teachers implement best practices reflected in the ESAIL.

Research depicted in the conceptual framework illustrates that a cyclical relationship exists between a teacher’s self-efficacy levels and a willingness to adapt practices to meet students’ learning needs (Cervone, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hoy & Davis, 2002; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). It is evident that there is a “willingness to adapt practices to meet students’ learning needs” by high efficacy teachers. While these teachers provided a great deal of evidence to support they were willing to adapt practices, it was also evident that a range of implementation exists

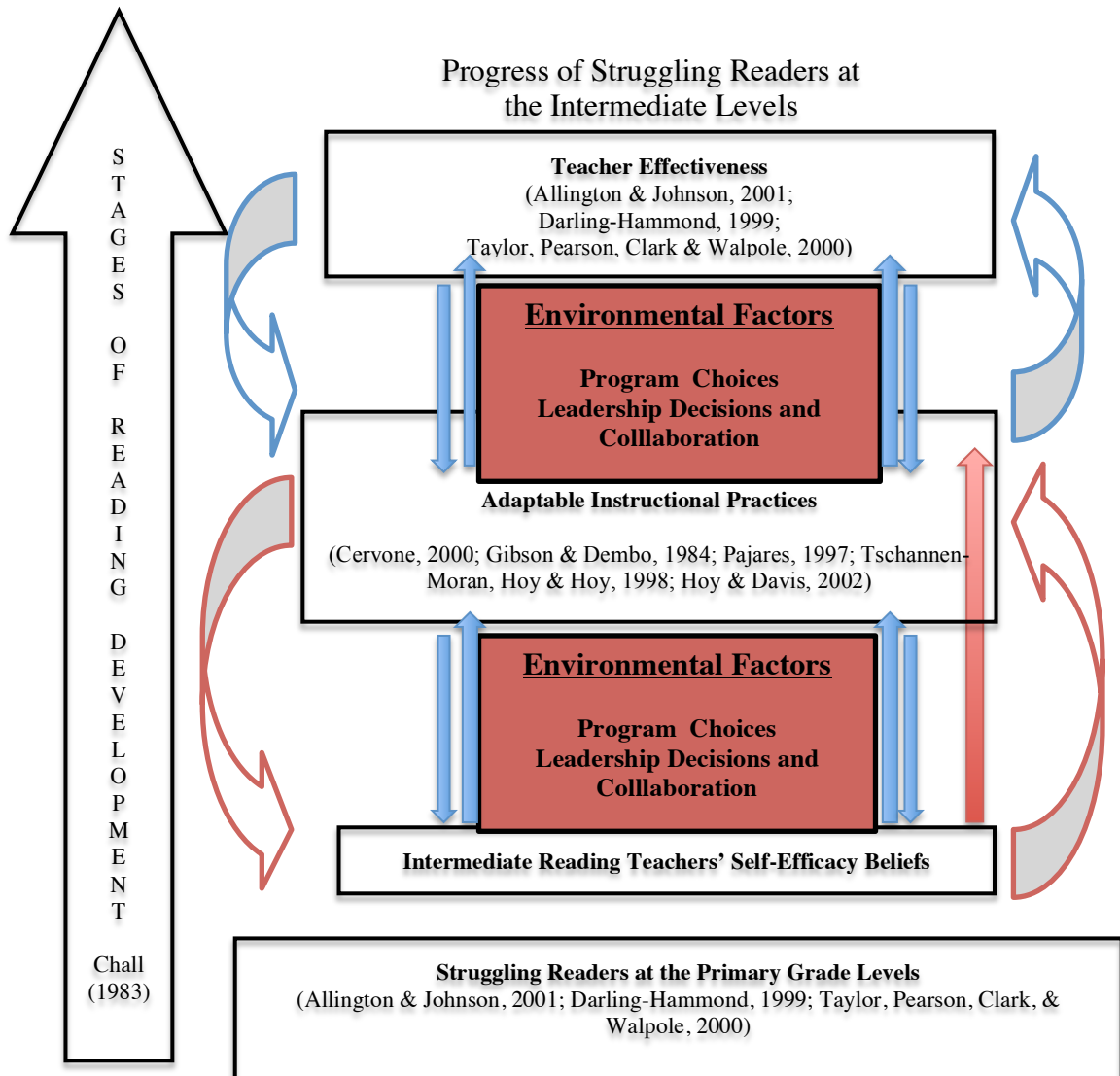
and that differentiation of instruction is a practice that these teachers find to be challenging.

One change to the original conceptual framework is the introduction of environmental factors that can positively and negatively influence high efficacy teachers and impact a teacher's ability to incorporate the most effective instructional practices for struggling readers into their classrooms. This finding is counter to what I expected at the inception of the study and is described in Figure 6.1 below. In the adapted conceptual framework, program choices, leadership decisions, and collaboration are identified as environmental factors that can influence the cyclical relationship that was established in the original conceptual framework. These environmental factors are located in two places in the adapted conceptual framework to illustrate the influence that they can have on the relationship among efficacy beliefs, adaptable instructional practices, and teacher effectiveness.

Arrows support the depiction of how these environmental factors influence the cyclical relationship. Program choices, leadership decisions, and/or a lack of collaboration can “push down” on the efficacy beliefs of intermediate teachers and impede their ability to adapt their instructional practices. Environmental factors can also “lift up” the efficacy beliefs of intermediate teachers and support their instructional practices. When high efficacy teachers are not provided with time to collaborate with teachers and administrators, they are less likely to adapt their instructional practices to meet the needs of students and more likely to teach in isolation and away from the support of colleagues. However, when high efficacy teachers are provided with

opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, they are more likely to incorporate instructional practices that meet the needs of struggling readers.

Figure 6.1. Adapted Conceptual Framework of Proposed Study



The adapted conceptual framework represents the way people can think about teaching reading at these grade levels. It illustrates the cyclical relationship that exists between a teacher's self-efficacy levels and his or her willingness to adapt practices to meet a student's learning needs while simultaneously introducing the influence that environmental factors can have on this cyclical relationship.

Implications

As a school principal, I found the learning that I have gained through my research to be enlightening while supporting my own professional growth and directly impacting my work as an elementary school principal. The findings from this study provide insights for educators, policy makers, and researchers.

Implications for Educators

Principals. The findings of this research may be helpful for principals who are looking for ways to better meet the needs of struggling readers in their schools. Principals should consider participating in professional development opportunities that will help develop a deeper understanding of best practices in reading instruction at the intermediate grade levels. This deeper understanding will allow principals to be better informed about which instructional practices they should be instituting and supporting in their schools.

Principals need to understand that teachers benefit from being trusted to implement instructional strategies that they develop from professional development and in collaboration with other teachers. Teachers who participate in professional development, pursue master's degrees in literacy, or read the most current research on instructional practices benefit from being trusted to collaborate and to incorporate new instructional practices into their work with students. Principals need to resist the temptation of adopting instructional programs that promise an increase in test scores but often times fail to reflect best practices in reading instruction and can restrict teachers' professional judgment.

Principals also should understand that a range of implementation existed among the teachers in this study. Even though the study focused on high efficacy teachers, there

was still a wide range of best practices that were embraced and implemented in all of the classrooms studied. While there were teachers who incorporated a majority of the instructional practices identified in the ESAIL, there were also high efficacy teachers who were rated as low implementers in all four domains. The one domain that teachers had the most difficult time implementing was in differentiation, especially when it was across content areas. While some participants provided evidence that they differentiate instruction in reading, very few were able to provide evidence that they differentiate in other content areas, like social studies. Principals may use this finding as inspiration to assess the range of instructional practices that exist in their schools and to develop a plan for professional development to address these inconsistencies.

District Leaders. The findings from this study point to the importance of making informed decisions about selecting curriculum and adopting instructional practices. District leadership should consider the use of the ESAIL or similar instruments as a guide for assessing the level of fidelity in implementing best practices into individual classrooms, entire schools, and the district as a whole. These instruments could serve as a resource for districts that are hiring classroom teachers and want to identify a candidate's understanding of best practices in literacy instruction and the skills necessary to meet the needs of the range of readers that exist in their classrooms. The use of the ESAIL could allow district leadership to develop expectations for all learners and move away from focusing on how to move middling students to acceptable test scores and could serve as resource for adopting appropriate instructional practices and materials. It could also allow district leadership to take a more active role in identifying and facilitating the professional development of teachers.

District leadership, like principals, needs to understand that teachers benefit from being trusted to implement instructional strategies that are developed through professional development and collaboration with other teachers. District leadership should spend time consulting with teachers and assessing the status of instructional practices in their districts. They need to avoid only using the results of standardized tests as the sole means of making a determination about instructional practices. They should avoid purchasing instructional programs that are “teacher proof” and remove teacher judgment and collaboration amongst teachers.

Classroom Teachers. The finding that collaboration among teachers and leaders positively affect literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers may be beneficial to teachers who would like to further develop their instructional practices. Collaboration with colleagues who are focused on reading instruction is an opportunity for teachers to grow their instructional practices while improving school-wide instruction. Collaboration provides teachers with time to learn how to better meet the needs of their students and allows teachers to move through the implementation of new curriculum while problem solving with other teachers. Collaboration with colleagues is valuable for planning instruction, reviewing data and sharing resources. When teachers remain in their classrooms and only focus on the needs of their students, their instructional practices are limited. When teachers collaborate, they are able to interact with colleagues and support instructional change that is occurring within their schools. Teachers should consider their role in working with school administration to facilitate opportunities for teacher collaboration in their schools.

Higher Education. Professors working in higher education should consider incorporating some of the findings from this study into their teacher and school leadership preparation programs. In teacher preparation programs, students should be learning how to differentiate instruction so they are prepared to meet the range of readers that will exist in their classrooms. Prospective teachers would benefit from learning about best practices in reading instruction and should receive this regardless of whether they intend to teach at the primary or intermediate grade levels. Prospective teachers would also benefit from understanding their roles as teacher leaders who have the ability to shape literacy instruction in their schools.

In leadership programs, professors should use this and similar research to teach how a directive leadership and programmatic approach can negatively influence literacy instruction. Future leaders need to be fluent in best practices in reading instruction and learn how to differentiate instruction so they are prepared to meet the range of readers that will exist in their schools. They would benefit from learning how collaboration among teachers and leaders can positively affect literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers. Future school leaders need to learn what it means to be strong instructional leaders if they are to effectively lead today's schools.

Implications for Policy Makers

People who are involved in developing and implementing state and local policy should consider that collaboration among teachers and leaders positively affect literacy practices in schools with a population of struggling readers and differentiation of instruction is a key practice that intermediate literacy teachers find challenging. Considering the lack of funding for teachers to attend conferences and professional

development, policy makers should consider how they could support teachers in learning how to effectively collaborate and differentiate instruction so as to support the growth of struggling readers.

Policy makers might also consider supporting the updating of certification requirements for elementary education teachers that better reflect the need to have teachers with the necessary skills to meet the needs of struggling readers. This might include increased course work in teaching reading to children at the upper elementary grade levels with an emphasis on differentiation.

Implications for Researchers

As explained in the limitations section, this research was limited to eight teachers working in four intermediate schools in Maine. The research could be further studied by replicating the study in other intermediate schools outside of Maine. While my study focused on grades three through five, it would be beneficial to replicate the design at the middle and high school levels. This would allow researchers to enhance the findings from my study and determine if the same range of efficacy levels exists among teachers at these grade levels and if a range of implementation of instructional supports and best practices exists among high efficacy teachers.

Another area for future research could be focused on establishing the levels of understanding that current elementary principals have regarding best practices in reading instruction at the intermediate levels. Since this study identified the negative influence principals could have on instructional practices of high efficacy teachers, it would be helpful to develop a deeper understanding in this area. Another recommended area for research, once these levels are understood, would be to learn from principals directly

about how districts can support their learning in the area of best practices in reading instruction. Principals who develop a deeper understanding of literacy practices will be better able to advocate for appropriate programs with district leadership and school boards.

Since this study was focused on interviews, further research that incorporates observations of teachers working with students would provide a deeper understanding of the instructional practices of high efficacy teachers and how effective they can be. It would be beneficial if this focused on the intermediate grade levels due to the abundance of research that already exists at the primary grades.

Concluding Remarks

At the inception of this study, I was frustrated with the progress my school was making in meeting the needs of struggling readers. Struggling readers would arrive at our intermediate school with lagging skills in reading. These children would then spend three years receiving supplemental help from Title One reading program or be identified with reading disabilities and placed in special education programs. The research was daunting with many studies confirming what I was seeing in my own school. If a child struggled to read in third grade, and his or her learning needs were not effectively addressed, he or she would continue to struggle throughout his or her academic career. Over the years as a teacher and an administrator, I heard various explanations for why the needs of these children could not be better met in regular education classrooms. One explanation that was most often offered by intermediate teachers was, "In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn." Teachers, who I would have described as highly efficacious reading teachers, expressed frustrations about

balancing the need to teach a fourth grade curriculum to students who were at a second grade reading level. They regularly shared that teaching struggling readers should not be their responsibility and that effective instruction that took place outside of the classroom was the solution.

Now that I have completed this research I am encouraged at the progress classroom teachers have made at incorporating best practices into their classrooms so as to meet the needs of struggling readers. None of the high efficacy teachers who participated provided any indication that they believed in or had been influenced by the mantra, “In grades K-2, children learn to read and in grades 3-5, children read to learn.” In fact, they provided many examples of how they supported the learning of all of their students, especially those who struggle in reading. My findings suggest that the use of the ESAIL instrument can provide teachers, principals, and school districts with a process for assessing their instructional practices in reading. Educators can use this information to identify areas for growth with the practices that they are using in their classrooms and schools.

I also discovered that there are environmental factors that can be a barrier or a support to teachers who are working to incorporate instructional practices that meet the needs of struggling readers into their classrooms. These findings suggest that knowledgeable instructional leadership, appropriate instructional programming, and opportunities to collaborate as professionals have the ability to positively influence the instruction struggling readers receive. Principals and district leadership can use these findings to understand how their decisions can negatively and positively affect the instructional practices that teachers incorporate into their classrooms.

I feel fortunate to have been welcomed into the eight classrooms that I studied. All of the participants were committed teachers who were reflective about their teaching and were willing to discuss ways to improve for the sake of their students. My study reinforces the critical role intermediate teachers play in meeting the needs of struggling readers and am glad it reinforces this notion. I hope that researchers will continue to study instruction at the intermediate grade levels because this is where we know that many of our students stop believing that they can learn to read. More research that is focused on reading instruction at the intermediate can only help educators become more effective at meeting the needs of struggling readers so we can reverse the trend of children continuing to struggle as readers throughout their academic careers.

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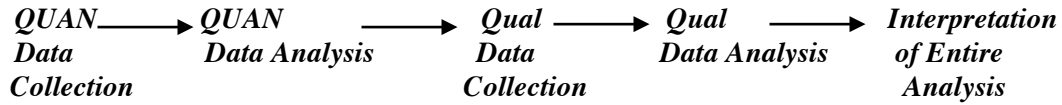
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Appendix A: SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHOD DESIGN



<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Product(s)</i>	<i>Sample Description</i>
Quantitative Data Collection (Part A) (Teachers)	Paper Based Survey (n = 30) Researcher administration of the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo: Long Form-PTE- Personal Teacher Efficacy and GTE- General Teacher Efficacy) Or (Szabo and Mokhtari: Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument)	Numeric Data	Classroom teachers who teach reading in grades 3-5 and will be selected from 4 schools in Maine. All schools qualify for Title 1 and only contain the grade levels 3,4, and 5.
Quantitative Data Collection (Part B) (Teachers)	Paper Based Survey (n = 30) Researcher administration of a Teacher Reading Practices Survey.	Numeric Data	Classroom Teachers in grades 3-5 from 4 schools that were selected for the study.
<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Product(s)</i>	<i>Sample Description</i>
Analysis of Quantitative Data	Determine where teachers fall based on the scoring of their responses on the Reading Teacher Survey.	30 Surveys Descriptive Statistics	Analyze data and identify teachers from opposing quadrants. Teachers will be identified as having high efficacy beliefs.
Qualitative Data Collection	Purposely select 6 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Teachers with Efficacy Ratings from upward trend schools. • 3 Teachers with High Efficacy Ratings from downward trend schools. 	N = 6 Text data(interview transcripts, and notes, classroom and school environment description)	Interview 6 teachers, one on one, in opposing quadrants to determine how teachers work to meet the needs of struggling readers.
Qualitative Data Analysis	Purposely selecting teacher responses.	Text data (transcripts, documents, artifacts)	
Integration of Quan & Qual Results	Interpretation and explanation of quantitative and qualitative results	Report Discussion Implications Future Research	

(Explanatory Design, See Creswell-Educational Research, p. 560)

APPENDIX B: READING TEACHER SURVEY

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Numbers:

(W)

(H)

General Information about you:

1. How many years have you been a classroom teacher?

2. Please circle the word that best describes the preparation program that you participated in prior to beginning your career as a teacher:

Undergraduate Degree/ Major in Education Teacher Certification Program-Post College

3. Throughout your career, what grade levels have you taught? Please circle all grades that apply:

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

4. Have you taught in other schools than the intermediate school you are currently teaching in?

Yes or No

5. If yes, what grade levels were housed in this other school(s)?
Please circle all grades that apply:

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

6. Please rank order, 1st to 5th, the content areas that you believe you are most skilled in teaching:

Math Reading Writing Science Social Studies

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

7. As a classroom teacher, do you have access to a literacy specialist in your current teaching placement?

Yes or No

8. Would you be willing to participate in two follow-up interviews for this study?

Yes or No

Directions: Listed below are statements about reading. Please read each statement carefully. Then **circle** the letters that show how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = undecided

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

1. When a student does better than usual in reading
it is often because the teacher exerted a little extra effort. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I continually look for better ways to teach reading. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Even when I try very hard, I do not teach reading as well
as I will teach other subjects. 1 2 3 4 5
4. When the reading performance of students
improves, it is often because their teacher has
found a more effective way to support reading. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I know several ways to teach reading
effectively 1 2 3 4 5
6. I am not very effective in monitoring reading
activities. 1 2 3 4 5
7. When a low-achieving child progresses in reading,
at the intermediate level, it is usually due to extra support
offered by the teacher. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I understand the process of reading well enough to
be effective in teaching reading. 1 2 3 4 5
9. The teacher is generally responsible for the
achievement of students in reading. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Students' achievement in reading is directly related
to their teacher's effectiveness in the teaching of
reading. 1 2 3 4 5
11. If parents comment that their child is showing more
interest in reading, it is probably due to the
performance of the child's teacher. 1 2 3 4 5

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 12. I find it difficult to teach students with reading problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. When teaching reading, I usually welcome student questions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. I find it difficult to explain to students how to improve their reading. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. I do not know what to do to turn students on to reading. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. I use community resources to help get support for literacy in my classroom. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

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APPENDIX C: READING TEACHER EFFICACY INSTRUMENT- VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI), Szabo & Mokhtari (2004) followed several steps to establish that they have developed a valid and reliable measure. The steps included: (a) reviewing the literature regarding teaching efficacy, (b) consulting with potential users and experts in the area of teaching and reading education with regard to selection and categorization of statements in the scale, (c) examining existing teaching efficacy scales, and (d) conducting appropriate reliability and factor analyses to examine the overall structure of the scale. Drafts of the scale were subjected to successive cycles of field-testing, validation, and revision. The statements used in developing the proposed scale were adapted from two existing instruments: The Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (STEBI -Riggs & Enochs, 1990) and the Math Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (MTEBI -Enochs, Smith, Huinker, 2000). Both the STEBI and the MTEBI instruments report adequate psychometric properties, and both have been used for measuring both in-service teaching efficacy and teacher candidate teaching efficacy in the areas of science and mathematics.

Szabo & Mokhtari field-tested the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) with a group of teacher candidates. The total sample for this pilot testing consisted of 419 teacher candidates (386 female and 33 male). Their ages (Mean = 23.6; SD = 7.2) ranged from 18 to 40+ with 80% of the participants between the ages of 18 and 24. Of the total number of participants, 82% were Caucasian, 3% were Hispanic, 4% were Native American and 6% were African American with 5% giving no response. Background information provided by the participants indicated that nearly half (47%) reported a

strong interest in teaching and indicated having had various experiences working with children.

In addition to completing the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI), all participants completed Krusher's (1993) Teacher Efficacy Belief Instrument (TEBI). The results from the TEBI were used to determine teacher candidate's efficacy with respect to teaching in general, and were used to give additional validity to the proposed instrument. The data obtained were analyzed using (a) reliability analysis to determine the extent to which the various statements are related to each other, (b) a confirmatory factor analysis using a principal component analysis with a forced factor of two to identify principal factors or subscales within the 27-item instrument and to help identify any items that might need to be refined or deleted, and (c) a correlational analysis which involved an analyzing participant performance on the proposed instrument in relation to their performance on a similar instrument developed by Krusher (TEBI - 1993). These data provided evidence for the instruments' concurrent validity.

14 items Initial numbering of items.	Item-Total Correlation	Factor #1 RTSE	Factor #2 RTOE
4. I will continually look for better ways to teach reading.	0.52	0.65	-0.08
8. Even if I try very hard, I will not teach reading as well as I will teach other subjects.	0.57	0.63	-0.30
9. I will not be very effective in monitoring reading activities.	0.59	0.63	-0.35
<i>11. If I really try, I will be able to get through to readers with difficult reading problems.</i>	0.26*	-	-
13. I understand the process of reading well enough to be effective in teaching reading.	0.44	0.54	-0.13

16. I will find it difficult to teach students with reading problems.	0.39	0.42	-0.39
18. I will find it difficult to explain to students how to improve their reading.	0.57	0.62	-0.30
19. I do not know what to do to turn students on to reading.	0.63	0.68	-0.32
<i>21. When a student has difficulty understanding what s/he has read, I will often be at a loss as to how to help the student understand the story better</i>	<i>-0.55*</i>	<i>- -</i>	
22. When teaching reading, I will usually welcome student questions.	0.46	0.59	.04
<i>24. If parents would do more reading with their children at home, I could do more at school.</i>	<i>0.14*</i>	<i>- -</i>	
25. I will know several ways to teach reading effectively.	0.55	0.63	-0.18
26. I will use community resources to help get support for literacy in my classroom.	0.47	0.59	0.04
<i>27. When teaching stories, I will find it difficult to help students understand the meaning.</i>	<i>-0.49*</i>	<i>- -</i>	

Reliability was conducted on both subscales of the Reading Teacher Efficacy Instrument (RTEI) and items (in italics) had corrected item-total correlations of less than 0.30 and were dropped from further analysis due to low correlations. This process left ten statements on the self-efficacy subscale ($r = 0.83$), and eight statements on the outcomes expectancy sub-scale scale ($r = 0.74$). The results of the factor analysis provided useful information with regard to the factors involved. The screen plot from the factor analysis confirmed that two factors or sub-scales should be retained the self-efficacy sub-scale and the outcomes expectancy sub-scale. The elimination of these items left a total of 16 statements in the final version of the instrument (Appendix C), with 10 statements in the self-efficacy sub-scale (5 positively worded and 5 negatively worded) and 6 statements in

the outcomes expectancy sub-scale (all were positively worded). The participants' performance on the reading teaching efficacy belief instrument was further analyzed in relation to their performance on Krusher's (1993) Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (TEBI). These results indicate that the participants' on both instruments were quite similar. Specifically, Krusher's (1993) results (i.e., self-efficacy subscale-alpha = 0.65 and outcome expectancy subscale-alpha = 0.79), using 359 teacher candidates compare quite favorably with the performance of the participants in the current study (i.e., self-efficacy sub-scale-alpha = 0.61 and outcome expectancy sub-scale-alpha = 0.80). Szabo & Mokhtari believe the results lend support to the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument, indicating that the instrument has acceptable validity for use in measuring teacher candidates' self-efficacy and outcome expectancy in the area of reading.

APPENDIX D: SCORING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RTEI

1. In the first column, record your circled numbers from the survey. Place each circled number for each statement on the line provided.

2. In the second column, you will need to recode (R) 5 statements as they are worded negatively. If the number has an R by it, change your initial score (if you had a 1, change to 5; if 2 change to 4; if 4 change to 2 and if 5 change to 1). If the number did not have an R by it, just rewrite the same number as it appears in column 1. Add the column of numbers to find your sum to determine if you have a high, middle or low total reading teaching efficacy. (Remember, this scoring is the least recommended.)

* Low = 16-55 * Average = 56 – 68 * High = 69 - 80

(No, I rarely know how to teach reading skills and strategies or how to determine what students need in order to become better readers.)

(Yes, I sometimes know how to teach reading skills and strategies and I can determine to some extent what students need to become better readers.)

(Definitely, I know how to teach reading skills and strategies and I can determine what all students need in order to become better readers.)

3. In the third column, put the numbers from column two on the existing lines. Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 judge your reading teaching self-efficacy (RTSE). Add the column of numbers to find your RTSE rating. Reading teaching self-efficacy is defined as a belief in your ability to teach reading effectively to all students in your classroom, whether they are gifted, average or at-risk readers.

* Low = 16-55 * Average = 56 – 68 * High = 69 - 80

(Yes, I can teach reading effectively to some of my students, some of the time.)

(Yes, I can teach reading effectively to most of my students, most of the time.)

(Yes, I can teach reading effectively to all of my students, all of the time.)

4. In the fourth column, put the numbers from column two on the existing lines. Questions 1, 4, 7, 9, 10 and 11 judge your reading teaching outcome expectancy (RTOE). Add the column of numbers to find your RTOE rating. Reading teaching outcome expectancy is defined as the belief that effective teaching will have a positive impact on student's learning (reading development) regardless of outside factors such as home environment and student's attitudes that they bring with them to the classroom.

* Low = 16-55 * Average = 56 – 68 * High = 69 - 80

(No, I do not have the ability to change environmental factors in order to improve all of my student's reading development.)

(Yes, I have the ability to sometimes positively impact or counter-balance external forces in order to improve some of my student's reading development.)

(Definitely, I have the knowledge to effectively teaching reading to all of my students no matter what.)

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APPENDIX E: FIRST IINTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Name:

Position at School:

School Name:

Date:

Est. Time: 30 mins

Interview: The purpose of the interview is to focus on each participant's core instructional practices in reading.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview process. The interviews will consist of a 30-minute phone interview and a 90-minute interview in your classroom at a later date.

- 1. Please describe what I would observe during your reading block on a typical day if I entered your classroom?**
 - How long is your reading block?
 - What is your instructional routine? How does your reading block begin, end, and what are students doing throughout the block?
 - Please tell me about the instructional materials that you use in your classroom. Are you expected to follow a school based or district based curriculum?

- 2. How diverse are the readers in your classroom?**
 - What classroom assessments are used to determine whether children are on grade level, below grade level, or are advanced level readers?
 - How many of your students fall into each (above, below, advanced) of these categories?

- 3. Please reflect on your reading instruction from the early stages of your teaching career and describe the instructional practices that you had in place? How do those practices compare to how you teach reading now?**

APPENDIX F: SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Name:

Position at School:

School Name:

Date:

Est. Time: 60-90 mins

Interview: The purpose of the interview is to focus on the participant's instructional practices in that support struggling readers.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview process. During the interview, please feel free to share any artifacts that you believe will help you to better define your responses.

1. Please describe how your school determines the reading proficiency of students as they move from grade to grade.

- What formal assessments are used to identify students who struggle in reading?

2. Please describe the reading instruction that you provide for a.) children who are on grade level in reading b.) children who are below grade level in reading c.) children who are advanced readers.

- How does your school work to meet the needs of readers who are: on grade level, below grade level, and are advanced readers?
- Do any of your students leave your classroom to receive their primary reading instruction?
- Do any other adults come into your classroom to support students during your reading block?

3. Please think of a specific student in your classroom who struggles in reading.

(Encourage the participant to share any artifacts related to the questions.)

- How did you determine that he or she is a struggling reader? Please walk me through the steps that you took to determine that he or she is a struggling reader?
- How will you monitor his or her growth throughout the year?

- 4. Please continue to think about this struggling reader. This time think about him or her from the perspective of teaching reading and describe the instructional practices that you believe meet the needs of this struggling reader?**

(Encourage the participant to share any artifacts related to the questions.)

- In what ways do you supplement your instructional practices to meet the learning needs of this struggling reader?
- Does your struggling reader work with other students during your reading block?
- If yes, in what ways does he or she work with other students?
- Does he or she work alone? If yes, in what ways does he or she work alone?
- Does he or she ever just work with you? If yes, how often?

- 5. Please tell me about how your classroom is structured to support reading instruction.**

(Encourage the participant to share about how the desks are arranged, the classroom library, wall hangings, and student work that is displayed on the walls.)

- How is your classroom structured to support this struggling reader?
- Tell me about how you organize seats and why you organize them in this manner.
- Is it structured to support some struggling readers better than others?
- Tell me about your classroom library.
- Please tell me about the work that is hanging on your walls.
- If you could change the structure of your classroom to better support struggling readers, what would you change?

- 6. In what ways do you promote reading in your classroom?**

**APPENDIX G: MODIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL SCALE FOR
ASSESSING IMPLEMENTATION LEVELS DOCUMENT**

Criterion 1: Creates a Literate Environment

Teachers create a literate environment by providing a wide variety of reading experiences, including rich and diverse opportunities for students to read, discuss, and write texts across the curriculum. Students' learning at various stages in the reading and writing process is celebrated and displayed on walls within and outside classrooms. Classrooms are arranged to promote whole and small group problem-solving discussions. Inquiry-based learning is evident, including relevant and purposeful talk. Respectful talk and attitudes are promoted and used among students, and students' questions are valued by providing additional opportunities for clarifying and seeking information through research.

Criterion 2: Organizes the Classroom

Teachers organize the classroom to meet the needs of diverse learners, including selecting appropriate materials and working with whole group, small group, and individual learners. Classroom schedules are visible, predictable routines are established, and classroom norms are outlined. Children's behaviors include: staying on-task, working independently, assuming responsibility for classroom materials, and respecting the rights of others. Teachers' workspace and materials, including assessment notebooks, are organized and used to document learning and plan for instruction. Students' workspace and materials, including students' logs, are organized and easily accessible. Classroom libraries are well organized and contain an abundant amount of reading material across genres, authors and topics.

Criterion 3: Uses Data To Inform Instruction and To Provide Systemic

Interventions

Teachers use assessments to inform instruction and to monitor students' learning. Formal and informal assessments are triangulated, including portfolio-based assessments, observation notes, constructed response measures, observations, anecdotal notes, running records, logs, and norm- and criterion-referenced tests. Data are used to tailor interventions that provide another layer of support for the most needy students, including classroom interventions and supplemental interventions in one-to-one and small groups. The specialty teachers collaborate and plan with the classroom teachers to ensure consistency of interventions across the school day.

Criterion 4: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning

Teachers use a workshop approach to learning across the curriculum, including reading, writing, language, and content workshops. Small group reading and writing instruction is provided to meet the needs of diverse learners; and explicit mini-lessons are tailored to meet the needs of the majority of students across the curriculum. Daily one-to-one conferences are scheduled with students during the workshop framework. Teaching prompts are used to promote problem-solving strategies, higher-order thinking processes, and deeper comprehension. Quality literature is read, enjoyed, and analyzed across the various workshops. A writing continuum is used to meet student needs, plan instruction, and monitor student progress. Writing is taught as a process, including drafting, revising, editing, and publishing processes.

Mentor texts and notebooks are used as resources across genres; and inquiry-based learning is promoted and arranged across the content.

Criterion 1: Creates a Literate Environment	1st Interview	2nd Interview
1. Reading responses through writing or art are displayed on walls and in hallways		
2. Writing drafts are organized in writing portfolios, and final drafts are displayed on walls and in hallways.		
3. Variety of reading materials is enjoyed, discussed and analyzed across the curriculum.		
4. Co-constructed language charts embrace student language and are displayed on walls and in students' notebooks.		
5. Tables, clusters of desks, and work areas are arranged to promote collaborative learning and problem solving.		
6. Problem-solving is collaborative (pairs or groups) and talk is purposeful.		
7. Engagement is maintained by meaningfulness and relevance of the task.		
8. Respectful talk and attitudes are promoted and used among all learners.		
9. Elaborated discussions around specific concepts are promoted and students' thinking is valued and discussed.		
10. Environment is conducive to inquiry-based learning and learners are engaged in constructive interactions around purposeful literacy events.		

Criterion 2: Organizes the Classroom	1st Interview	2nd Interview
1. Teachers' schedules are displayed and routines are clearly established.		
2. Classroom space is carefully considered and designed for whole group, small group and individual teaching and learning.		
3. Teachers' workspace and instructional materials are organized for teaching across the curriculum.		
4. Students' materials are organized and easily accessible.		
5. Students' logs are organized and reflect integrated learning across the curriculum.		
6. Classroom libraries contain an abundant amount of reading material across genres, authors and topics.		
7. Literature for read-aloud, familiar/independent reading material, big books, charts, poetry, and poetry notebooks are organized and accessible.		
8. Book tubs housed in classroom library are clearly labeled according to genre, topic and/or by author.		
9. Literacy corner tasks are organized and are designed to meet the needs of groups and individual learners.		
10. Summative and formative assessments are organized for instructional purposes and documentation.		

Criterion 3: Uses Data To Inform Instruction and To Provide Systemic Interventions	1st Interview	2nd Interview
1. Summative and formative assessments are used to determine where to begin instruction.		
2. Data are used across the curriculum to monitor student progress and to guide and plan instruction.		
3. Summative and formative assessments are used to tailor in-class interventions to meet the needs of struggling learners.		
4. Data are used to plan a Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM), including Reading Recovery in first grade and small groups for other needy readers across grades.		
5. Teachers collaborate with intervention teacher/s around student/s progress and collaboratively develop a plan of action.		

Criterion 4: Uses a Differentiated Approach to Learning	1st Interview	2nd Interview
1. Schedules include a workshop approach to learning across the curriculum.		
2. Explicit mini-lessons are tailored to meet the needs of the majority of students across the curriculum.		
3. Daily small group reading and writing instruction is provided to meet the diverse needs of students.		
4. Daily one-to-one reading and writing conferences are scheduled with students.		
5. Prompts are used to activate successful problem-solving strategies, higher order thinking, and deeper comprehension.		
6. Writing is taught as a process, including composing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.		
7. A writing continuum is used to meet student needs, plan instruction, and monitor progress over time.		
8. Quality literature is read, enjoyed and analyzed across the various workshops.		
9. Mentor texts and notebooks are used as resources across genres.		
10. Inquiry based learning opportunities are promoted and arranged across the content areas.		

ESAIL: Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels
Dorn, L. & Soffos, C. (2007). *Environmental Scale for Assessing Implementation Levels (ESAIL)*. Center for Literacy. University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) model. Scale may be reproduced for use with schools.

APPENDIX H: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Name	Years Teaching	Grades Taught	Current Teaching Assignment	Teacher Preparation Program	Master's Degree	Reading Teacher Efficacy Score
Michelle	14 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Annie	13 years	4, 5, 6	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Linda	7 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Barbara	7 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Nicole	5 years	1, 3, 5	4	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	Low
Calli	5 years	3	3	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	Low
Anonymous	3 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Audrey	3 years	3, 4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Low

Name	Years Teaching	Grades Taught	Current Teaching Assignment	Teacher Preparation Program	Master's Degree	Reading Teacher Efficacy Score
Katrina	1 year	5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Margret	1 year	5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Low
Celia	38 years	3, 5, 6	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Patty	22 years	3	3	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	Average
Paul	19 years	3, 4, 5	5	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	Average
Wilma	16 years	4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Lynn	12 years	3, 4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Ernie	11 years	4, 6	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Ally	8 years	3, 4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Susan	7 years	4, 5	5	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	Average

Name	Years Teaching	Grades Taught	Current Teaching Assignment	Teacher Preparation Program	Master's Degree	Reading Teacher Efficacy Score
Sherry	6 years	5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Bryn	4 years	K-2, 4,5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	Average
Diane	28 years	1, 2, 3,4, 5, 7 and 8	3	Undergraduate- Education	Yes	High
Liz	23 years	1,4, 5	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Jackie	18 years	1, 3, 4,5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Gale	18 years	5	5	Undergraduate Education	Yes	High
Cindy	13 years	2, 3	3	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High
Sandy	13 years	1, 3, 5	5	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Don	12 years	4	4	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High
Barbara	10 years	3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Kara	9 years	1, 3, 4	4	Undergraduate Education	No	High
Kelly	9 years	3, 4, 6	4	Teacher Certification Program	Yes	High

APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Maine Informed Consent Letter for Student Participants

You are invited asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Terry Young, a doctoral student at the University of Maine. The purpose of this study is to build on the earlier efficacy work of Tschannen, Moran and Hoy (2001) and the reading teacher efficacy work of Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) as it relates to the teaching of struggling readers at the intermediate levels.

This dissertation will add to educational research related to teacher efficacy and reading instruction as well as expand on the research that is specifically focused on the teaching of struggling readers at the intermediate levels.

Your school was selected to participate because it meets one of two research criteria: (1) it is an intermediate school in Maine and (2) the school receives Title 1 funds.

For an individual teacher to participate, you must meet three criteria: (1) be a classroom teacher who teaches reading in an intermediate school that meet the criteria for schools that are participating in the study (2) must have three or more years teaching experience.

What will you be asked to do?

Phase 1

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete the attached survey that consists of two instruments: a background questionnaire and the Reading Teacher Survey. The instrument asks questions related to the demographics and includes questions related to the number of years that you have taught reading, the grade levels you have taught and the number of years that you have taught at each grade level. The instrument also contains sixteen items and is designed along a five-point Likert Scale with choices ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

The surveys will be left with your principal during a staff meeting and I will remain on site until all who want to participate are able to do so. If you do not wish to participate, you will not be asked to pass in a survey. The results will remain confidential and all participants, at each site, will be provided with a chance to win a \$25 Borders Gift Certificate for participating in the survey.

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the study requires two interviews and will be held in a mutually agreed upon time.

The first interview will be conducted over the phone and may take approximately thirty minutes

of your time. Notes will be taken during the interview. The second interview will be conducted in your classroom and will be held at an agreed upon time during the school year and will take approximately 60 minutes. The researcher will take pictures of the

classroom as a visual aid for data analysis. This interview will be taped so your responses can be better examined. The tapes and pictures will be destroyed at the completion of the project in the spring of 2012. Transcripts will be maintained indefinitely. Safeguards will be taken to prevent anyone from connecting your name to the transcripts. The identity of students will be deleted from any artifacts shared, copied, or displayed in classroom pictures.

Risks to Being in Study:

The risks of participating in this study are minimal aside from the time allocated for participation. You may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

Benefits of Being in Study:

All participants in Phase 1, the survey, have a chance to win a \$25 Borders Gift Certificate for participating in the survey. All participants who are chosen for Phase 2, the interviews, will be given a \$50 gift certificate to Borders for participating in the second part of this study.

This researcher believes that the analysis and recommendations that will result from this research will benefit educational leaders, classroom teachers, and educational researchers in their work to meet the needs of all students.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential.

I will take notes and audio record during the first and second interviews.

All interviews will be transcribed and will be stored on a password-protected computer in my home-office.

Pseudonyms will be used during the transcription process for all names of people and schools.

The code linking real names and pseudonyms will be stored on a password-protected computer in my home office.

All paper copies of data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office.

No individual (student or adult) or school names will be entered into written transcripts.

In any report, I will not include your name or otherwise identify you or your students.

Any identifiable digital and paper records will be kept until one year after the completion of the project, spring 2012.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

Taking part in both phases of this study is voluntary.

You are free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

You are free to choose not to answer any of the questions during the interview phase of the study.

You will not be penalized in any way for declining to complete the survey, declining to be interviewed for Phase 2 of the study, or for deciding to stop taking part in the study after you have agreed to be interviewed. All of this information will remain confidential.

Contacts and Questions:

The lead researcher conducting this study is Terry Young, a doctoral student from The University of Maine. He can be reached at tpyoung1@gmail.com or (207) 831-5179.

The faculty supervisor is Dr. Sarah MacKenzie, sarah_mackenzie@umit.maine.edu (207) 581-2734.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board at 581-1498. gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu

Copy of Consent Form:

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to take part in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Terrence (Terry) Young was born in Dedham, Massachusetts and graduated from the Roxbury Latin School in 1986. He attended the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in political science in 1990. After graduation, Terry worked in legal research at Hale and Dorr in Boston while considering admission to law school. Instead, Terry decided on a career in education.

Terry completed a Masters in Education at Boston University in 1995. Terry taught in Hingham, Massachusetts and then moved to Maine where he taught in Windham. After ten years of classroom teaching, Terry decided to pursue a career in school leadership and was encouraged by his superintendent to participate in the Maine Leadership Network. Upon completion, he served as an assistant principal in Auburn, Maine and then a principal in Saco, Maine. Terry is currently a principal at the Longfellow School, a K-5 school in Portland, Maine. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from The University of Maine in August, 2017.