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# Beginning Teachers and Literacy Instruction Using iPads in Title I Schools

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Beginning Teachers and Literacy Instruction Using iPads in Title I Schools

by

Latasha McDowell

MA, Converse College, 2010

BS, University of South Carolina at Upstate, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Though iPads are being implemented more in elementary classrooms, many beginning teachers struggle with integrating literacy using the iPad in Title I schools among struggling readers. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through 2nd grade 1st year teacher self-efficacy and experiences with literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers in Title I schools. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy provided theoretical foundation to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and participants' experiences. Seven elementary school teachers from grades K-2 who used iPads to teach literacy among struggling readers in Title I schools participated in open-ended interviews. Data were transcribed, coded, and categorized by textural and structural descriptions through the process of horizontalization that resulted in 10 major themes. Findings revealed that using the iPad as an instructional tool increased engagement and promoted growth in reading, and self-efficacy was directly related to teacher instructional experiences. Findings also revealed diverse experiences regarding teacher support, prior training, and functional challenges when using the iPad to integrate literacy. Implications include increased support at the elementary level as well as further education on self-efficacy and teaching students from poverty. This social change effort spreads awareness to educators who serve students in Title I schools in their effort to increase literacy skills among struggling readers using digital technology.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I give thanks to God who fueled my faith and gave me strength throughout my doctoral journey. To my late grandparents, Melvin, Rosa, and Richard, thank you for always believing in me and supporting my dreams. I wish you were here to share this moment with me but I know you are all smiling down on me with love. To my late Father, "I did it" and I know you are so proud of me as well.

To my mother, I would not be where I am today without the countless sacrifices you made to provide for me and expose me to all life's opportunities. Through your strength and perseverance, you carefully molded me into the woman I am today. Thank you for instilling in me at a young age that anything was possible with hard work. Thank you for always encouraging me in my highest moments and for motivating me when I felt like I couldn't go on. This is "our" degree. I am forever grateful for you and your endless support of my family.

To my beautiful daughter Khloe, thank you for always lifting my spirits on those hard days in my office. Thank you for being patient and understanding as I worked on my laptop for endless hours. I pray that this accomplishment will be a constant reminder that you can achieve anything in life. Continue to believe in yourself and dream BIG!

To my husband, thank you for always supporting my dreams and constantly telling me "you got this!" Thank you for your understanding when I had to put my laptop first. Thank you for wiping my tears and always reassuring me that this was destined for me. Your patience, love, sacrifice, and encouragement will forever be appreciated.

Acknowledgments

To my family and close friends, thank you for all your prayers and positive words of encouragement throughout my doctoral journey.

I am so grateful and thankful for my supportive committee who has been both an essential and influential part of my doctoral journey. Thank you Dr. Lucy Abernathy (Committee Chair), Dr. Dennis Beck (Methodologist), and Dr. Danielle Hedegard (URR Reviewer) for your thoughtful feedback and continuous support along the way. I have learned so much from you all and I am so grateful for your devoted time, constructive feedback, and positive contributions toward completing my degree.

I would like to acknowledge all the school districts, school administrators, and teachers for your participation throughout this research study. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Robert for your support and constant motivation throughout my doctoral journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The competency of beginning teachers has been a continuous concern in the field of education that has been closely associated with student achievement in reading (Goh, Yusuf, & Wong, 2017). Researchers have shown that novice teachers who teach literacy in high poverty school settings face greater challenges due to less resources, surrounding environment, and student needs (Manwa, Mukeredzi, & Manwa, 2016). Integrating technology into literacy instruction could positively enhance the reading skills among at-risk readers (Calvert, 2015); however, iPad literacy integration is a skill that many teachers struggle to implement among at-risk student populations (D'Agostino, Rodgers, Harmey, & Brownfield, 2016). This study will address the gap and focus on first-year teachers experiences and perceptions of integrating iPads into literacy instruction to increase reading skills among at-risk students in Title I schools.

This chapter will begin with the background, problem, purpose of the study, and research questions followed by the conceptual framework and nature of study. Operational definitions will also be discussed along with assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. The chapter will conclude with the significance of the study and a comprehensive summary transitions to Chapter 2.

**Background**

Beginning teachers who serve kindergarten through second-grade students in districts of high poverty need consistent support, which is especially important because districts in high poverty have high percentages of beginning teachers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Along with support, self-efficacy could influence beginning teachers

serving students in areas of high poverty, as self-efficacy has had a significant influence on beginning teachers' induction program experiences and their choice to continue teaching in the same school setting (LoCascio, Smeaton, & Waters, 2016).

Many teachers build self-efficacy during collegiate program experiences. For instance, a partnership was created between a resident collegiate education mentor program and a public school system created to support teachers during their first year of teaching (Gorneau, 2014). The program encouraged teachers not to leave the teaching profession, showing that productive support systems and self- efficacy were related to beginning teacher experiences and their decision to remain in the teaching profession (Gorneau, 2014). In addition to self-efficacy, technology integration has started to become a new trend in elementary classrooms.

Using iPads has had a positive influence on student growth (Larabee, Burns, & McComas, 2014). For instance, reading applications on the iPad can instructionally support struggling first-grade readers in high risk urban schools. However, there has been a disconnection between teacher beliefs about teaching literacy with technology and the lack of technology training for teachers (D'Agostino et al., 2016). Though digital learning tools can increase literacy skills among young learners, learning cannot take place without the implementation of effective iPad management during instructional time by teachers (Calvert, 2015). Self-efficacy may be a defining factor when using technology as a literacy-based instructional tool. Purposeful professional development in regard to instructional integration and management using the iPad could also affect

beginning teachers. Therefore, this study was focused on teachers' self-efficacy in relation to using iPads to help struggling readers in Title I schools to address their needs.

## Problem Statement

There are many beginning primary teachers serving students in Title I schools located in high poverty districts who educate struggling readers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Beginning teachers have been known to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and unsupported (Gorneau, 2014). In addition to the frustrations of beginning teachers, some Title I schools have purchased iPads as an integrational learning tool for instruction which teachers were expected to differentiate and influence learning. (D'Agostino et al., 2016). The iPad has made an influential impact on literacy in these schools (Calvert, 2015). However, many teachers face obstacles when integrating the iPad into instruction (D'Agostino et al., 2016). The problem this qualitative study addressed is that there are first-year teachers with low self-efficacy who struggle with integrating literacy into instruction using an iPad in Title I schools where differentiation is an expectation for meeting the needs of diverse readers. The findings may inform teacher preparation programs, school administrators, and literacy coaches in Title I schools who serve as a support system for first-year teachers are expected to enhance literacy skills among struggling readers using iPads.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teacher self-efficacy and experiences with literacy-based iPad integration among struggling

readers in Title I schools. A phenomenological research design approach was used to focus on the perceptions among multiple participants regarding the study's purpose. Additionally, I focused on the difficulties and self-efficacy among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers. Implementing a phenomenological approach helped reveal in-depth data on the experiences of these teachers and allow the researcher to form generalizations about experiencing the phenomenon. Findings may help address common challenges, determine what types of support are needed for teachers to feel successful, and for at-risk students to gain a foundation in reading.

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**Research Questions**

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The research questions for this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teachers who use literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?

Research Question 2: How do kindergarten through second-grade teachers perceive their self-efficacy during their first year of teaching using literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?

Research Question 3: What are kindergarten through second-grade teacher perceptions about the use of literacy-based iPad integration and its impact on instructional practices and the learning experiences of students?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is centered on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy describes how an individual thinks, feels, behaves, and believes in achieving specific performance tasks based on the perception of personal skills. This conceptual framework informed the study because the actions of beginning teachers may be shaped by their beliefs and control over their capabilities, behaviors, motivation, and social environment. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy was utilized to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and the experiences and abilities of first-year teachers using literacy-based iPad integration with struggling readers in Title I schools.

## Nature of the Study

This qualitative research study involved a phenomenological approach, as phenomenology is used to provide a comprehensive view of similar individual experiences to develop an in-depth analysis of the core of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This approach helped understand multiple lived experiences related to first-year teacher self-efficacy and literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers. The phenomenological approach is used to explore human feelings and also eliminate bias or assumptions about the lived experiences of a central phenomenon. Using the phenomenological approach, the researcher can use data from participants to form statements about experiencing the phenomenon. Therefore, this approach provided data that may inform the field of education and provide an in-depth understanding of how first-year teachers perceive the same phenomenon differently.

**Operational Definitions**

*AutisMate:* An augmentative and alternative communication application designed to assist users who have difficulty communicating verbally (https://learningworksforkids.com/apps/autismate/).

*Beginning teacher:* A teacher in a public school who has been teaching for less than 3 years.

*Book writer:* An application that allows the user to create interactive or multimedia books. The application also provides interactive functions such as item connection and auto play (apps.apple.com/us/app/book-writer/id481160195).

*Developmental reading assessment:* A standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading (pearsonassessments.org).

*Differentiate:* To strategically use data to purposefully plan instruction to meet the diverse needs of multiple learners.

*English language learner (ELL):* A student who was not born in the United States, whose native language is a language other than English, or who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant and has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language which may deny them the ability to meet state assessment requirements, succeed in English based classrooms, or participate in society (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018).

*English to speakers of other languages (ESOL):* Students who did not learn English as their native tongue and continue to use their dominant language (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018a).

*Head start:* A federal program that promotes the school readiness of children from birth to age 5 from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive social, and emotional development (South Carolina State Head Start Association, 2018).

*Induction programs/teachers:* A statewide program for all school districts whose purpose is to ensure that beginning teachers become an integral part of the professional learning community, benefit from the coaching and support of trained mentors, and continue to develop the skills necessary to positively impact student learning throughout their careers (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018b).

*Instructional practices:* Teaching practices that are carried out through instruction in an effort to master learning objectives or specific student needs.

*Literacy-based iPad integration:* Key concepts, themes, strategies, or software that strictly promote literacy and are used to integrate literacy while using a digital tool such as an iPad.

*Measure of academic progress (MAP):* A computerized adaptive test that helps teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students and make informed decisions to promote a child's academic growth (www.nwea.org).

*RIT Score (Rasch Unit - associated with MAP):* This score represents a student's achievement level at any given moment and helps measure their academic growth over time. The RIT scale is a stable scale, like feet and inches, that accurately measures student performance, regardless of age, grades, or grade level (community.nwea.org).

*Struggling readers:* Students who are significantly reading below the reading level indicated by their current grade level and require intensive support or reading interventions.

*Title I school:* Title I, Part A of Public Law 107-110, as amended, provides assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018c).

## Assumptions

There are a variety of assumptions that are related to the study. It was assumed that participants would answer all interview questions honestly, and the criteria of the sample would ensure that all participants have experienced the same phenomenon. It was also assumed that participants had a genuine interest in participating in the study and were not driven by alternative motives. It was also assumed that there would be an essence to the shared experience that will provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015) and that themes, meanings, and trends would develop from the data that would allow for unbiased interpretations (Center for Innovation and Research in Teaching, 2018).

## Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was created and supported by the research questions, which were focused on the experiences of beginning teachers, self-efficacy, iPad integration, literacy, and at-risk students in Title I schools. The scope was also developed based on the background information gathered from the literature review. Delimitations

include only focusing on beginning teachers in Title I schools, teachers within their first

or second year teaching, and teachers who have used an iPad during literacy instruction.

Teachers with fewer than 2 years of experience are related to the phenomenon of the

study. Title I schools are the only school population that were studied. Title I schools are

one-to-one iPad schools where each individual student has access to an iPad during

school hours. Title I schools also serve the student population that is addressed by the

research questions. iPad integration in literacy serves as one of the imperative elements of

the study due to the strong need for differentiation to meet the needs of diverse struggling

readers from high poverty populations. Selected schools were located within a 10-45-mile

radius to promote time management and access to participants. Interviews were

conducted in a private location within the school that the participant teaches or close

secured location. These delimitations directly support the purpose and research questions

of the study.

**Limitations**

To address potential limitations, it was important to select participants who had

directly experienced the phenomenon and were able to articulate their thoughts clearly.

Factors such as nervousness, cognition, pride, and self-consciousness were potential

limitations with selected participants. Additionally, organizing and presenting findings

may be difficult due to rich qualitative data (Center for Innovation and Research in

Teaching, 2018). Due to the nature of the data, establishing reliability and validity may

also be difficult as well as organizing the interpretation of the data while maintaining

bracketing (ConnectUS, 2015). It was also important to remain free from bias during the

interview and while analyzing and interpreting data. Time management was taken into consideration, as collecting and analyzing can be time consuming due to the large amount of interview data that must me coded and organized by themes (Lester, 1999). Another limitation was unknown factors or conditions that could have developed at the workplace of participants could create a bias response. Finally, the number of participants may not have been enough to reach saturation.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will address the gap in knowledge regarding the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teachers' ability to use literacy-based iPad integration into instruction and reading achievement among students served in Title I schools. It can take beginning teachers 3 to 4 years to become experienced teachers (LoCascio et al., 2016), which may affect the achievement gap in literacy among students living in extreme urban areas of poverty (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). However, there has been little research on first-year teachers, innovative literacy integration using the iPad, and at-risk struggling readers at Title I schools. The iPad can be used to transform literacy practices (Calvert, 2015), but many novice teachers are not using digital tools in capacities where optimal learning can take place (Larabee et al., 2014). Thus, this study provides insight into the perceptions of first-year teachers with a goal of developing future implications that could support new teachers in similar school settings. In regard to positive social change, this study may provide at-risk students with attributes such as core reading skills, eager attitudes toward literacy, and digital self-expression, which would be an asset to their surrounding community and their roles as future citizens.

## Summary

This chapter started with the background, problem, and purpose of the study immediately followed by the conceptual framework, research questions, nature of the study, and operational definitions. Assumptions were later revealed along with the scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study. The chapter concluded the significance of the study, gap in research, and a statement of how the study has the potential to close the gap in research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

There are first-year teachers with low self-efficacy who struggle with integrating literacy into instruction using an iPad in Title I schools where differentiation is an expectation for meeting the needs of diverse readers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teacher self-efficacy and experiences with literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers in Title I schools. The findings may inform teacher preparation programs, school administrators, and literacy coaches in Title I schools who serve as a support system for first-year teachers who are expected to enhance literacy skills among struggling readers using iPads.

This chapter provides the literacy research strategy and a comprehensive review of the conceptual framework. The framework will reveal findings on the relationship between the theory of self-efficacy and the perceptions of first-year teachers using literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers. Next, the chapter will present review of relevant literature organized by themes found within the literature. The literature relates to beginning teachers and literacy. Lastly, the chapter will include a discussion of digital innovation with iPads and how it impacts literacy instruction. The chapter will conclude with a summary followed by transitional remarks about Chapter 3.

## Literacy Search Strategy

The literature research was conducted using the Walden University Library. The following databases were used to reach saturation of the research topic: Education

Source, ERIC, ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, Computers & Applied

Sciences Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX with full text. The

following keywords were used when searching the databases: *beginning teachers, self-*

*efficacy, Zone of Proximal Development, teacher effectiveness, professional development,*

*at-risk students, literacy, Title I, disadvantaged schools, struggling readers, reading*

*ability, iPad, technology integration, educational technology, elementary*, and digital

*literacy*. Keywords were also combined to gain more references.

## Conceptual Framework

The major phenomenon of the study is kindergarten through second-grade, first-

year teacher experiences with literacy-based iPad integration and struggling readers in

high poverty Title I schools. To further address the phenomenon, the conceptual

framework for this study was centered on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy. The

theory of self-efficacy helped reveal how this phenomenon has been articulated in

previous research, which supports its use in the current study.

### Theory of Self-Efficacy

The theory of self-efficacy describes individuals' beliefs in achieving specific

performance tasks. Self-efficacy is formulated by the perceptions of self-actions as well

as observing or working with an individual or collaboratively in a group setting (Bandura,

1977). Bandura (1977) also suggested that personal character traits play a role in

professional experiences and have a direct effect on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can alter

how someone views success, the process toward achieving success, and the manner in

which someone prevails. Bandura suggested that self-efficacy can be increased during

success but can quickly decrease during failed attempts. Personal beliefs toward completing a task have a direct effect on the choices an individual makes to complete the task before them (Sharp, Brandt, Tuft, & Jay, 2016).

Self-efficacy is imperative to the teaching profession, as actions of teachers are shaped by their beliefs and control over their capabilities, behaviors, motivation, and social environment. Thus, self-efficacy has been influential in educational research and often used as a tool to further investigate the achievements among successful teachers (Fry, 2009). In relation to this study, self-efficacy may be an integral factor to address when examining the perceptions, experiences, and actions of beginning teachers in Title I schools serving struggling readers.

**Self-efficacy and teacher success**. High self-efficacy has been related to teacher success, as teachers with high self-efficacy dedicate more time and energy and are further driven to ensure their students succeed. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more prepared, open to new teaching strategies, and provide creative engagement during learning (Sharp et al., 2016). As for struggling students and students with low academics, beginning teachers with high self-efficacy are more motivated to meet the individual needs of students and are patient throughout their learning process (Sharp et al., 2016). For example, Sharp et al. (2016) utilized Bandura's (1977) interpretation of the four sources of information about efficacy, examining personal performance, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological well-being. These sources related to how teachers judged themselves when teaching literacy; how well teachers learned from others, especially when exposed to exemplary models of literacy instruction; whether

mentors or coaches enhanced teacher abilities, and teachers' emotions related to their ability to competently teach literacy (Sharp et al., 2016). These four sources may increase or decrease self-efficacy among prospective teachers. These sources are related to the current study and the self-efficacy of beginning teachers as they face the task of increasing skills among struggling readers using the iPad as a literacy learning tool.

**Self-efficacy and induction year teachers**. Research has also used Bandura's theory to examine the role that self-efficacy played in beginning teachers' experiences and willingness to stay in the profession. Four novice teachers were studied over 3 years and found that high self-efficacy is related to beginning teachers' preparations program experiences, especially student teaching (Fry, 2009). Additionally, one of the four teachers left the teaching profession after 2 years of teaching. Future implications suggested a strong relationship between student teachers and cooperating teachers during the last year of their collegiate programs as well as mentorship to support beginning teachers (Fry, 2009).

In relation to the current study, addressing self-efficacy during teacher preparation programs could have a positive effect on the first years of a teaching career. It is important to acknowledge self-efficacy during the early stages of teacher preparation programs because these experiences influence the development of teacher self-efficacy (Johnson, 2010). For instance, vicarious experience involves modeling by effective master teachers, which can directly affect teachers' self-efficacy when there is a respectful connection with the master teacher. Pre-service teachers have been influenced by vicarious experiences in literacy during their student teaching experiences, which also

had a positive impact on their ability to teach literacy during the first year in the classroom (Johnson, 2010). Additionally, first-year teachers who are exposed to a variety of reading programs during their preparation program are more prepared to confidently and persistently meet the needs of struggling readers (Johnson, 2010).

The current study benefitted from Bandura's (1977) framework on self-efficacy to explore how the actions of beginning teachers may be shaped by their self-efficacy. The theory of self-efficacy was used to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and the experiences and abilities of first-year teachers using iPad technology integration with struggling readers in Title I schools.

## Themes in the Literature

### Beginning Teachers

Many beginning educators have a challenging experience while transitioning to the classroom into the independent role of developing and organizing instructional strategies (Kartal, Ozdemir, & Yirci 2017). Beginning teachers start their teaching careers with the goal of making a difference in the lives of students and meeting student needs. But when most beginning teachers enter into urban school settings that have high expectations, they are faced with many tasks, responsibilities, and are mandated to a strict curricula that may have an effect on their confidence (Adoniou, 2016). It is important for beginning teachers to engage with their colleagues and capitalize on opportunities for reflection and growth (Adoniou, 2016). Engaging with peers in networks has been beneficial for first-year teachers, as active engagement serves as an outlet for them when in need of help (Adoniou, 2016).

Another challenge in transitioning from pre-service teacher to classroom teacher is unexpected struggles with professional identity and competence. Beginning teachers have been known to consistently second guess their decisions during their beginning year of teaching (Pillen, Beijaard & Brok, 2013). There is also a multitude of tensions among beginning teachers from pre-service transition, additional support, and individual perceptions of teacher education (Pillen et al., 2013; see also Sharp et al., 2016). Because self-efficacy is related to the personal perceptions and success of a beginning teacher (Sharp et al., 2016), examining personal perception could shed insight on first-year teachers and the challenges they may face with their professional identities and digital literacy among at- risk struggling readers.

**Beginning teachers and relationships.** Strong relationships may be essential to the success and well-being of beginning teachers throughout the year (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Research has indicated five important relationships for beginning teachers to create during their first year of teaching (Turner & Morelli, 2017). The first and most important relationship to establish as a new teacher is with the students, which can impact student success and the classroom community. To initiate this relationship, surveys, student inventories, and observations can be used to obtain and analyze student behavior and interest. Beginning teachers can also take time to bond with students during the first quarter to develop trust and a sense of community among students' peers. It is important for teaches to quickly develop a positive classroom climate and a high level of engagement with each child (Morcom, 2014). Allowing students to have a choice in their learning experiences can also strengthen the relationship between teachers and students

(Turner & Morelli, 2017). In addition to promoting respect and accountability, building meaningful relationships with students allows the classroom to be well managed.

The second relationship is with peers and colleagues, as teachers do not work in an isolated state (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Collaboration among teachers is encouraged during the first year of teaching. Administrators can help initiate this learning experience for new teachers and suggest who would be a great match for collaboration. Strong relationships with a fellow colleague reduce stress, anxiety, and are an asset to the school culture. In this relationship, it is also important for beginning teachers to develop a voice and be a part of planning and data decision making with regard to curricula.

The third essential relationship is with school administrators as they have the biggest influence on beginning teachers. Trust is the initial factor for the relationship between new teachers and administrators to flourish. New teachers can invite administrators into their classroom as well as set up meetings where administrators and beginning teachers could meet throughout the year to discuss progress and opportunities for growth (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Effective administrators enhance this relationship by providing ample opportunities for new teacher support.

The fourth and most influential relationship new teachers develop is with parents, which is important to be built on positivity, reliability, trust, and compassion. New teacher and parent relationships can be initialized through a phone call or letter home then followed up by consistent communication through newsletters, websites, social media, e-mails, or interactive agendas. Invitations to school events and volunteer opportunities in the classroom also strengthen the relationships with parents. The

relationship between new teachers and parents has had an influential impact on
experiences in the classroom (Turner & Morelli, 2017).

The fifth essential relationship new teachers build is within their inner selves. It is
important for new teachers to know their worth, their goals, what makes them happy, and
their purpose for teaching. This aligns with research suggesting that successful teachers
display high levels of self-efficacy (Sharp et al., 2016). Teacher identity is important and
relates to how new teachers approache and responde to the many aspects they face as
first-year teachers (Sharp et al., 2016; Turner & Morelli, 2017). Beginning teachers who
experience these five essential relationships may succeed in any school setting (Turner &
Morelli, 2017).

**Beginning teachers and poverty.** The transition from pre-service teacher to a
first-year classroom teacher serving students of high poverty may have its challenges.
Poverty has been connected to the academic success or failure among at-risk students,
and reports have stated that 85% of at-risk students living in areas of high poverty could
not read and were also not exposed to an abundant vocabulary in the home (Cho,
Convertino, & Khourey-bowers, 2015). Understanding the effect that poverty has on
learning can help pre-service teachers recognize students in poverty, help students
succeed in the classroom, and develop meaningful relationships (Cho et al., 2015). Online
learning modules have been helpful in giving pre-service teachers a better understanding
of students living in poverty and how poverty affects social development, behavior,
attendance, and student achievement (Cho et al., 2015). The learning modules gave

teachers insight on how to approach, interact, and build relationships with students from high poverty (Cho et al., 2015).

In addition to poverty, it is important to address new teacher perceptions and understandings of diverse student populations. New teachers may face challenges when educating students from diverse backgrounds and populations, which may require an ongoing support system to help equip them with the skills to meet the needs of diverse populations (Dharan, 2015). It is important for new teachers to receive continuous support, mentorship, or a professional development session related to building relationships and educating students from diverse populations (Dharan, 2015). Pre-service teacher education programs can address this need to ensure a smooth transition for teachers who leave college and begin working in urban schools with high populations of diversity (Dharan, 2015).

Further research could focus on how factors of the school environments could be related to teacher performance growth (Xu, Özek, & Hansen, 2015). For instance, Whipp and Geronime (2017) conducted a study on pre-service teachers who had teaching experience in urban schools, attended urban schools, and volunteered in urban schools to predict their outcome for teacher retention and their future commitment to teach in urban schools. Whipp and Geronime found that new teacher graduates were apprehensive to teach in urban schools, and many beginning teachers who started teaching in high poverty schools would transfer within 1 to 3 years. Teachers who completed student teaching, volunteer services, and attended school in an urban setting had an influential impact on their choice to teach and become committed to urban schools. Data suggested that a

strong positive prediction could be made in regard to teacher commitment and retention in urban schools (Whipp & Geronime, 2017).

**Supporting beginning teachers.** Certain relationships are significant to the success and teaching practices of beginning teachers. Many of these relationships are centered on guidance, trust, and support (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Thus, schools have implemented induction programs to help teachers build relationships during their first year of teaching (Allen, 2013). Although teachers graduate with an accreditation stating that they are prepared to teach, many teachers do not learn the essentials of teaching until their induction year. Professional support throughout the induction years of beginning teachers has been beneficial to teacher development (Allen, 2013). Collaboration and support during the first years of teaching have also had a positive effect (Adoniou, 2016). Future implications suggested that career long professional support for novice and seasoned teachers should be the next steps in education (Allen, 2013). For instance, Lemaire (2014) reported that the New South Wales Teachers Federation provides beginning teachers with extra support as well as a gradual release into teaching after entering the field of education. Schools received additional funding to accommodate for a 2-hour release for first-year teachers and a 1-hour release for second-year teachers. During the release period, beginning teachers observe classes, participate in professional development workshops, create lesson plans, and designe or analyzed assessments. For further support, experienced teachers were allotted 1 hour of release time to serve as a mentor to a beginning teacher (Lemaire, 2014). This type of support promotes teacher competence as well as instructional best practices (Lemaire, 2014).

Along with professional development, researchers have found that mentorship has impacted beginning teachers in many ways. For teachers who serve students in urban schools, Kartal et al., (2017) explored the challenges beginning teachers faced as well as how the challenges could be used to develop relationships with mentors. Researchers found that mentorship was not only empowering but also a purposeful support system that was beneficial for inexperienced teachers (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). The purpose of the study was to find out if mentor relationships would benefit teachers who work in rural and urban schools during their early years of teaching (Kartal et al.,2017). Eleven teachers were selected, and data was collected through interviews which contained three open ended questions created by researchers. Findings revealed that mentorship services would have a positive impact on the professional goals and practices of teachers. Many teachers struggled with time management, organization, behavior management, planning, and other school related responsibilities during the early years of teaching. An mentor served as a direct support system throughout the early years and helped teachers confront the daily challenges that teachers faced. Ideally the role of the mentor would be filled by a highly effective teacher (Kartal et al.,2017). Future implications suggested that the role of mentorship should be addressed during the transition from collegiate program to the classroom (Kartal et al., 2017).

It was imperative to take an active interest in the experiences and needs of first year teachers as their actions effected student achievement, their professional performance, as well as their willingness to continue teaching (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). The role and goal of mentorship is to positively intervene during this crucial year of

teaching. Teachers who have effective mentors during their first few years of teaching eventually transform into high quality teachers (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). However, the mentor and mentee match was vital to the success of the novice teacher. To gain a deeper perspective, the experiences of novice teachers who were assigned mentors during their first year of teaching was investigated (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). The purpose of this study was to determine if official mentorship during the first year of teaching had a positive influence on the experiences of first and second year teachers (2010).

Results showed that teachers in low income schools were assigned mentors during their first year; however, nearly 80 percent of teachers were matched with unsuccessful mentors (Kardos & Johnson. 2010). Data was used to develop purposeful research questions to drive the study that were based on the presence of mentoring, characteristics of the mentor match, and interactions between the mentor and new teacher. Results also revealed that many new teachers highly benefited from the experience; however, results also showed that teachers stated there was a lack of mentor and mentee interaction, mentor and mentee matches were not ideal, and teachers needed more guided support (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). It was suggested that future research should investigate and evaluate the mentor programs that serve public schools to ensure that novice teachers were supported consistently, equally, and successfully (Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

**Literacy**

Teaching literacy is one of the most important foundations for early learners. In early childhood classrooms, literacy skills set the tone for individual reading success. However, teaching literacy among young learners has been known to have its challenges

along the way. A study was conducted to examine the experiences and thoughts of prekindergarten through second-grade teachers with regards to teaching literacy (Giles & Tunks, 2015). For years, the educational system debated over whether using phonics or purposeful literacy activities was the correct way to approach literacy (Giles & Tunks, 2015). There were two approaches to teaching reading; the skill based reading readiness perspective and the emergent literacy perspective (Giles & Tunks, 2015). The reading readiness perspective was based on a structured systematic approach to teaching reading where the teacher served as the main facilitator during whole group instruction (Giles & Tunks, 2015). Students were taught reading readiness skills regardless of their maturity level or if they were ready to read. Eventually, educators took on the emergent literacy approach which was child based and promoted social interactions and exploration of the natural environment while learning how to read. The perceptions of prekindergarten through second grade teachers were examined in regard to instructional practices in literacy to gain a comprehensive outlook on the best practices in literacy (Giles & Tunks, 2015) .

Collectively, three research questions asked "Do early childhood teachers' perceptions of literacy acquisition differ by educational level, grade level taught, and amount of teaching experience? (Giles & Tunks, 2015, p. 525). A descriptive research model was used, and data was collected from 76 prekindergarten through second-grade teachers through a survey method. After analyzing data, Giles suggested that use of differentiation during instruction among diverse readers would be more beneficial for students rather than simply using a specific literacy approach. Differentiation is related to

the current study as it focuses on beginning teachers and literacy instruction among

diverse learners.

**Reading behaviors**. Giles and Tunks provided a great outlook on the diversity of

literacy strategies; however Foorman, York, Santi, and Francis (2008) took an in-depth

look at factors that may predict the reading behaviors of first and second grade primary

readers. This study took place in both urban and rural schools, and the purpose was to

determine if specific factors during their first grade year would help predict their success

in reading during their second grade year as a student. Researchers focused on the

assessment data, student individuality, grade level, teacher characteristics, and the outline

of how the test was administered as a basis for predicting their reading difficulties for the

next year. Findings revealed that context played an integral role in determining the level

of difficulty that students may face during the next school year.

**Literacy and culture**. This study took an in-depth look at how beginning

teachers perceived literacy within the context of urban culture (Glover & Harris, 2016).

There was a decline of teachers remaining in the profession after the first year, especially

teachers who served in challenging schools in urban communities (Glover & Harris,

2016). Similar to Dharan, researchers focused on the Professional Dyads of Culturally

Relevant Teaching initiative whose purpose was to provide an integral relationship

among teachers of color as well as those who serve students of color in communities of

poverty. Researchers completed a case study that sought to create and implement literacy

practices that were a direct reflection of the cultural community within the school. The

purpose of the qualitative case study was to make a positive impact on parents, the school

community, and also increase the reading abilities of the school population through cultural instructional practices in literacy.

Through the collaborative work efforts of two educators, one of same cultural background and one educational leader, the research questions of the study asked if the educators would have an effect on the instructional practices in literacy for beginning teachers as well as the students they serve. Culturally Relevant Teaching was used as the theoretical framework (Glover & Harris, 2016). The framework focuses on culturally relevant educators and their ability to merge literacy instruction with the cultural experiences of students in an effort for them to make a meaningful connections to the learning experience.

An intense 2-year case study took place in a second grade classroom of a teacher participant where increasing reading skills among diverse learners was the ultimate goal. The diverse classroom included students who spoke multiple languages and were from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The participating teacher highly benefited from the Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching project initiative which served as an instructional and educational support system throughout the 2-year case study (Glover & Harris, 2016). The teacher expressed that with support from the dyad, she was able to blossom as an educator and meet the literacy needs of students in a powerful and memorable manner. The participating teacher also expressed that other teachers among her grade level were not supportive of the cultural instructional practices put in place.

There were many beginning teachers who accepted teaching positions in urban communities but lacked experiences and knowledge about the children who lived within

those communities (Glover & Harris, 2016). Lacking experience about the culture of students could have an adverse effect on learning as well as the teachers' potential of remaining in the teaching profession due to possible challenges that may arise. Research efforts inform the research problem of the current study as it sheds light on the importance of beginning teachers' ability to build meaningful relationships with at-risk students in conjunction with diverse practices in literacy (Glover & Harris, 2016). It also magnifies the idea of training teachers who serve students in high poverty areas on how to implement cultural relevant teaching practices within the classroom (Glover & Harris, 2016).

A case study investigated the relationship between literacy instruction and its ability to influence students to connect to their rural surroundings through the content of the curriculum (Waller & Barrentine, 2015). Glover and Harris focused on cultural teaching practices whereas Waller and Barrentine (2015) focused more on the curriculum itself and questioned whether the adopted curriculum provided real life integration concepts to which students could relate. It was suggested that one textbook design or curriculum may not be appropriate for the schools who serve a diverse population of students. In regard to the reading curriculum, researchers discussed the importance of students being able to relate to the content, text structure, vocabulary, and also make connections to their surrounding community through the text. Learning how to read and reading comprehension were highly built on the individual ability to make connections based on prior knowledge and identified these connections as "text to text, text to world, and text to self" (Waller & Barrentine, p.2, 2015).

The qualitative case study asked if the teachers' background, the reading curriculum, and literacy instruction influenced students when making connections in literacy (Waller & Barrentine, 2015). Data was collected within a small rural school community and three teachers who resided in the area utilized a standard reading curriculum in the primary literacy study. Result revealed students made more connections with the teachers versus the curriculum itself. Teachers revealed that it was difficult for students to make meaningful personal connections between the basal series and the real world. In relation to the current research study, it seems as though it is imperative to take an active interest in how to strategically integrate commercial literacy curriculum into the classrooms of urban and diverse populations. As Allen (2013) revealed the challenges of beginning teachers, Waller and Barrentine's (2015) case study sheds insight on the pressure of a beginning teacher and their ability to not only increase reading skills among at-risk learners but also being able to build quality connections with their community through a standard reading curriculum. Beginning and seasoned teachers were encouraged to integrate cultural connections of the classroom population into the standard reading curriculum that was adopted by the school (Waller & Barrentine, 2015).

**Literacy and classroom management**. There are many factors that influenced beginning teachers and the ability to teach literacy effectively among at-risk learners. In addition to Waller and Barrentine's ideas in regard to students building connection in literacy, Garwood and Vernon-Feagans (2017) discussed the impact that classroom management may have on reading behaviors of diverse student populations. The word "diverse" can represent a variety of cultures, backgrounds, characteristics, and

personalities. Researchers focused on the relationship between classroom management and students with emotional and behavioral concerns as well as how classroom management was related to their reading capabilities (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Many children with emotional and behavioral disorders did not show significant progress in reading from year to year (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). The purpose of this case study was to determine the relationship between students with emotional and behavioral disorders within a highly well-managed positive classroom setting over a four year time span to determine their reading achievement score on a third grade assessment. Classroom management would be a pivotal element to place more emphasis on throughout teacher preparation programs as many beginning teachers struggle with the concept of classroom management (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017).

The time frame that students with emotional and behavioral disorders experienced an exceptional well-managed classroom while in kindergarten through third grade and how it was related to their third grade reading assessment scores was investigated (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Researchers predicted that students that experienced four years in a well-managed classroom would have increased literacy scores in third grade. Data was collected over a four year time span through the use of a Family Life Project where participants were selected as well as 189 classroom teachers that were also participants in the study (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Reading skills were measured using the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Results revealed that effective classroom management was significantly related to the increased achievement in reading in third grade among boys; however girls

did not show any significant changes. Classroom management was an imperative skill

that was highly related to the enhancement of reading achievement among diverse

learners. This study highly informs the current research problem as classroom

management could have an integral effect on teachers' ability to increase reading

capabilities among at-risk students while integrating iPad technology (Garwood &

Vernon-Feagans, 2017).

**Technology and Beginning Teachers**

Many schools have introduced technology into the classroom as a unique learning

tool; however, learning how to use technology instructionally has presented challenges

for teachers. The integration of technology use in the classroom along with personal

collegiate educational experiences and how those experiences may have impacted

individual teaching practices was examined (Tondeur et al., 2017). Many beginning

teachers do not willingly integrate technology in their instructional plans. However, some

beginning teachers were knowledgeable about technology and were willing to share

techniques among their colleagues (Tondeur et al., 2017). Teacher preparation programs

were directly related to the experiences of beginning teachers and experiences when

integrating technology into teaching practices (Tondeur et al., 2017). Technology

integration should be mastered during teacher education programs to promote confidence

when merging into diverse classrooms in schools today. Beginning teacher perceptions of

the successes or challenges they faced when integrating technology into their teaching

practices were explored (Tondeur et al., 2017).

A longitudinal study and found that beginning teachers were highly interested in technology integration; however, they lacked a great deal of knowledge on how to integrate technology both meaningfully and appropriately (Tondeur et al., 2017). There was a consistent disconnection between what teachers experienced in their preparation programs and current expectations for technology in classrooms. It was evident that teachers did not learn how to effectively integrate technology based on collegiate experiences. Future implications may be centered on enhancing technology based literature and coursework within teacher preparation programs so that beginning teachers are better prepared to educate students within the digital age of learning (Tondeur et al., 2017). Preparing teachers who are adequately prepared to meet the needs of students through digital literacy is directly related to the current research problem which is focused on first year teachers and digital literacy in Title I schools.

**iPads and literacy.** The iPad has emerged into many early childhood classrooms as a motivational and thought-provoking learning tool. The relationship between iPads and the enhancement of reading skills among young learners was examined (Neumann, 2018). Emergent literacy and how the iPad could be influential in promoting it as well as the relationship between iPads and emergent literacy was of high interest as most children were intrigued by the visual and creative touch that iPads provided (Neumann, 2018). Concepts of print, letter knowledge, phonics, and writing are all essential elements of emergent literacy. The iPad provided operational convenience as they were portable and did not require intense fine motor skills. The unique features of the iPad were also suitable for a variety of learners. To determine the relationship between iPads and

emergent literacy, students were tested after a 9 week iPad intervention program where students used literacy applications based on emergent literacy skills (Neumann, 2018). Results showed that students were highly engaged, and the iPad was directly related to the development of emergent literacy skills. Although letter writing was an area that was unsuccessful in comparison to the other components, emergent literacy is a component of the current research problem and may explain how relating to the reflections of beginning teachers impact this study.

Neumann provided evidence on how the iPad impacted emergent learning while Moon, Wold, and Francom (2017) focused on the use of the iPads to enhance reading comprehension skills among fifth graders. Reading comprehension was an imperative part of becoming a successful reader as it continues to develop throughout primary school. Researchers chose to take an active interest in the relationship between reading comprehension and iPads (Moon et al.,2017). The iPads proved to be highly engaging, motivating, and unique to all learning styles. With the increase and successes of iPad use in elementary schools, the iPad was chosen as a primary learning tool to determine if fifth grade students reading comprehension skills would increase by utilizing an iPad during student centered activities (Moon et al.,2017). Students were paired with college students who served as a "buddy" throughout the experience and researchers questioned if students reading comprehension assessments scores improved and if their attitudes toward literacy would change (Moon et al., 2017).

Findings revealed that iPad activity had a major effect on the reading comprehension scores of fifth grade students. Using iPads during student centered

activities allowed students to take accountability for their learning and also enhanced personal confidence in regard to reading comprehension. Student gains related to reading comprehension exceeded teachers' original expectations. Researchers gave credit to college students who served as a peer buddies and also suggested that teachers should consider pairing students with peers during student centered activities when working with iPads (Moon et al., 2017). This informed the current research problem as reading comprehension was a challenging skill that teachers are expected to teach diverse readers.

**iPads and interventions**. College students were used as a support in place of the teacher (Moon et al., 2017). However, it was also suggested that the iPad could potentially serve as an intervention without teacher or peer support (Dennis, Whalon, Kraut & Herron, 2016). The difference between teacher facilitated instruction and iPad facilitated instruction on preschool students and the mastery of specific vocabulary was explored (Dennis et al.,, 2016). At-risk students and their lack of vocabulary knowledge was the focus of this study as authors suggested that many at-risk preschoolers entered school lacking a foundation of vocabulary. Due to their lack of vocabulary when entering preschool, interventions were put in place at the preschool level in Headstart programs to specifically meet the needs of students from at-risk populations. An iPad application called Book Writer that was used in Headstart programs to increase vocabulary (Dennis et al., 2016). Results revealed that vocabulary increased and students displayed a high level of engagement and understanding.

The relationship between teacher facilitated instruction and iPad facilitated instruction as an intervention for expressive vocabulary growth among Headstart

preschool students was explored (Dennis et al., 2016). AutisMate was the interactive

application that was used to provide sequential lessons for students on the iPad.

Intervention took place four days a week for ten minutes a day over a seven week time

frame. Results showed that students were able to master knowledge of vocabulary in both

facilitated interventions. However, results also showed an increased level of engagement

with iPad interventions (Dennis et al., 2016). This study highly relates to the current

research study as it reveals that in addition to teacher instruction, the use of the iPad can

provide differentiation and enhance literacy skills among at-risk students.

      **iPad integration**. Although studies have shown that reading interventions can

both be teacher facilitated and iPad facilitated, a research study that focused on teachers

who were experienced in using the iPad to differentiate instruction in a one to one iPad

model classroom was conducted. The purpose of the research study was to determine

how experienced teachers strategically used the iPad to integrate literacy instruction in

primary classrooms. Due to the increased amount of iPad use in the classroom

researchers suggested that it was imperative for teachers to understand how to

productively use the iPad as a learning tool and how to teach students to use it effectively

Lu, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ding, & Glazewski, 2017). Similar to the current research study,

many teachers were unsure of what apps to choose and how to appropriately integrate

literacy content daily. The importance of creating a child-centered environment for

students while using the iPad was also stressed. Researchers sought to find out how

experienced iPad educators incorporated iPads into literacy instruction and what apps

they used to enhance instruction (Lu, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ding, & Glazewski, 2017).

Four iPad teachers participated in the case study, and data was collected through interviews and classroom observations.

Findings revealed that teacher directed strategies included setting daily fixed purposes while also incorporating learning stations to promote student accountability. Developmental strategies included guidance, collaboration, exploration, and promoting students' creative independence through the development of digital production projects. Students were growing within a digital world, and it was imperative for educational leaders to take an active interest in effectively preparing pre-service teachers with digital knowledge on integrating and choosing appropriate apps to enhance and differentiate learning among diverse students (Lu, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ding, & Glazewski, 2017). In regard to the current research problem, studies showed that many beginning teachers lacked this level of knowledge. The current research study sought to expand on this issue by exploring, analyzing, and seeking an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade first-year teacher experiences with literacy-based iPad integration and struggling readers in high poverty Title I schools.

**iPads and struggling readers.** Prior studies showed the positive effects of iPad use in the classroom; however, the current study was focused on struggling readers in Title one schools who lived in high poverty populations. Many other factors were involved when educating children within this background (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Teachers understanding of how to choose appropriate applications when integrating literacy using the iPad was imperative (Lu, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ding, & Glazewski, 2017). Rinehart and Ahern (2016) agreed with Lu, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ding, and

Glazewski as they sought to determine if appropriate application selection was related to increasing the reading abilities of struggling readers. Struggling readers often had challenges with reading fluency which was a vital component of reading that was usually measured in first grade and beyond. Imperative considerations when choosing iPad applications were provided (Rinehart & Ahern, 2016). Examples included realistic learning objectives, engaging, modifiable software, and non-challenging route to accomplish goals, clear instructions, boundaries, and an equal amount of play, practice, and learning skills. It was suggested that when choosing fluency applications for struggling readers the software should be flexible, adaptable, creative, and learnable (Rinehart & Ahern, 2016). Findings shed insight on the current study as it revealed elements to consider when choosing an appropriate application for literacy instruction purposes.

Redcay and Preston (2016) were also interested in how iPads impact fluency but also interested its impact on comprehension and chose to center their study on second grade students and teacher guided iPad instruction. Researchers suggested that fluency was based on speed, accuracy, and proper expression and also suggested that there was a direct correlation between fluent readers and their comprehensive capability of reading text (Redcay & Preston, 2016). Application based learning proved to have a lasting effect on literacy skills among young learners (Redcay & Preston, 2016)..

The use of teacher guided iPad instruction was highly suggested (Redcay & Preston, 2016). In this case, students were given objectives before operating the iPad independently. When the teacher guided the iPad experience, the teacher provided a

model, guided the practice, and then allowed the student to work independently. Throughout this process, students were provided with feedback on their learning during the iPad experience. The purpose of this study was to determine and analyze second grade student growth in fluency and comprehension while using the teacher guided iPad approach. Results indicated that second grade students highly comprehended the learning guidelines with the support of their teacher who guided the iPad experience. Students who were exposed to the teacher guided iPad experience resulted in higher fluency and comprehension scores in comparison to students who did not use the teacher guided iPad model.

Many students from at-risk populations were poor readers as a possible result of not being prepared for school due to no funding for preschool or the shortage of experienced literacy teachers (Chai, 2017). With the iPad evolving in primary schools, researchers sought to examine whether an iPad application could increase the literacy skills among students with developmental delays in a small group setting (Chai, 2017). Researchers wanted to know if children with developmental delays could increase their knowledge of phonics as well as observe the learning of their peers in a small group setting using the Touch Sound iPad application. Results revealed that the small group iPad intervention had a progressive impact on student learning and results were in high favor of using the iPad as an instructional learning tool for students with developmental disabilities. Results of the study informed he current research problem and the at-risk children with a variety of disabilities who were served in Title I schools.

Musti-Rao and Plati (2015) also utilized the teacher guided iPad approach; however, they referred to it as teacher directed iPad instruction. The focus of the study was on first graders and ELL students whose sight word reading fluency and oral reading fluency were well below grade level. With the rapid success of iPads in early childhood classrooms, researchers explored the impact of teacher directed iPad instruction on the sight word knowledge of at-risk students (Musti-Rao & Plati, 2015). Researchers inquired about the effect of teacher directed iPad instruction on sight word and oral reading fluency and the effects of self- mediated iPad instruction in comparison to student engagement during independent reading. Results revealed that the level of engagement throughout time on the iPad was extremely higher compared to students who were reading without the iPad (Musti-Rao & Plati, 2015). The findings supported iPad integration, whether it be teacher guided, student centered, small group, or self-mediated (Musti-Rao & Plati, 2015). Chai and Musti-Rao & Plati results were similar and both found that iPad integration has been proved to be a strategic approach to differentiated learning among diverse student populations and may positively influence the education field.

**iPads and parent involvement**. When working with students in schools that serve students from high poverty, it was imperative to build meaningful relationships with parents and student culture (Glover & Harris, 2016).  Aliagas and Margallo (2017) completed a study on iPad use in the home to promote early literacy skills. Parents were a pivotal part of students' early literacy learning experiences as parents provided learning exposure before students arrived in preschool or grade school (Aliagas & Margallo,

2017). A two year ethnographic case study with the families of Spanish students was completed. Researchers inquired about students' engagement levels after being exposed to screen-based interactivity with a variety of storybook applications on the iPad. Interactivity proved to be a successful component of the research study as children responded to interactivity. Children were able to make meaningful connections to the text and responded in a comprehensive and emotional manner. It was found that educators should take an active interest in examining the importance of how children respond to digital text (Aliagas & Margallo, 2017).

The Aliagas and Margallo study was similar to Glover and Harris which suggested that iPads would be an integral tool to use along with the strategy of cultural relevant teaching. Providing students with digital texts that were related to their cultural background could ignite a strong foundation in literacy for at-risk readers. Early in the literature review, Neumann researched and discussed findings on the influence of the iPad and its positive impact on emergent literacy. Neumann and Neumann further expressed the importance of the opportunity for young at-risk children to use iPads at home to promote emergent literacy skills. Although children were capable of using iPads independently, parent guidance or scaffolding during iPad interaction was imperative to the early reading development of at-risk children. It was recommended that the importance of choosing quality apps and digital stories that supported and fostered the development of early literacy skills (Neumann & Neuman, 2017). Equipping parents with the skills to influence their children in literacy at home through the use of iPads before

preschool could have a lasting effect on their emergent literacy development (Neumann and Neumann, 2017).

**Summary**

A variety of themes were revealed through the literature. Beginning teachers were discussed along with the experiences and challenges faced through the first years of teaching. Working within poverty populations and facilitated support for beginning teachers serving students in these populations was addressed through the relevant studies of researchers. An in-depth discussion about beginning teachers and poverty was followed by the subject of literacy in addition to the variety of experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers in literacy. Technology was later introduced with an emphasis on literacy, beginning teachers, iPads, struggling readers, and parental involvement.

From the literature I found that iPads have been a positive influential tool that has been widely used among beginning teachers in a variety of ways to increase literacy skills among at-risk students and struggling readers. The iPad was transforming literacy practices in the lives of young learners (Calvert, 2015). However, many novice teachers were not using digital tools in capacities where optimal learning could take place (Larabee et al., 2014). What we still seek to discover is an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade first year teachers and their experiences with literacy-based iPad integration and struggling readers in high poverty Title I schools. This gap is imperative as LoCascio et al (2016) found that it could take beginning teachers three to four years to become competent teachers in addition to the

known achievement gap in literacy among students living in extreme urban areas of poverty (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). This directly informs the current research problem as there has been little research on first year teacher competency on implementing innovative digital literacy using the iPad and teaching at-risk struggling readers at Title I schools. The problem that was addressed is the need to explore the perceptions of first year teachers who did not have iPad experiences in Title I settings and had been faced with the challenge of using iPads to differentiate and enhance reading skills among diverse struggling readers. This study may further extend knowledge in the discipline as the future findings have the potential to inform the structure, objectives, and expectations of first year teachers in Title I schools. In Chapter 3, the research design will be discussed based upon the gap in the literature followed by role of the researcher, methodology, and data analysis plan.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and analyze the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teacher experiences with literacy-based iPad integration and struggling readers in Title I schools where poverty is high. This chapter reveals the research design, role of the researcher, and methodology followed by a detailed description of participants, instrumentation, and data analysis plan. The chapter will conclude with a discussion addressing trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a transitional summary leading to Chapter 4.

**Research Design and Rationale**

A phenomenological research tradition was used for this study because phenomenology promotes a comprehensive view of similar individual experiences and perceptions to develop an in-depth analysis of the core of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon and central concept of interest was centered on the difficulties and self-efficacy among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers. The research questions to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon were:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teachers who use literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?

Research Question 2: How do kindergarten through second-grade teachers perceive their self-efficacy during their first year of teaching using literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?

Research Question 3: What are kindergarten through second-grade teacher perceptions about the use of literacy-based iPad integration and its impact on instructional practices and the learning experiences of students?

The rationale for using a qualitative phenomenological approach was to understand multiple lived experiences regarding first-year teacher self-efficacy and literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers. This approach helped explore human feelings and reduce bias or assumptions about the lived experiences of the central phenomenon. Using the phenomenological approach, I used data from participants to make generalizations about the difficulties and self-efficacy among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers

A basic qualitative approach was not chosen for the study because I sought to do more than just explore a research problem (Patton, 2012). I sought to take an in-depth active interest in multiple individuals who have lived or experienced the same phenomenon. Additionally, the general inductive approach allows researchers to gain raw data from participants based on the researchers' objectives followed by an analyzation to detect themes that may have arose in regard to objectives created by the researcher (Alase, 2017). However, in the current study the research objectives were broad, and the study required data from a lived phenomenon and research questions related to the phenomenon to identify its true essence. Further, the narrative approach was not chosen because it is focused on stories or life history narratives experienced by individuals (Patton, 2012), whereas phenomenology only requires individual experiences based only on the central phenomenon. Finally, a case study approach was not chosen as most cases

are studied over time and participants are made up of individuals who may not have experienced the same lived experience, which is a requirement of the phenomenological approach (Patton, 2012).

## Role of the Researcher

As a phenomenological researcher, it was important to be open to different meanings, connections, and background that came along with participants experiences (Baysal, Tezcan, & Araç, 2018). A phenomenological attitude was developed in order to promote a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). For instance, it was important to bracket my experiences and ideas related to the research purpose and questions to discover the true essence of the difficulties and self-efficacy among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools (Alase, 2017).

My role as the researcher and observer throughout the phenomenological study was to design and implement the chosen research approach effectively with fidelity. In my professional role, I served as a literacy specialist at a public elementary school where I worked as a literacy coach as well as a reading interventionist. I interacted with primary students and teachers in the area of literacy daily. This could have shaped my data collection and interpretation, as I am knowledgeable about teaching literacy. However, I had no personal or professional relationships with participants because they were chosen from other Title I schools within the district or from a different school district using purposive sampling. With data being collected outside of my current school, this eliminated supervisory or instructor power over participants.

To address my professional role and prevent any bias, I exercised the use of epoche, which encourages the researcher to not only recognize any potential bias but to also set bias aside to understand and self-monitor how it may affect the research process (Koop, 2017). Thus, I identified and disposed of preconceived ideas to gain an unbiased perspective and refrain from any type of judgement or assumptions about the phenomenon (Young & Goering, 2018). Bracketing through phenomenological reduction was also used to help understand the phenomenon as it was perceived by participants, which promoted reliability and validity (Patton, 2015). Additionally, the process of intuition was implemented to remain open and gain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon that was being described by participants.

## Methodology

This section reveals the methodology of the study. Participant selection, researcher developed instruments, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection will also be discussed. Lastly, a data analysis plan will be discussed followed by issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

### Participant Selection Logic

In phenomenological studies, the population should include individuals who have directly experienced the central phenomenon of the current research study (Moustakas, 1994). The population of this study included beginning teachers who were employed at Title I schools, who have prior experiences with literacy-based iPad integration during instructional practices in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers, and who were willing to provide feedback in regard to self-efficacy. The research questions served

as justification for the chosen school population. To prevent researcher biases and eliminate professional relationships and ethical issues, the research sample was not selected from my current school.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants and schools based on the purpose of the research as well as the research questions (see Groenewald, 2004). Purposive sampling provided me with the opportunity to take an in-depth look at information rich cases that provided insight about the phenomenon (Baysal et al., 2018). Purposive sampling also allowed me to gain meaningful feedback from participants that were free from generalizations (Ömür, 2018), The sampling strategy for choosing the school was based on and justified by the current research purpose, which was to seek an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade, first-year teacher self-efficacy and experiences with literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers in Title I schools. The chosen schools were selected from an approved district that met the requirements of the research purpose, problem, and questions.

Purposive sampling was an appropriate choice for participant selection to ensure that the teacher population met the participant criteria (Young & Goering, 2018). The criterion on which participation selection was based was essential, so I only selected participants who had directly experienced the phenomenon addressed by the research questions (Moustakas, 1994). The criteria were developed to ensure participant selection aligned with the chosen phenomenon of interest (Baysal et al., 2018). Criteria were selected based on the research questions, participant experience, and participant interest in the study (Young & Goering, 2018). According to the research questions, participants

needed to have experience using literacy-based iPad integration during instructional practices and were willing to share reflections regarding self-efficacy. Specific criteria included the following: beginning teachers who taught kindergarten, first, or second grade; teachers who were within their first or second year of teaching; beginning teachers who were employed at a Title I school; beginning teachers who used iPads to integrate literacy,; beginning teachers who taught reading as a core subject; and teachers who were willing to reflect on self-efficacy. Participants were known to meet the criteria because they were chosen from the specific school population that directly aligned with the purpose and research questions.

The sample size included up to 10 participants, as six to 10 participants is sufficient for phenomenological studies that involve interviews that provide rich and abundant data (Morse, 2000). A minimum of six participants were interviewed; however, more participants may have been needed to reach saturation (Center for Innovation and Research in Teaching, 2018). Thus, the research questions were open ended and developed to reach saturation among a small number of participants (Alase, 2017). It was intended for six participants to be interviewed with four participants considered as backup in case unforeseen circumstances arose and a participant requested to be released from the study. If this occurred, another participant was chosen from the back-up list in order of their selection.

To identify, contact, and recruit participants, I contacted the research representative from the main district office to gain necessary permission and approvals in order to collect data and conduct research (see Baysal et al., 2018). After receiving

permission, I e-mailed administrators at participating Title I schools to discuss teachers who were eligible to participate based on the research questions and participant criteria, which included kindergarten through second-grade teachers who had experience with iPad integration during instructional practice among struggling readers. Teachers were also asked to be willing to share personal perceptions of self-efficacy.

After taking a further look at teachers recommended by administrators according to criteria, I contacted administrators at Title I schools to share my final list of desired participants whose experiences were rich regarding the research questions and reflected the goal of purposive sampling (see Ömür, 2018). This list was reviewed by me and administrator to ensure participants met all criteria requirements and were eligible to participate in the study. All teachers who met the research criteria were invited to participate in the study as well as an informational meeting that explained the research study and their role as a volunteer and research participant.

Immediately following this meeting, I compiled a list of all individuals who were willing to participate in the research study. From this list, the first 10 participants were selected as the research sample and were sent an informed consent separately through e-mail. The informed consent included the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits of the research followed by the voluntary nature of participants and procedures to protect confidentiality (see Groenewald, 2004). The first six participants were chosen for interviews, and others were informed through e-mail if they were needed. If a participant exited the study, the next participant on the list was notified by e-mail to request their participation in the study.

In regard to saturation and sample size, it was expected that saturation would be reached when new information was no longer introduced during the interview process (Morse, 2000). Through purposive sampling, the sample size was designed to reach saturation, as only participants with information rich cases were selected based on what I was seeking, and research questions were designed to receive maximum feedback in regard to the phenomenon (Ömür, 2018).

**Instrumentation**

An interview guide was developed used as the primary source and instrument in the study (see Appendix), which provides a consistent line of communication and inquiry among all interviewees (Patton, 2015). The interview guide promoted an efficient interviewing system among multiple participants and also provided a comfortable platform for conversing that promoted exploration during questioning (see Patton, 2015). The interview guide contained open-ended questions and allowed me to strategically prompt for comprehensive meaning and depth through the use of timely language (see Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, to establish and ensure content credibility, the interview guide was organized and developed based on research questions that related to the research purpose and were directly consistent with the problem statement (Baysal et al., 2018). Interviews were conducted in a professional space and were designed to take place in one or more sittings.

To establish sufficiency of the data collection instrument in regard to the research questions, I used open-ended questions, listened interactively, was fully receptive, and gave equal value in regard to personal feedback to gain a clear and accurate

understanding of the experiences described (see Moustakas, 1994). As the interviewer, it was important to speak only when needed, ask for clarification, use a positive tone, and strategically avoid interruptions throughout the interview process.

**Researcher-Developed Instruments**

The basis for the researcher developed interview guide was to ensure that all open ended questions directly aligned with the research purpose, problem, and questions. The interview guide was used to guide the interview and also provide ample opportunities for the participant to clearly share their experiences and perceptions.

To establish content validity, content experts were confirmed. My committee examined the interview guide to ensure the questions were appropriate and aligned with the purpose and problem of the research study. I used the self-efficacy theory to help guide questioning in regard to teacher confidence and motivation. Content validity was promoted through the selection of participants and to ensure they were directly related to the phenomenon.

The sufficiency of data collection instruments were intended to successfully answer the research questions. The interview guide was created to directly reflect the research problem, purpose, and questions. The open ended questions were designed to gain a comprehensive view of the participants lived experience and provide them with the chance to further express themselves freely (Anasiz & Püsküllüoglu, 2018). With the research questions being open ended, the participant was allowed to share any experiences or feedback that may have been needed to in regard to the lived phenomenon. (see Table 1)

Table 1

*Research Questions Aligned with Interview Guide*

| Research Question | Interview Guide |
|---|---|
| Question #1: What are the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade first year teachers who use literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers? | 1. What are your experiences with iPad integration and using iPads to differentiate among struggling readers?<br>2. What did you learn from the experience?<br>3. What would you consider to be the biggest challenges and successes when using iPads to differentiate among struggling readers? |
| Question #2: How do kindergarten through second-grade teachers perceive their self-efficacy during their first year of teaching using literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers? | 4. How did you perceive your level of self-efficacy while using iPads to differentiate among struggling readers?<br>5. Do you believe self-efficacy is related to your ability to differentiate among struggling readers using the iPad? Why or why not?<br>6. How do you feel about self-efficacy and teaching literacy? |
| Question #3: What are kindergarten through second-grade teacher perceptions about the use of literacy-based iPad integration and its impact on instructional practices and the learning experiences of students? | 7. Do you believe that using the iPad has a positive impact on your instructional practices and the learning experiences of students? Why or why not?<br>8. Do you promote the use of an iPad in an elementary setting? Why or why not?<br>9. Is there anything further that you would like for me to know about your experiences with iPad integration in literacy among struggling readers? |

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Data was collected from beginning teachers that taught literacy in Title I schools using iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers. Teachers were recruited based on the following criteria: teachers who have taught Kindergarten, first or second grade, teachers who were within their 1st or 2nd year of teaching, teachers who were employed at a Title I school, teachers who had access to iPads, and teachers who taught reading as a core subject.

As the researcher, I solely collected the data through interviews composed of open-ended questions using the interview guide in an effort to meet the requirements of the research questions (Ömür, 2018). Data was collected by the researcher through in-

depth face to face interviews at an approved site. The interview site displayed an inviting and comfortable atmosphere where participants felt open and willing to give honest and reflective feedback (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, it was essential to let the participant have a choice in regard to the interview site to promote a place of comfort for the participant (Alase, 2017). Possible interview sites in which participants felt comfortable were discussed and confirmed with participants after informed consent had been given. As a backup, the researcher selected a coffee shop, library, or bookstore; however, it was imperative for the participant to have a choice in the interview site to gain their trust and promote relaxation throughout the interview process (Alase, 2017). As the interviewer, I created a positive rapport with participants so they felt comfortable, relaxed, and were willing to share raw experiences without feeling judged or uncomfortable (Alase, 2017).

The frequency of data collection was designed for each interview to take place in one sitting and the data collection process to take place within two months. However, more time was needed to reach saturation (Moustakas, 1994). If the participant was unable to attend a face to face interview, a video conference or phone interview was provided.

The duration of data collection was designed for one interview sitting that ranged from sixty and up to ninety minutes each (Alase, 2017). When needed, long interviews, were designed to take place for up to two hours and were scheduled to take place within one sitting; however, some secondary interviews were scheduled at the same or a different location to gain more in-depth information. Participants offered their

experiences on a voluntary basis and were eligible to withdraw from the study at any time (Moustakas, 1994).

Interviews were recorded using a digital device for accuracy purposes, and participants were notified about this through the informed consent. A recording device such as an iPad or iPod was used to record all interview sessions. As a second form of data storage, field notes were saved on a secure password protected jump drive.

A follow-up plan was used if recruitment resulted in too few participants. The sample included up to ten participants and back up participants were chosen from this sample in case there were not enough participants to interview (Morse, 2000). This list was determined by both basic and specific criteria that was revealed within the participant selection section. Participants were listed in a random manner and were selected as needed to reach saturation.

In regard to exiting the study, participants were debriefed after the interview session was complete. The debrief consisted of an overview of the interview process and details about on how their responses would be used in the research study. The interviewer reviewed the informed consent. Participants were given the opportunity to request a transcript of their responses.  The data was strategically transcribed, coded, and then categorized by textural and structural descriptions. Follow up procedures included sustaining a line of communication with participants in regard to the publication of the study.

If a participant withdrew, all recorded data or transcripts were given to the participant and were not used in the research study (Moustakas, 1994). If this occurred,

the backup list from the sample was used to select another participant. The backup list

contained a list of approved participants in no specific order. The list was ordered in a

"first come first serve" basis.

Follow up interviews were not required unless unforeseen circumstances

occurred. If for some reason an interview was interrupted, it was rescheduled at a later

date within the designated frequency range.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with transcribing and then coding the data to create themes

through horizonalization which involved grouping statements from the data that directly

described how the participant experienced the phenomenon (Center for Innovation and

Research in Teaching, 2018). This was best for my current study as horizonalization is a

unique coding strategy that reveals rich experiences from the authentic horizon of data

shared by the participant (Gilstrap 2007). New meanings from the data can potentially

arise when data is coded, re-coded, and compared through multiple categories of themes

(Gilstrap 2007). Through the use of horizonalization and open ended research questions, I

was able to identify the true essence of the phenomenon.

To achieve horizonalization, each recorded interview was transcribed and

summarized. After recorded data had been transcribed, it was thoroughly read and

documented imperative notes as well as any significant statements that were given by the

participant along the way (Ward, DiPaolo, & Popson, 2009). Transcriptions were read

several times to ensure I had clarity as well as a solid lead on themes (Alase, 2017). As

the researcher, I coded data based on documented notes and similar themes in regard to

meanings and significant topics that arose from the experiences of the participants (Palmer, Boniek, Turner & Lovell, 2014). Multi colored highlighters were initially used to create a coding system and to differentiate among codes. This coding system was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet where clusters were formed to organize thematic codes appropriately (Palmer et al., 2014).

From the clusters, invariant themes were developed and used to create an imaginative variation to gain an enhanced version of the themes (Patton, 2015). Themes that arose from clusters helped shape both textural and structural descriptions (Koop, 2017). Textural descriptions and structural experiences described "what" the participants experienced as well as "how" participants experienced it which essentially lead to the discovery of the essence of the phenomenon (Koops, 2017).

The study was summarized and compared to the literature review. Lastly, a unique theme based on textural and structural descriptions communicated a summative essence of the phenomenon. In the event that discrepant cases arose, data was reviewed and further analyzed by the researcher.

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

Substantial and reflective questions were asked in reference to professional experience and teaching practices in an effort to address dimensions of trustworthiness. This record of potential bias was used throughout the interview process to acknowledge, reflect, or make any notes of any bias that may occur.

To promote credibility, participant selection directly aligned with the research questions and purpose of the study. All participants were required to meet the sample

criteria mentioned in the previous section. Transferability was based upon the

generalization of the themes that arose from the data. Themes that arose through textural

and structural descriptions provided an in-depth look at the applicability of the research.

To promote dependability, participants were given a transcript of their response to ensure

it perceives their direct experiences (Groenewald, 2004).

Confirmability was addressed through the relationship between the research

questions, interview responses, and the phenomenon. This was consistently addressed

through the bracketing process to ensure the data was free of any researcher bias and was

solely based upon the participant and their personal and direct experiences. Reliability

was promoted by analyzing and documenting the processes of the study. This was

implemented by ensuring the construction of the research study had been completed with

validity, and all evidence from the study could be solidified and confirmed through

collected data.

Threats to validity could have included trustworthiness from participants, honesty

among participants while collecting data, and the atmosphere where interviews take

place. Threats were mitigated by setting clear guidelines and strategically selecting the

sample based on the specific criteria selected for the research sample. Participants were

informed of the importance of sharing their raw experiences through the informed

consent. Interviews took place in a positive unbiased and uninterrupted interview setting.

Evidence of quality were ensured by implementing the stages of the phenomenological

interviewing process in addition to asking consistent and appropriate questions in a

professional manner.

**Ethical Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was followed precisely to promote both accuracy and accountability in regard to participant selection. Institutional permissions and IRB approvals were applied for and obtained. After IRB approval, participants were recruited. The treatment of human participants are listed below.

To address ethical concerns related to recruitment materials, all materials were created by the researcher and only shared with potential research participants. Information was shared at the information meeting via video conference for potential participants. At that time, potential participants were asked not to share any information with others in regard to the research study. The interview guide was secured by the researcher and was not shared with participants prior to the interview.

To address any ethical concerns related to data collection, participants were briefed about anonymous participation and protection of their responses both personally and through the informed consent. Interview questions were unstructured and open ended. Interactive listening took place in order to receive accurate experiences. An informed consent was sent to selected participants, and an opportunity to ask questions was provided.

In regard to the treatment of data, information related to the interview process was highly protected, secured, and stored to promote confidentiality. The researcher ensured participants that all data remained confidential and anonymous as participant names were only shared with the researcher (Ward et al., 2009). Secured data was password protected to promote confidentiality between the researcher and participant (Alase, 2017).

Information was stored and locked within a secure data file and kept up until five years after the conclusion of the research study. As the researcher, I had sole access to the secured data and a confidentiality agreement was signed to protect the privacy of participants.

## Summary

The beginning of this chapter revealed the research design, role of the researcher, and the research methodology. Participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis strategies were also discussed in-depth. The chapter ended with issues of trustworthiness with a plan for ethical procedures. The next chapter will further discuss data collection and data analysis methods ending with comprehensive results of the research study.

Chapter 4: Results

**Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the

perceptions of first-year teacher experiences with literacy-based iPad integration. The

teachers worked in kindergarten through first-grade classrooms and worked with

struggling readers in high poverty Title I schools. This chapter includes the setting,

demographics, data collection, and provides a detailed analysis of the data followed by

evidence of trustworthiness. I conclude the chapter with a discussion revealing and

addressing the results of the study and a transitional summary leading to Chapter 5.

**Setting**

I interviewed seven teachers from various Title I Elementary schools in three

local school districts. Participating school districts were District A, District B, and

District C. To promote self-expression, all interviews took place in a neutral, private, and

comfortable environment. Two interviews were conducted in a coffee shop that was

equipped with meeting spaces to promote privacy. Participants had access to coffee

during the interview. There were no interruptions or disturbances during the interview.

Four interviews were conducted in a private conference room at a local library.

Conference rooms at the local library were within 5 to 7 minutes away from the

workplace of participants. To promote privacy and minimal disturbances, each room was

soundproof and located in section of the library that was separate from the public. One

interview was scheduled to take place in a private conference room at a local library, but

due to several scheduling conflicts the interview was rescheduled to take place over the

telephone. Prior to the phone interview, the participant was advised that the phone conversation was going to take place in a private space to promote confidentiality and would be audio recorded as stated in the informed consent.

All participants appeared to be comfortable during all interviews. As the interviewer, I attempted to exude a positive demeanor, listened attentively, and used a clear and professional tone. Upon meeting each participant, I asked if they felt comfortable proceeding with the interview in the current environment, and all participants agreed.

## Demographics

Based on the research criteria, all participants were confirmed as kindergarten, first-, or second-grade teachers who served students in a Title I setting and had experience with literacy integration using iPads among struggling readers. The final sample included no second-grade teachers. Seven total participants agreed to take part in the study. All seven participants were White women; however, the grades they served and years of experienced varied. To protect participant identity, participants were identified by a participant number in random order. I refer to them as P1 through P7. P1, P2 and P7 were first year teachers who served students in an elementary Title I school setting. While in college, P7 student taught at a Title I school. P1 and P2 did not student teach at a Title I school. P3, P4, P5 and P6 had 2 years of teaching experience at Title I schools and taught the same grade both years. School settings related to student teaching were not discussed in all interviews as all teachers did not volunteer information in regard to their student teaching school setting. Table 2 shows the specifics about participant

details regarding gender, race, current grade, years of experience, and school setting. To

promote anonymity, school districts were represented by the following pseudonyms:

District A, District B, and District C.

Table 2

*Participant Demographics*

| Participant | Gender | Race | Current Grade | Experience | School Setting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Female | White | First grade | 1 year | Elementary, District A |
| P2 | Female | White | First grade | 1 year | Elementary, District A |
| P3 | Female | White | Kindergarten | 2 years | Elementary, District B |
| P4 | Female | White | Kindergarten | 2 years | Elementary, District B |
| P5 | Female | White | Kindergarten | 2 years | Elementary, District C |
| P6 | Female | White | Kindergarten | 2 years | Elementary, District B |
| P7 | Female | White | First grade | 1 year | Elementary, District B |

**Data Collection**

The data collection process began on March 11, 2019. On March 7, 2019, I

received approval from District A to conduct research in Title I elementary schools. Prior

to approval, the research department at District A contacted administrators of Title I

schools to ask if they would participate in my research study. Thirteen schools were

contacted, and three schools replied and agreed to participate. On March 8, 2019, I

received approval from Walden IRB (approval #03-08-19-0366222) to conduct research

in District A. On Monday March 11, 2019, I contacted administrators of the Title I

elementary schools who agreed to participate to get a list of teachers who met the specific

research criteria. Eight total teachers from all three schools met the research criteria.

After receiving this list, I sent an invitation to all teachers to invite them to participate in

a brief informational meeting via video conference to learn more about the study, explain

the informed consent, and answer any questions about the study. Three teachers replied

and agreed to participate in the informational meeting; one teacher declined to participate

after the informational meeting, and four teachers declined to participate in the study.

After two informational meetings in District A, a total of two teachers returned

informed consent forms and agreed to participate in the research study. Interviews were

scheduled and completed at a local private coffee shop. As far as saturation, a minimum

of six teachers were needed for the research study (Center for Innovation and Research in

Teaching, 2018). Due to only having two teachers respond within District A, I reached

out to other surrounding school districts to reach saturation.

To confirm more participants, a slight change was made in the original plan in

Chapter 3. Originally, I planned to collect data from three districts. However, after the

lack of participants from one of the original districts, I submitted a change in procedures

form to the IRB to also include two additional districts. In addition to District A, I applied

to four additional school districts. I received permission to conduct research in District B

on April 25, 2019. After receiving permission, I contacted administrators of the Title I

elementary schools in District B to get a list of teachers who met the specific research

criteria. Thirteen total teachers from all Title I schools met the research criteria; I

followed the same process as described for the first district, starting by inviting teachers

to an informational meeting. Six teachers participated in the informational meeting, and one teacher declined to participate. After the informational meetings were held, four teachers agreed to participate, and one teacher declined to participate. The four teachers who agreed to participate and returned the signed informed consent form to me via e-mail. Interviews were scheduled at the main local library.

I also received permission to conduct research in District C and District D on May 3, 2019. After receiving permission, I contacted administrators of the Title I elementary schools in both District D and District C to get a list of teachers who met the specific research criteria. Administrators at District D did not respond to my e-mails after several attempts. Eight total teachers from District C Title I schools met the research criteria. After receiving this list, I again sent an invitation to participate in a brief informational meeting via telephone conference. Five informational meetings were scheduled, and three teachers did not respond after several attempts. Two out of five teachers participated in the scheduled informational meetings. One teacher declined to participate. One teacher agreed to participate and returned the informed consent form via e-mail.

Additionally, I received permission to conduct research in District E on May 7, 2019. After receiving permission, I contacted administrators of the Title I elementary schools to get a list of teachers who met the specific research criteria. Four administrators responded, and a total of nine teachers met the research criteria. Two of nine teachers responded and agreed to participate in the informational meeting; however, after several attempts I was unable to schedule the informational meetings due to lack of response to

e-mails. Seven teachers did not respond to the e-mail invitation. Lack of participation may have been due to time constraints and the end of the school year approaching.

After reaching out to five local school districts, a total of seven teachers agreed to participate in the research study. After receiving all informed consent forms, interviews were scheduled. Interviews took place between the months of March and May 2019. Before conducting interviews, I used epoche to identify and address any biases or judgment (see Young & Goering, 2018). Bracketing was also used to help understand the phenomenon as it was perceived by participants (see Patton, 2015).

Two interviews took place at a local coffee shop in that offered private rooms to promote privacy. Four interviews took place in a private conference room at a local library. To provide convenience and privacy of the research participant, one interview took place via telephone. Each participant interview duration ranged between 17- 40 minutes. Participants were interviewed in a one-time sitting. See Table 3.

Table 3

*Location, Frequency, and Duration of Data Collection*

| Participant | Interview Location | Duration | Frequency of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Private coffee shop | 25:25 | One time |
| P2 | Private coffee shop | 39:24 | One time |
| P3 | Local County Library | 19:14 | One time |
| P4 | Local County Library | 22:21 | One time |
| P5 | Phone Interview | 18:14 | One time |
| P6 | Local County Library | 17:44 | One time |
| P7 | Local County Library | 28:10 | One time |

During data collection, six interviews were recorded via audio using an iPhone/iPod and via video using a video recording camera. One phone interview was

audio recorded only. I took minimal notes during both audio and video recordings. After interviews were conducted, data were saved on a password-protected hard drive to protect privacy.

There were a couple of variations in data. As mentioned, approval from additional districts was needed to reach saturation. Additionally, all interviews were intended to be face to face; however, due to participant availability, one interview was conducted via telephone. I identified and reviewed data, and there were no unusual circumstances.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with setting aside any preconceptions or judgments in regard to the study. To implement this, before the interview process began, I took the time to independently reflect on any personal bias I may have had related to the study. I recorded my thoughts in a notebook that I used to make additional notes in during interviews. Before conducting each interview and throughout the data analysis process, I identified and reviewed my thoughts to prevent researcher bias.

Horizontalization was the method of phenomenological analysis that was chosen for this study. Horizontalization is a coding strategy that reveals rich experiences and significant statements as well as potential new meanings when data are coded, re-coded, and compared through categories of themes supported by textural descriptions (Gilstrap, 2007). To initiate the process of horizontalization, transcriptions were read, and videos were observed more than five times to gain a clear comprehensive view of experiences and topics in which participants expressed. While reading transcriptions and viewing videos from the interview, notes were taken on participants' experiences. Significant

responses and statements that reflected the participants' direct experiences of the phenomenon were noted as textural descriptions.

Highlighters were used to manually code data by relevant topics that participants shared. Five pre-codes were developed from the research questions and literature review: instruction, differentiation, success, challenges, and self-efficacy. Among these codes, the most important were differentiation and self-efficacy. This was determined based on participant responses as they all mentioned or made reference to them multiple times. After analyzing transcripts, 18 codes were evident among the data: digital tools, management, functioning, engagement, planning, district, mentor, support, personal experience, applications, college, home life, poverty, literacy, perceptions, struggling readers, and feelings. The most important codes were personal experience, applications, feelings, and literacy as all participants shared similar and repetitive experiences. Codes were transferred to an Excel document and were used to organize thematic codes appropriately (see Palmer et al., 2014)

Additional codes arose from the theoretical framework centered on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. The theory is focused on the manner in which an individual thinks, feels, behaves, and believes in achieving specific performance tasks based on the perception of the skills possessed. During the coding process many words, feelings, and phrases related to self-efficacy were coded as they were directly related to participants. The following additional codes in relation to self-efficacy were used: fear, confusion, anxiety, uncomfortable, worried, struggle, hesitant, confidence, support, comfortable relationships, consistency, limited, enhance, potential, and perceptions. These codes were

later used to develop clusters of meaning and themes that arose from the data. See Table 4 for code count with correlating cluster of meaning and research question.

After analyzing codes, the codes were grouped together based on correlated meanings and areas of focus. After correlating codes, the following clusters of meaning arose: technology, instruction, self-efficacy, and support. Table 4 shows the specific code count that arose for each cluster. From the four clusters, 10 correlating themes were developed (see Table 5).

Technology and self-efficacy were the most imperative clusters of meaning. Saturation was quickly achieved through technology and self-efficacy as participant responses became repetitive and no new information arose in regard to those clusters. Themes were developed and organized based on varied participant perceptions and experiences in regard to a specific cluster of meaning.

Table 4

*Code Count and Cluster of Meanings*

| Pre-Codes | Code Count | Cluster of Meaning | Theme | Research Question |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instruction challenges success (3) | Digital tools applications functioning management (4) | Technology | #7 - Management and planning using the iPad<br>#8 - Perceptions of functional use of the iPad and applications | 2, 3 |
| Differentiation instruction success challenges (4) | Literacy Engagement Planning Struggling readers (4) | Instruction | #1 - Student engagement when using the iPad<br>#2 - Using the iPad for instructional practices<br>#3 - Perceptions of using the iPad as a differentiation tool<br>#4 - Student growth and struggling readers while using the iPad | 1, 3 |
| Self-efficacy success challenges instruction (4) | Personal experience Feelings Perceptions Fear Confusion Anxiety Uncomfortable Worried Struggle Hesitant Confidence Support Comfortable Relationships Consistency Limited Enhance Potential (18) | Self-Efficacy | #5 - Reflections on self-efficacy | 2 |
| Challenges success (2) | District Mentor Support Poverty College Home life (6) | Support | #6 - Perceptions of teacher, mentor, or district support<br>#9 - Perceptions of technology instruction in college or student teaching experiences<br>#10 - Student poverty and home environment | 2, 3 |

Table 5

Themes Related to Research Questions

| Theme | Research Question | Textual Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Student engagement when using the iPad | 1, 3 | One success is their engagement, they love it. I love using it in different ways. We use it for reading. I think for some of the slower ones in this day and age they are on their tablets all the times. They can pick it up better than me just explaining it on paper or in a book. (P6) |
| 2 Using the iPad for instructional practices | 1 | For me it's a way to kind of assess without having a formal assessment. Through Reading A-Z I can see what they're doing and how they're doing on the quizzes and if they are comprehending. I can see if a friend over here really struggled with phonics. This tells me if I need to pull that group a little bit more and work on that area more. (P6) |
| 3 Perceptions of using the iPad as a differentiation tool | 1 | With Reading Eggs, They take a diagnostic test and when they do it the first time, and it puts them where they need to be. With Path Blazer it takes their MAP score and then provides lessons for them at their level. I use Path Blazer for guiding my instruction. You can see where they are at and what they have finished on their iPad or what they're struggling with then when I pull them into my group I know what to focus on. (P5) |
| 4 Student growth and struggling readers while using the iPad | 3 | I can see what they have achieved, what lessons they have mastered, and what standards they have mastered. I like being able to see the student progress and growth. I really use it to drive my instruction for my small groups. (P7) |
| 5 Reflections on self-efficacy | 2 | In the beginning of the year I didn't feel as confident. I think I needed more work as far as knowing exactly what to do. I feel like it kind of drove me to kind of be more interested in the technology part because when I was in school we didn't use technology so I was not used to it. (P7) |
| 6 Perceptions of teacher, mentor, or district support | 2 | I had a mentor teacher last year. She really helped me see what she uses them (iPad) for so I got some ideas from her. She uses Epic sometimes in her reading station so that was helpful because I didn't have a lot of listening books. (P5) |
| 7 Management and planning using the iPad | 2 | Setting up boundaries ahead of time is a key thing. When we had the iPads we had all the reading apps they could use in one box and all the math apps in one box just so they knew it because it was very easy for them to get into other things. It's been a lot of management and figuring out how that works with five year olds. (P4)<br>With my students last year it was a lot. You get them logged on and just within the time it took us to get them logged on it was time to go to the next station. (P5) |

*(table continues)*

| Theme | | Research Question | Textural Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Perceptions of functional use of the iPad and applications | 3 | At first it was the password thing with RAZ kids. Six year olds have a hard time typing in passwords so I made them all use their lunch number. Then without looking at the keypad they type it in at lunch so they really don't even know their lunch number and that was a challenge. (P2)<br>I've tried Seesaw. I couldn't get it to hold a connection on our school Wi-Fi for some reason. It just kept kicking it off and that was so frustrating. (P3) |
| 9 | Perceptions of technology instruction in college or student teaching experiences | 3 | I didn't receive any training on iPads or Chromebooks. We all had a technology class and we talked about how to use Windows 10. We looked at apps and websites that you can use and we did like short little things so we did have a technology class but we didn't have iPads. (P1) |
| 10 | Student poverty and home environment | 3 | We did the DRA and one of the first questions on there is who reads to you (development reading assessment) at home. Everyone said no one so they don't have someone to read to them. A lot of them don't have books. (P3) |

Specific applications were used by participants that were correlated to some of the themes listed in Table 5. Participants selected applications that directly addressed their instructional plan. Table 6 list the names and purpose for each application.

Table 6

*List of Applications Used by Participants and Their Purpose*

| Name of Application | Purpose |
| --- | --- |
| Reading A to Z (Raz Kids) | A reading solution with thousands of leveled readers, lesson plans, worksheets and assessments to teach guided reading, reading proficiency. |
| Epic | Digital library for kids offering unlimited access to 35000 of the best children's books. |
| Compass Odyssey | Online interactive program that revolutionizes the integration of learning and technology. |
| I-Station | Comprehensive e-learning program |
| Story Books | An application that provides stories read aloud with motion pictures and words. |
| Reading Eggs | Reading Eggs is the online reading program that helps children learn to read. |
| Path Blazer | A web-based math and ELA curriculum designed around animated video lessons for students in K - 8 who are working below grade level |
| Magnetic Letters | An application that allows students to manipulate the letters of the alphabet. |
| ESGI | (Education Software for Guiding Instruction) is a simple one-on-one assessment solution for pre-k, kindergarten, and 1st grade |
| Flipgrid | Flipgrid is a social learning platform that allows educators to ask a question, then the students respond in a video. |
| SeeSaw | Seesaw is a student-driven digital portfolio that empowers students to independently document what they are learning at school. |
| Pebble Go | PebbleGo is a curricular content hub specifically designed for K-3 students. |
| Class Dojo | Class Dojo is an application used in the classroom that allows teachers, students, and parents to communicate. |

Textural descriptions were developed from each theme in an effort to create structural descriptions. Key words within the textural descriptions began to reveal how the difficulties and self-efficacy among first year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers. Statements that were continuously repeated or were irrelevant to the purpose of the study were removed. Themes and textural descriptions led to the development of the structural descriptions. Based on the codes, access to iPads and varied teacher experiences proved to be

prominent structural descriptions that arose among the data. Structural descriptions were later used to determine the essence of the phenomenon.

There were no discrepant cases among the experiences shared by participants. I was able to reach saturation as participants shared a multiple lived range of experiences and new information eventually became obsolete. As interviews progressed, most data became relative among participants. All participants shared a variety of diverse experiences however all responses were compatible.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness of this study included attention to issues related to credibility and dependability of participants, and to the transferability and confirmability of the data. To support the credibility of the research findings, participants were selected strictly based upon the research criteria as well as the research questions and purpose of the study. All participants met the sample criteria and were strategically chosen and confirmed with the help of school administrators in regard to their professional experiences.

To address dependability of the participants as well. For example, participants were debriefed after the interview and encouraged to inquire about the fidelity of their responses. Participants were given next steps in the interview process and were informed their right and access to their individual responses to the interview questions and transcripts.

To address the transferability of the data, interviews were carefully transcribed and coded. Manual and thematic codes were created followed by pre-codes and

categories that helped develop reflective themes. This provided a rich and in-depth look into the data which was structured by the research questions.

I ensured the confirmability of the data through the use of horizontalization. I used several methods to prevent researcher bias, including Epoche' and bracketing in an effort to avoid any bias that may have arose throughout the data collection and analysis process.

## Results

The results of the research study have been organized by research question to show how the data aligned with each research question. Several themes arose in regard to the research question which were supported by textural descriptions and later led to structural descriptions.  Each research question is followed by supportive data as well as textural descriptions.

I present the results by grouping themes that address the three research questions. Three themes addressed Research Question 1: (a) student engagement when using the iPad, (b) using the iPad for instructional practices, and (c) perceptions of using the iPad as a differentiation tool. Research question 2 was addressed with three themes as well: (a) reflections on self-efficacy, (b) perceptions of teacher, mentor, and district support, and (c) management and planning using the iPad. Research question 3 was addressed with four themes: (a) student engagement, (b) perception of technology instruction in college, (c) student poverty, and (d) perception of functional use of the iPad.

**Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of kindergarten through second-grade first year teachers who use literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?**

In response to this question, participant experiences were centered on student engagement, instructional practices, and differentiation strategies when using the iPad. In regard to research question one, data compiled from interviews led to the development of the following themes: Student engagement when using the iPad, using the iPad for literacy instruction, and perceptions of using the iPad as a differentiation tool.

**Theme 1: Student engagement when using the iPad.** Participants revealed both successes and challenges in regard to student engagement while using the iPad. Teachers revealed student attention spans as well as their ability to focus as a major success when using the iPad. When using the iPad for literacy practice, students were extremely engaged and more willing to complete reading tasks. As a result, reading scores increased among struggling readers as many students put forth more effort when using the iPad during literacy instruction. However, finding a healthy balance between experiences with real text and the iPad proved to be a challenge.

*Textural descriptions.* P3 and P5 described how students proved to be extremely focused and productive while using the iPad in addition to accomplishing more tasks and building stamina. P3 stated, "It engages them way more and I think it took me a while to realize that. Building that stamina was way harder but they actually love to go read on the tablet." Similarly, P5 commented, "I've noticed that they were more focused when they are on the iPad. They achieve a lot more when they are working on the iPads than they do

sometimes with us." However, in contrast P3 shared challenges in regard to student engagement. P3 was concerned about students being overly exposed to the iPad and the negative effect it may have on their interaction with non-digital literacy:

> I think the challenge would be not relying on it all the time. If you only rely on that and you try to get them to actually read a book it's like they don't want to. I try to balance it and have a happy medium.

P3 and P5 both agreed that student engagement proved to be a positive asset when using the iPad. However, participant P3 revealed that it is imperative to be mindful of the amount of time that students engage in iPad activity in the classroom daily as it may have a negative effect on their interest in real text.

**Theme 2: Using the iPad for instructional practices.** Almost all participants instructionally used the iPad during reading workshops, literacy center rotations, or during silent reading activities. Teachers were surprised about how students were able to use the iPad to conduct research independently and also produce work that reflected their thinking. Many teachers used applications such as Pebble Go to initiate all about books and encouraged students to make real life connections through digital literacy. In addition to this, many teachers were able to perform informal assessments that were later used to make instructional decisions based on individual student data.

*Textural descriptions.* P1 and P4 discussed the positive effect that Epic and research projects had on student experiences in literacy. P1 stated, "I use Epic to do a lot of research. It's also another way to talk about 'Hey I touched this book and I can't read that' or 'this is too hard for me.'" P4 was surprised by the independence that students

exhibited while working on the iPad: "The biggest success has been doing this all about book and being able to have them research without me. This is the most independent I've ever seen five and six year olds, but it's because of the device." P5 extended on this and shared results of an application called Pebble Go: "We did a research project and we investigated different animals that came from eggs. They did research and were able to use Pebble Go. They took pictures of their work, and we got to put it on Class DoJo."

P1 and P5 revealed that Epic and Pebble Go were extremely successful for student research projects. The independence that P4 described was evident as students learned how to the iPad to productively reflect on their learning in the area of literacy. P5 and P6 also experienced success with using application on the iPad to track informal assessments. P5 stated,

I learned more about how to use data. We use ESGI. You can go on there and test their sight words and their letter sound recognition for upper case and lower case. It keeps all that data and shows the attempt.

P5 was able to use the iPad to determine student ability in regard to letter sounds and sight words. This information was later used to develop lesson plans for small group instruction based on ESGI. Similarly, P6 expressed,

It's been a way for me to assess without having a formal assessment. I can see what they're doing on those quizzes and if they are comprehending. You can also use it to drive your instruction.

P5 and P6 used live data to drive their decision making in regard to literacy instruction. However, for P6, the iPad provided ample opportunities with the use of

informal assessments that shared imperative information about their students reading

abilities. P6 revealed that this gave teachers the opportunity to set up intentional

intervention plans in an effort to get students to meet their personal reading goals.

**Theme 3: Perceptions of using the iPad as a differentiation tool.**

Differentiation arose as a heavy theme while analyzing data. Some participants heavily

relied on specific apps to differentiate while others created their own way of

differentiating among students using the iPad. Reading A-Z was the most popular

application in regard to promoting differentiation among struggling readers using the

iPad. Teachers were pleased with the options of manipulating reading levels, monitoring

progress, and using data from the application to drive instruction for small groups. Other

applications such as Doodle Buddy and Magnetic Letters were used for instructional

purposes and was especially beneficial for students that entered Kindergarten without any

preschool experience.

*Textural descriptions.* P2 and P3 highly mentioned and recommended Reading

A-Z. The program met students at their level and they were able to track their progress

along the way. P2 said, "Reading A-Z reads to them on their level, and you get to choose

their level. They can go through the book again and read it for themselves even if they

fail the quiz." P3 added,

> We have the Reading A – Z program, and I love it. I can go in and assign their
>
> level, and then they can read the books on their level. I try to check on it like
>
> every week to two weeks to see how they are progressing.

P3 received live data from students as they recorded themselves reading aloud for P3 to analyze later. Differentiation was highly evident as comprehension questions were individualized and structured to reveal their accurate level of understanding in literacy. P2 mentioned that some students may fail but they had the opportunity to go back to read and attempt the quiz again. Although P2 and P3 believed Reading A-Z was highly effective when it came to differentiation, P4 and P7 revealed similar programs that were used to promote differentiation and align with MAP scores. P4 expressed, "So this year we started using a program called Fast Forward. It's a literacy program that is differentiated based on how they score on a test. They take the test and then it puts them in the program." P4 used Fast Forward to meet students directly at their level depending on how they scored on a particular test. Once students are placed in the program, teachers are able to track and monitor their progress as they work.

> P7 had similar success with I-station as it is directly linked to their MAP scores:
>
> As far as I-station, it is automatically linked to their MAP scores. I can go in and put in their RIT band for MAP testing. It will give them lessons that are above so it pushes those lower ones and challenge them a little.

With I-station, P7 revealed that student MAP scores and RIT bands were used to drive instruction on the iPad and while also attempting to increase their ability based on their responses. P7 used this to application to differentiate and also challenge lower students as the program would provide lessons that were slightly higher than their independent ability. P4 and P7 found success Fast Forward and I-station among first and second

graders. However, P6 used the iPad to differentiate in other ways such as tracing and identifying letter names and sounds:

> For my lower ones, I downloaded other apps. I used those to hit letter sounds because of our lower ones. We have 4K so I've got about half of them coming in who've been through a 4K program and then the other half have not.

P6 revealed that there were many students who entered school without attending preschool. These students struggled with phonics and concepts of print. In an effort to meet student needs, P6 used applications specifically focused on letter names and letter sounds. P6 revealed that these applications proved to be very successful. Especially for students who had been previously exposed to technology. P6 expressed that using the iPad to practice literacy skills resulted in engagement and learning. P2, P3, P4, and P7 described applications that not only promoted differentiation among Kindergarten through secondgrade students, but also enhanced early literacy skills.

**Research Question 2: How do kindergarten through second-grade teachers perceive their self-efficacy during their first year of teaching using literacy-based iPad integration to differentiate among struggling readers?**

Participants shared detailed experiences in regard to self-efficacy and literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers. Most responses to the research question were centered on self-efficacy, management, as well as support from teachers, mentors, or district leaders. In regard to research question two, the following themes arose: Reflections on self-efficacy, perceptions of varied types of support, and management using the iPads.

**Theme 5: Reflections on self-efficacy.** It is evident that there was a direct correlation between self-efficacy and instructional experiences with beginning teachers and iPads. Many teachers expressed a feeling of fear when first introduced to the iPad as participants did not receive direct hands on training about the using the iPad as an instructional tool in college. All teachers recognized the relationship between self-efficacy and differentiating during literacy instruction however; their experiences varied in regard their ability to do this successfully.

Teacher self-efficacy levels fluctuated from low to high depending upon personal participant experiences using the iPad. Many teachers experienced low self-efficacy during their first year implementing iPads. Teachers eluded to having no iPad training prior to teaching as the reason for their first year experience using the iPad in an instructional setting. In contrast, some teachers experienced enhanced self-efficacy while using the iPad to differentiate and which had a positive effect on their confidence while teaching.

*Textural descriptions.* P2 and P7 had similar feelings and experiences after being introduced to the iPad. Both P2 and P7 delayed using the iPad due to lack of training. P2 said,

> When I first started in August, I was so scared of those things. I was not trained on these, and I did my student teaching at an Academy. So for the first month, my kids probably didn't even touch them.

However, P7's lack of iPad knowledge served as motivation when it came to learning more about technology:

At the beginning of the year I didn't feel as confident when teaching. I feel like it

kind of drove me to be more interested in the technology part because when I was

in school we didn't use all of this technology.

This was related to P1's experience as they shared that it was imperative to take

an active interest in technology before introducing it to children: "As a teacher you have

to be willing to put in the time, take an iPad home, and take your computer before you

introduce it to know what it does." P1 believed they were less apprehensive to approach

the technology because they took the time to learn how to use the technology on their

own. P1 and P2 also shared their personal experiences in regard to their level of self-

efficacy and its relation to their ability to differentiate. Both P1 and P2 expressed a

connection between self-efficacy and differentiation. P1 commented,

Yes. If you don't know how to use them and the ends and outs of them, you're not

going to be able to use them to your best ability. You're not going to be able to

use them to their potential.

P1 continued to promote success and high self-efficacy to taking the time to learn

how to efficiently use the iPad during instruction before introducing it to students. P2

believed that self-efficacy was directly related to instructional planning and student

growth in reading:

It definitely has an impact on your instructional decisions and lesson planning.

Some of my students have moved up two levels in the past month. I think self-

efficacy is related to my ability to increase my students reading level.

P1 and P2 used the iPad to integrate literacy enhanced their level of self-efficacy during instructional practices. P2 reflected on their levels of self-efficacy and how it related to teaching literacy. P4 shared how technology enhanced their personal self-efficacy as previous experiences eluded to their success with the new device: "I think it enhances my self-efficacy. I am very comfortable with using technology and a lot of different programs so I wasn't hesitant as some of the other teachers were when getting new devices."

Although P4 expressed confidence due to prior experiences, P7 added the importance of exuding confidence and eagerness when using iPads to teach literacy: "If you're confident about what you are teaching, it reflects on the student. If you are not excited and you don't know what your teaching, then of course they're not going to learn from that."

However, P3 had a different experience and lacked confidence when using the iPad to teach literacy. As a result, she sought out help from a reading coach: "When my kids were getting stuck, I got to that point that I didn't know to push them above that. I had our reading coach come in, and she modeled lessons. After that, I felt way more confident." As a result of a coaching cycle, P3 became more confident using iPads during literacy instruction.

P2 received help from a fellow grade level teacher who shared lesson plans with her. However, P2 expressed how her self-efficacy increased once she began creating reading plans that met the needs of her children rather than using someone's else's plan to teach which resulted in low self-efficacy during literacy instruction:

We do team planning, and there was a woman on our team who does reading. I

started off copying and pasting their plans then trying to teach them. I started

talking to my mentor and told her I thought I had to try something else.

After listening to the experiences of P2, P3, P4, and P7 it was evident that self-

efficacy was related to confidence while teaching. P3, P4, and P6 had two years of

experience and compared their range of their self-efficacy during their first and second

year in comparison to their second year. P4 said,

So last year, I had a different teaching assistant. This year I have a different one,

and my classroom was completely different. Having somebody on my team in my

room and because we worked well together, our kids work well together too.

P4 expressed the importance of having a Kindergarten aide who was on board with her

instructional decisions. In addition to this, their relationship was positive and had a

positive effect on the classroom environment.

P6 also gave credit to having a year a experience under her belt in regard to

technology. However, both P3 and P6 expressed that they had received no formal training

from college. P6 stated,

It has definitely increased. My first year it was probably a bit lower using

technology because we never really talked about technology in the classroom in

college. When I was handed these iPads, I was like what can we put on this?

P3 also said,

I feel like honestly if I could go back and apologize to my kids, I would say I'm

so sorry. I didn't know what I was doing. They send you to college and then tell

you here are your kids.

P3, P4, and P6 all expressed an increased level of self-efficacy during their

second year of teaching. Although they had different experiences in regard to self-

efficacy, teachers felt comfortable with technology and confident with integrating literacy

into their literacy instruction.

**Theme 6: Perceptions of teacher, mentor, or district support.** Participants

reflected on their experiences with mentors, grade level teachers, district support, past

cooperating teachers, and the impact it had on their instructional experiences while using

the iPad to integrate literacy. Most teachers endured positive experiences with their

mentors; however, not all participants were paired with mentors during their first year of

teaching. In addition to mentors, some teachers received direct support from the district

technology specialist who came to classroom to model lessons or give verbal guidance

but not all participants received this support.

Cooperating teachers were an asset to some participant experiences; however, not

all participants were exposed to iPads during their students teaching experience. In

addition to this, not all teachers student taught in a Title I setting. Due to this, some

teachers were not able to apply what they learned in non-Title I schools to their current

teaching.

*Textural descriptions.* P7 expressed appreciation of having support from the

district as they began to implement the use of iPads while teaching literacy in their

classrooms. District support ranged from setting up iPads, to help with literacy

integration, and professional development. P7 stated, "I had a mentor teacher. She's in

first grade, too, so she helped me with how to use the apps and integrate it into my center

time. That's how I got knowledgeable about those programs."

P7 had no background knowledge about iPads were grateful of this support;

however, P2 and P7 did not received minimal or indirect support, which led to a different

experience. P2 said,

> We have a technology specialist. She messaged us at the beginning of the year
>
> and asked if anybody needed her help setting up the iPads with the students and
>
> going over do's and don'ts. I didn't know there were do's and don'ts.

P2 was unaware of do's and don'ts when using the iPad until she heard from the

technology specialist. Some districts provided a specialist to assist teachers with

technology however some schools did not receive direct training with iPads. P7 had a

related experience: "As far as the district goes, we went to orientation, but they don't

really tell you a lot about the technology programs and how to use them. So you have to

ask people who have experience with them." Similarly, P2 shared,

> I feel like support training would have been nice. They need to tell you how to set
>
> it up because I don't know if I was doing it right. Definitely a training course and
>
> a list of helpful tips were needed.

It was evident that P2 and P7 did not receive direct training with iPads during

their collegiate years nor in their school districts. However, P2 and P7 benefited from

having close sources within their school settings who were able to guide them through the use of technology.

     **Theme 7: Management and planning using the iPad.** Many participants expressed the importance of management while introducing and using the iPads as a part of their instructional practices. Many categories arose with management such as time, space, planning, managing applications, behavior, and functional factors.

     Teachers expressed concerns with preparing the iPads for the class as well as introducing them appropriately to the class. Teachers revealed that setting up boundaries, consistent procedures, and monitoring seemed to be effective in regards to management. Teachers also shared experiences about managing student behavior while on the iPad and setting expectations.

     *Textural descriptions.* P4 grouped all applications into categories so students could locate and navigate the applications easily:

> Setting up boundaries ahead of time is a key thing. With the iPads, we had all the reading apps they could use in one box and all the math apps they could use in one box. The students just knew where to go.

This was beneficial for participants and helped with iPad management. In addition to this, P6 discussed the importance of monitoring student iPad use and P3 revealed the benefits of learning how to lock iPads during student use. P6 said,

> Make sure you know what the students are on at all times and know the guidelines of when they can get on and what they can get on. It was important that my assistant was available to make sure she is monitoring.

P3 also shared,

> Learn how to lock the iPads. I didn't learn that until Christmas, and it was a game
>
> changer. It's under accessibility, and you can set up a passcode. When students
>
> press the home button, they can't get out of what they are working on.

> For P3. P4, and P6 setting boundaries, expectations, and management strategies

while using the iPad proved to be beneficial during instruction. P3 was able to lock

students in on specific applications to promote accountability and also helped with iPad

management like P4. In Kindergarten, P6 shared that having a class aide helped with

monitoring and reinforcement. However, teachers without aides learned how to use iPad

features to monitor student engagement.

**Research Question 3: What are kindergarten through second-grade teacher**

**perceptions about the use of literacy-based iPad integration and its impact on**

**instructional practices and the learning experiences of students?**

Participants shared feedback about student growth, student poverty, collegiate

training, and functional use of the iPad. In regard to research question three, the

following themes arose: Student growth and struggling readers, perceptions of functional

use of the iPad, perceptions of technology instruction in college/student teaching

experiences, and student poverty and home environment.

**Theme 4: Student growth and struggling readers while using the iPad.**

Student growth and struggling readers quickly became an evident theme among

participants' experiences. One common success was that some student reading levels

increased significantly as a result of using the iPad to differentiate and integrate literacy.

Teachers expressed that the iPad was an interactive way to engage and motivate struggling readers who were frustrated with paper and pencil activities. Some challenges resulted in the inability of struggling readers understanding how to use the iPad appropriately and also explore applications or websites correctly without teacher assistance. As a management strategy, one participant approached this conflict by paring a low student with a buddy to assist them.

*Textural descriptions.* P1 expressed that ELL students struggled with daily navigation and use of the iPad. P1 was not equipped with the skills to integrate or positively influence these learners using the iPad:

> It is hard for them to use the iPads. When we go to our mailbox, just getting there and getting to the books sometimes is a challenge especially for my ones that have a hard time reading and who are also learning English.

However, some P3 learned how to use the iPad to meet the needs of ELL students:

> It really helped my English to Speakers of Other Language students because it has the Spanish and English and that helps them to make connections to what it means. A lot can speak Spanish and English, but they can't tell you what something meant.

Despite challenges, P2 expressed how much students reading abilities grew while using the iPad to integrate literacy. P2 revealed that most students' reading levels increased as a result of consistent and intentional use of literacy instruction using the iPad: "My kids alone just in literacy for everyone kids have grown so much. All of mine came to me on level A and B. I actually just moved all my level D group up to a level E."

**Theme 8: Perceptions of functional use of the iPad and applications.**

Functionality of the iPads and iPad applications was an area that many participants addressed and expressed concerns about. Some teachers struggled with fitting the iPad into their literacy block due to functional issues such as problems with the internet, downloading applications, application updates, setting iPads up, and the process of logging students in to particular applications. Teachers also expressed concerns with the internet glitches and applications freezing during instruction which directly interfered with the functional use of the iPad.

*Textural descriptions.* P6 expressed that when internet glitches occurred, it had a direct effect on their lesson plan and it took additional time to get students back on track:

> I've learned to find apps that work on the Wi-Fi that are consistent and aren't going to freeze. When they don't know what's going on or something went wrong, you have to be there and help them fix it.

In addition to this, P1, P2, and P5 shared that downloads, passwords, updates, and log in information also proved to be a challenge for students. P1 stated,

> The worst part is downloading the new apps and setting the iPads up. The login can be difficult to have them remember even if you tape it to their desk. Some of them still have a hard time typing it in.

P5 also said,

> My biggest challenge is getting them to understand how to log on. Last year we could just type in the code and they get in. They have to put in their school email, but they are five. They don't know their email.

P1 and P5 struggled with students log in, which can be difficult for young students to remember and manage. P2 also expressed a concern with iPad updates and effect it had on time management:

> All the passwords and then the updates of the apps are annoying. When you need to update an app you have to unhide it, then put in the password, and then re-hide it. When do I have time to do this on 20 iPads?

**Theme 9: Perceptions of technology instruction in college or student teaching experiences.** Based on the data, a majority of the participants did not have direct experience with iPads during their collegiate years. Many teachers participated in a technology class during their collegiate experiences however received no direct training on using iPads as an integration tool. Teachers also shared their experiences in regard to creating lesson plans during their student teaching experiences and how it affected their role as a first year teachers. In addition to this, some teachers taught in districts other than the districts they were hired to teach in.

*Textural descriptions.* P1 and P7 did not receive adequate training or knowledge on using iPads to integrate literacy during their college experiences. P1 and P7 were introduced to some websites and applications; however, these were not consistent across districts. P1 said, "I didn't receive any training on iPads. We did look at apps and websites that you can use. It was very little, and we didn't have iPads." P7 also stated, "We used Kahoot in some college classes. I did my student teaching in a different district so when I got to a new district it was a completely different ball game. I didn't know about any of those programs."

In addition to a lack of iPad training, learning how to write productive data driven lesson plans proved to be a problem among participant experiences. P2 shared that her collegiate program had varied expectations in regard to lesson plans which had a direct effect on her teaching experience: "I would have written those lesson plans in college. My mentor teacher just gave me her plans, and I would teach the plans. I didn't have to write my own." Due to this, as P2 transitioned into her own classroom she shared how difficult it was to create meaningful lesson plans with technology integration from week to week.

**Theme 10: Student poverty and home environment.** Participants reflected on teaching literacy in a Title I settings using digital tools among students from high areas of poverty. Many participants shared their perceptions on how students' life at home had an impact on their literacy skills and ability to use the iPad in the classroom. In addition to life at home, teachers expressed how the native language spoken in the home had an impact on how students learned content in the classroom. In addition, many teachers revealed that many struggling readers had no exposure to preschool before arriving to a five year old Kindergarten class.

*Textural descriptions.* P3 revealed that many students did not have access to books in the home and this may have had an effect on their reading abilities in the classroom: "We did the DRA [development reading assessment] and one of the first questions on there is 'Who reads to you at home?' Everyone said, 'No one.'" In response, some teachers printed text to send home with students for practice. However, P3 revealed

that although many students arrived to Kindergarten with no background knowledge,

when technology was introduced students were more engaged:

> Some students have been at home for the past five years and so it's like they don't
>
> really know a whole lot academically. It's like the second we got technology, they
>
> almost got like a confidence boost because that was familiar to them.

P4 also said,

> I just got a new student three weeks ago. He speaks no English and is new to the
>
> country. He's written an all about book using Google translate. We did it together,
>
> but that would not have been possible without the technology.

> P3 and P4 both reveal that struggling readers and ELL students responded in a

positive manner to technology through the use of the iPad. Struggling readers were able

to find a connection to technology due to exposure at home. P4 proved that through

Google translate, students were able to complete assignments without frustration through

the use if their native language.

**Structural Descriptions**

> All participants experienced difficulties and self-efficacy among first year

teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling

readers. The structure of the phenomenon was centered on the following: access to iPads

and teacher experiences.

> The iPad supply varied among school districts. Most Title I schools provided one

to one access to student iPads. However, due to funding as well as functioning factors,

some participants only had access to a specific amount in their classroom. In this case, teachers had to adapt and adjust in an effort to meet the needs of their students.

Teachers experienced the phenomenon in varied years of experience. Kindergarten teachers experienced the phenomenon while they were in their second year of teaching.  First grade teachers experienced the phenomenon during their first year of teaching. Some participants credited their student teaching experience as the reason for their exuded confidence during their first year of teaching. Many participants received support from mentors, teachers, and district specialist; however, not all participants experienced this level of support.

## Summary

In reference to research question one, many teachers underwent similar experiences while using the iPad to differentiate among struggling readers. There were many apps that were commonly used. Almost all research participants differentiated in the area a literacy. A reading app called Reading A-Z was commonly used to monitor, assess, and drive instruction for struggling readers. Participants experienced success and challenges along the way. All participants expressed student engagement as a success, and five out of seven participants expressed student growth as a success. In regard to challenges, participants revealed that management, functional abilities, and training were the most perplexing during their experiences.

In reference to research question two, there was a common feeling of low self-efficacy during participants first year of integrating literacy using the iPad with the exception of one teacher. One participant had a strong student teaching experience as

well as an onsite mentor that she claimed made her transition smoother. All participants

revealed that their self-efficacy slightly increased over the range of their experiences;

however, this resulted in different levels. All participants felt as though self-efficacy was

highly related to their ability to differentiate as well as their ability to teach literacy

effectively.

In reference to questions three, all participants revealed that the use of the iPad

had a positive impact on their instruction practices and learning experiences of their

students. However, two out of seven participants expressed concerns about "over

indulging" with the iPad. The concern was that it may cause students to become bored

and disengaged with the foundation of literacy which is having experiences with actual

books and not tablets. Most participants promoted the use of the iPad in an instructional

setting but also expressed concerns in regard to being adequately prepared to do this after

collegiate experiences. At the district level, four out of seven participants received direct

training and support with iPads. Two out of seven received minimal support, and one

participant received none at all. In regard to collegiate experiences, all participants

revealed that they were not specifically or adequately prepared during college to manage

iPads among struggling readers in Title I schools.

Chapter five will begin with a brief introduction followed by a detailed

description and an analysis of the findings. Limitations and recommendations of the

study will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

**Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand multiple lived experiences regarding first-year teacher self-efficacy and literacy-based iPad integration among struggling readers in Title I schools with high poverty. There has been little research addressing these three intersecting elements of literacy instruction: first-year teacher competency, implementing innovative digital literacy using the iPad, and teaching at-risk struggling readers at Title I schools. Therefore, I conducted open-ended interviews to gain a comprehensive view of the self-efficacy among first-year teachers while using literacy integration to serve struggling readers in Title I schools.

After analyzing interview data, the following four main clusters of meaning arose: technology, instruction, self-efficacy, and support. From these clusters, I identified 10 themes that later led to the creation of structural descriptions. Regarding the difficulties and self-efficacy among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools, these structural descriptions revealed that the essence of this phenomenon hinged on one core finding: first-year teachers may benefit from additional support from the collegiate and elementary school level.

The first finding revealed that many students were highly engaged and had positive attitudes when using the tool during literacy instruction. However, many teachers shared that there should be a healthy balance between using real literary textbooks and using the iPad. In regard to differentiation, the second finding revealed that the iPad was highly effective, and many students experienced growth regarding their reading level and

abilities with iPad use. For struggling ESOL students, the iPad helped them navigate, learn new vocabulary, and translate as some students only spoke the native language of their home. In regard to self-efficacy, the third finding revealed that all teachers felt that there was a direct correlation between self-efficacy and teaching literacy using the iPad. Data revealed that teachers experienced higher levels of self-efficacy toward the end of their first year of teaching as well as at the beginning of their second year.

The fourth finding revealed that there were mixed perceptions regarding the support of mentors, district, or other teachers. Teachers who had support had higher levels of self-efficacy, and teachers who stated that had minimal support had lower self-efficacy. The fifth finding revealed that among all teachers, no participant had experienced any training on how to use the iPad to integrate literacy. This became evident based on participant responses. Lastly, the sixth finding revealed participant challenges with iPads as instructional tools. Timing was a challenge, as participants struggled to fit lesson using the iPad into their daily reading block. Many students struggled to remember their student log-in information, which also affected timing. Effective planning was a challenge because participants wanted to make sure that lessons that involved the iPad directly aligned with reading objectives. Student behavior was a challenge in regard to managing student behavior and encouraging students to follow direction and daily routines using the iPad. Teachers also experienced glitches with digital technology such as continuous application updates, WiFi connections, frozen screens, and functions of the iPad.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

The interpretation of the major findings both confirmed prior research and extended on the literature. Findings on preservice teacher transition were both confirmed and extended on the literature. Findings in regard to literacy instruction, technology integration, student engagement, mentorship were confirmed by prior research but also extended in some aspects. Finally, findings on self-efficacy extended the literature, as they provided detailed results that were centered on when and how participants experienced high and low levels of self-efficacy.

First, the findings of my study extended upon previous research and indicated that the transition from preservice teacher to first-year teacher serving students of high poverty had challenges. Prior research found that preservice teachers needed to understand the effect that poverty had on learning (Cho et al., 2015). All the participants in my study experienced some type of challenge during their first year of teaching in a high poverty Title I school, which extended the literature by revealing how teachers faced these challenges while learning how to use iPads to integrate literacy among struggling readers. Teachers approached and learned from their challenges in varied ways; however, the transition itself from college to classroom was significant to the start and success of their year. Though Cho et al also expressed the importance of developing meaningful relationships with students during the start of the year to jumpstart a successful year, the participants in this study did not share many experiences with this relationship building. But the finding that teachers' transition from college to Title I schools was a significant

concern still confirmed research suggesting that this concern should be addressed in teacher preparation programs (Dharan, 2015).

In addition to extending the literature, findings from this study mainly confirmed previous research. In regard to literacy instruction using iPads and classroom management, it was found that teachers would benefit from more training in these areas. The current findings confirmed prior literature, as participants suggested that more emphasis should be placed on literacy instruction using the iPad and classroom management. Many beginning teachers have struggled with the concept of management (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Findings revealed that classroom management was a common concern among all participants; teachers struggled to manage behavior and procedures while using the iPad during literacy. Research has also indicated that though teachers are interested in technology integration, they lack knowledge and training on how to integrate technology like iPads (Tondeur et al., 2017). Due to lack of knowledge, some teachers did not share any strategies with me that were taught during their collegiate experience. This lack of background knowledge or specific training on how to use iPads resulted in a lack of management skills and iPads not being used to their potential.

Despite concerns with integrating technology properly, the results on student engagement, differentiation, and growth confirmed that iPad use was highly engaging, motivating, and unique to all learning profiles (Moon et al., 2017). All teachers experienced high engagement with students and were able to differentiate and meet students at their individual level or learning profile. The iPad was a meaningful tool when

it came to differentiation and motivating students to meet their personal reading goals. The use of iPads appeared was also related to the development of early literacy skills because most teachers saw student growth among struggling readers. However, the data from this study also disconfirms the development of early literacy skills, as many teachers expressed a concern with relying on the iPad and how it may have a negative effect on students' ability to approach and comprehend real text. Some teachers were also concerned about students who became over engaged and would not give effort on non-iPad assignments. Thus, this study both confirmed and disconfirmed prior research regarding student engagement using the iPad with struggling readers.

Findings from this study also confirmed that many of the participants' students were not being exposed to iPads at home. The core of this study is focused on struggling readers who lived in high areas of poverty and their exposure to technology in the home. It is important for young children from areas of poverty to have the opportunity to use iPads at home to promote emergent literacy skills (Neumann & Neumann, 2017). But teachers in the current study shared that several students had never been exposed to an iPad or tablet. It was also revealed that those who had iPads at home did not work on early literacy skills, assuming that they were for games or had a hard time learning how to use and care for it appropriately. In related research, when working with students in schools that serve students from areas of high poverty, it was imperative to build relationships with parents' and students' culture (Glover & Harris, 2016). In the current study, many teachers sent books home with students to practice at home with parents; however, data did not reveal that teachers reached out to parents to establish relationships

and become familiar with their culture, though this could help increase the ability of struggling readers. Therefore, future research may take a further look at teacher and parent relationships in improving literacy.

Key findings from this study also indicated teacher, mentor, and district support systems with beginning teachers, which aligned with previous research that showed mentorship was not only empowering but also a powerful support system that was beneficial for inexperienced teachers (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). All the teachers in this study who were involved with some type of mentor or district support person were grateful for the assistance and benefited from the experience in a positive way. Many teachers also expressed the importance of having a mentor. Teachers who did not have a mentor also shared the need for first-year teachers to have some type of ongoing support throughout the year. Teachers without mentors expressed that they may have had a better first year had they had some type of support. Findings confirmed that mentors served as a direct support system throughout the early years and helped teachers confront the daily challenges that teachers faced.

**Findings in Relation to Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was centered on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is important to the teaching profession, as actions of teachers are shaped by their beliefs and control over their capabilities, behaviors, motivation, and social environment. The theory of self-efficacy was used to determine teachers' self-efficacy and the effect it had on how beginning teachers experienced the phenomenon.

Findings revealed how teachers experienced a variety of levels of self-efficacy during

their experience using iPad to instruct struggling readers.

The findings of this study confirmed that high self-efficacy has been related to

teacher success as all teachers who spoke about having high levels of self-efficacy were

more confident and successful in their teaching (Sharp et al., 2016). Most teachers

experienced higher levels of self-efficacy during the end of their first year of teaching.

Not all teachers reached this level of high self-efficacy; however, all teachers experienced

an increase. Teachers who had high levels of self-efficacy credited it to teacher support,

mentors, and effective cooperating teachers. Thus, it was imperative to take a further look

at how this affected student success.

There was a direct correlation between high self-efficacy and student success. In

the current study, teachers with high self-efficacy saw anywhere from a small amount to

significant growth among struggling readers. Teachers who expressed high levels self-

efficacy were also attentive to tracking their students' growth through reading goals. One

participant student taught for an entire school year from beginning to end prior to

teaching in a Title I school. Among all teachers, she exuded the most confidence during

her interview. She credited her level of self-efficacy to her rich and hands-on student

teaching experience. She mentioned how strong her cooperating teacher was and how she

took everything in and learned so much from her. It was evident from her responses that

she went into her first year of teaching with a mid- to high-level of self-efficacy and was

motivated to help struggling readers. Although many teachers did not begin the year with

a high level, they progressed throughout the school year. Many teachers grew from low-

to mid-level and student growth in reading was evident. Participants who expressed growth but did not reach a high level of self-efficacy reflected on what they planned to do the next school year to get off to a solid start and influence struggling readers.

Self-efficacy can quickly decrease during failed attempts (Bandura, 1977). In the current study, teachers who experienced lower levels of self-efficacy were not confident, comfortable, and were unsure during their teaching experiences. However, there was a participant with low self-efficacy who used her low reading data to motivate her to be a better teacher. As a result, her self-efficacy increased. Many teachers experienced levels of low self-efficacy during the beginning of their first year of teaching. Teachers credited their feelings and beliefs to lack of support, no mentor, no prior iPad training, no formal training on how to use the iPad, feelings of confusion, no experience in a Title I setting, and no exposure to iPads during collegiate experiences. Although teachers started out with low levels of self-efficacy, all of their levels increased as the year progressed. In addition, teachers reflected on their prior experiences and how their actions could improve their teaching practices for the next school year. Second year beginning teachers experienced low levels of self-efficacy during their first year of teaching and higher levels of self-efficacy during their second year of teaching. Findings confirmed that with self-efficacy, levels can fluctuate from low to high. This allows teachers time to reflect, plan, and grow based on their prior experiences.

Bandura's (1977) interpretation of the four sources of information about efficacy were also correlated to the findings. The four sources included personal performance, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological well-being. In regard to

teaching literacy, Bandura suggested that the four sources of information could increase or decrease self-efficacy among teachers. In the current study, personal performance was correlated to self-efficacy as many teachers based their levels of self-efficacy on their teaching experience and student growth. There was an abundance of information shared by participants and their vicarious experiences with teachers, mentors, and district support. Through teacher and mentor support, findings show that verbal persuasion was used to influence participant prior experiences. Finally, psychological well-being was highly related to self-efficacy in this study as many participants experienced positive interactions, set goals, attempted to adapt to their environment, and reflected on their prior experiences to promote their future growth as an educator. All four sources of information were aligned with the findings as teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy were correlated to one or more of the sources.

Findings revealed that there is a correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher success when using the iPad to integrate literacy among struggling readers. The findings confirmed that self-efficacy has been influential in educational research as it highly supported the purpose, research questions, and findings of this study.

## Limitations of the Study

During data collection, one potential limitation occurred in regard to the number of research participants. The original number of participants was not enough to adequately reach saturation. Originally, I applied for permission to conduct research in District A. After reaching out to potential participants, I did not have enough participants to reach saturation as a minimum of six participants were needed (Center for Innovation

and Research in Teaching, 2018). Due to only having two teachers respond within District A, I reached out to other surrounding school districts in an effort to reach saturation. To confirm more participants, I submitted a change in procedures form to the IRB to also include Districts B, C, D, and E. Once permission was received, I continued to conduct research until saturation was reached. A total of seven teachers participated in the research study.

A second limitation occurred during the interview process. All interviews were intended to be face to face in a private space. Due to several scheduling conflicts with one research participant, the interview was rescheduled to take place over the telephone. Prior to the phone interview, the participant was advised that the phone conversation was going to take place in a private space to promote confidentiality. Normal interview procedures were used throughout the interview to promote consistency and privacy.

## Recommendations

Although the findings provided concrete data in regard to the purpose of the study, it also revealed relevant topics that could be explored through further research. Some participants reflected on their experiences with ELL students and their ability to use the iPad to increase their reading ability. The language spoken in the home affected their reading abilities as there was no English practice in the home. In addition to this, many ELL students struggled with learning new vocabulary. It may be imperative to not only educate the students but also the parents of ELL students. Additional research may be required to address this issue and determine if ELL and ESOL students would benefit from exposure to English in the home.

In regard to MAP scores, many teachers used this assessment as a means of determining students' reading ability when planning for differentiated instructions. While collecting feedback, I found that different districts have varied expectations in regard to when this assessment is administered. In some districts, MAP is only administered to second through fifth graders. In other districts, MAP is administered in Kindergarten through fifth grade. If teachers used this assessment as a resource to provide differentiation on the iPad, it may be beneficial to find a common administration strategy among all districts. This would require further research on whether MAP testing grades second through fifth or Kindergarten through fifth would provide the best feedback when making educational decisions for students.

School Wifi connections were a common issue among research participants as many teachers expressed concerns with internet connections while using the iPad. Due to failure of internet connections, many students were affected. With many Title I schools purchasing an increased amount of iPads, Title I schools should ensure they have the most efficient internet connection for students to use digital tools without disruption throughout the day. Further research may be required to determine what type of internet connection would provide less interruptions to learning in Title I schools using digital tools to enhance student knowledge.

The importance of developing meaningful relationships was discussed in the literature review; however, participants did not specifically mention any direct experiences with establishing meaningful relationships as a strategy while using the iPad as an integration tool. Building strong relationships with students had a direct effect on

student success and the classroom community (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Further research may be needed to build relationships in Title I schools and the affect it may potentially have on beginning teachers and their ability to increase reading skills among students from poverty using an iPad.

## Implications

The findings of the study revealed potential impacts for positive social change at both the elementary and teacher preparation levels. The iPad has emerged into many early childhood classrooms as a motivational and thought-provoking learning tool (Neumann (2018). Title I schools are increasingly providing space in their budget for these tools. However, findings show that many beginning teachers are not being exposed to iPads during their collegiate experience and are not effectively trained on how to integrate literacy among struggling readers using the iPad at the school level. Findings suggest that it is imperative for colleges to consider the implementation of courses that provide potential teachers in high areas of poverty with the skills they need to successfully use the iPad to integrate literacy. To promote social change at the elementary level, findings provide justification specifically with elementary students from high areas of poverty in the following areas: instruction, differentiation, management, tracking data, and iPad functions.

Poverty has been connected to the academic success or failure with at-risk students (Cho et al., 2015). Findings of this study indicate that some beginning teachers are hired in Title I schools without knowledge of what Title I or what poverty means. In addition to not being familiar with poverty, teachers are lacking the specific skills that

beginning teachers need in order to meet diverse needs with students of poverty. The findings provide justification for learning about poverty and iPads in collegiate programs before transitioning to their first year of teaching in a potential Title I school. To promote social change at the school level, findings provide justification for extra support for beginning teachers who serve students from poverty within Title I schools. Findings revealed that teachers did not receive any direct support within Title I schools on what poverty was and how to effectively support struggling readers using iPads. Findings showed that beginning teachers lacked experience of how to build relationships and instruct iPad students at their diverse levels during collegiate experiences as well.

The role of mentorship should be addressed during the transition from the collegiate program to the classroom (Kartal et al., 2017). However, findings of this study revealed that beginning teachers are leaving their collegiate programs and getting jobs in Title I schools without the initial support of a mentor. Some beginning teachers are being supported by mentors during their transition which may have a negative effect on their teaching practices using iPads to increase reading skills. To promote social change at the elementary level, the findings justify the need for beginning teachers to have ongoing support from administrators, instructional coaches, and mentors as they leave their collegiate programs and transition into Title I schools serving students from areas of poverty. This discovery also justifies the need to consistently have district technology specialists specifically focus on beginning teachers in Title I schools during their first two years of teaching.

Fry (2009) examined the role that self-efficacy played in beginning teachers experiences and willingness to stay in the profession. While collecting data, four out of seven participants did not understand the meaning of self-efficacy. After providing a clear definition, participants were able to relate to the term and share their personal experiences. Self-efficacy knowledge is essential for all beginning teachers approaching the teaching profession to be knowledgeable of and reflect on before they begin teaching. In addition, it is important for beginning teachers to understand how it affects their role as a classroom teacher as well as their ability to increase growth among struggling readers using an iPad from high areas of poverty. To promote social change at the school level, the findings justify the need for specific education about self-efficacy in teacher preparation programs in addition to professional development about self-efficacy at the Title I school level. These levels of support encourage high self-efficacy while also providing knowledge, strategies, and support for beginning teachers both during their transition from college through their first two years of teaching in a Title I school.

## Conclusion

Advanced digital technology has become a dominant and productive resource in today's classrooms. However, findings revealed that many schools and colleges have not adequately prepared candidates to meet the needs of students using advanced iPad technologies specifically in Title I schools. The perceptions of self-efficacy and difficulties among first-year teachers and literacy-based iPad integration in Title I schools that serve diverse struggling readers was the lived phenomenon of this study.

iPad literacy integration is a skill that many teachers struggle to implement with at-risk student populations (Rodgers, Harmey & Brownfield, 2016). This study revealed the importance of mentor support, collegiate support, self-efficacy awareness, and background knowledge of poverty in regard to beginning teachers. These findings led to implications for future practice.

Title I schools were the essential focus of this research study as novice teachers who teach literacy in high poverty school settings faced greater challenges due to less resources, surrounding environment, and student needs (Manwa et al., 2016). The gap of this research study was geared specifically toward Title I schools and beginning teachers with less than two years of teaching experience with iPad integration in the area of literacy. It is imperative to provide a solid foundation for future teachers who will potentially teach this population as findings showed that collegiate preparation courses did not adequately equip teachers with strategies to meet the needs of students from poverty using iPads. Educating students from high areas of poverty requires a solid foundation and understanding of multiple cultures. In addition, a comprehensive understanding of today's new technologies are imperative to teacher success among beginning teachers.

Prior literature provided a basis for the research study; however, the findings of this study revealed authentic and relevant experiences in regard to beginning teachers who were faced with the challenge of increasing the reading skills of struggling readers within Title I schools. Today's student population of Title I schools, has the potential to possibly break the cycle of growing up in poverty in the future. It is imperative to

intentionally mold teachers that can directly and successfully meet students' needs so those students may have the potential to one day be greater from their current environmental setting. As Title I schools hire first-year teachers, it is imperious to ensure teachers enter schools with high self-efficacy and are prepared to take on the challenge of meeting students' needs through iPads. This study brings awareness to first-year teachers and educators of Title I schools. Through this social change effort, teachers can reflect on their experiences and potentially shed insight on the lives of students from poverty, use the iPad to increase their literacy skills, and prepare them to become productive digital citizens who can make an influential impact on the world.

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