TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES DURING A

BALANCED CALENDAR IN A RURAL SETTING

by

Charlene Lovette Isom

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

For over a century, most public schools across the United States have operated in a traditional nine-month calendar. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. A small rural school system adopted a balanced school calendar that included two intersession weeks, one in the fall and one in the spring. Students were provided enrichment and remediation extended learning activities during the intersession weeks. The theory guiding this study is Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory. The researcher conducted on-site interviews with teachers. Additional data collection included focus groups and document analysis. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) systematic approach to construct a composite description of the meanings and convey the overall essence of the experience. Teachers felt that the extended learning activities influenced student achievement in numerous ways. Teachers believed the extended learning activities provided great opportunities for students as an enrichment effort. Teachers shared the importance of putting time and effort into planning fun, hands-on, and engaging activities.

Keywords: enrichment programs, remediation programs, extended learning, school calendars, balanced calendar, modified school calendar, teachers' perspectives, rural schools

Dedication

To my husband Richard, thank you for being by my side throughout this journey. Your unconditional love and support motivated me to keep pressing on. Words cannot express how much I appreciate the sacrifices you have made for me. To my children, Monique, Colt, Brett, and Brooke. I love you. I am so proud of each of you. I know God has great plans for your future. Thank you for your love and encouragement. To my Mom and Dad, in heaven, I dedicate this to you as well. I miss you both and look forward to seeing you again someday. Finally, to Brynn, Bryleigh, Bryce, and Liam, you are my joy. I hope you are proud of your Nana. Nana loves each of you.

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Most of all, I want to thank Jesus, my Savior and Lord, for salvation. I thank God that He has abundantly blessed me with family, friends, and an opportunity to study and show myself approved (2 Timothy 2:15). "I'm not saying that I have this all together that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me" (Philippians 3:14a, MSG).

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List of Abbreviations

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Small Virginia City Public Schools (SVCPS)

Small Virginia Elementary School (SVES)

Small Virginia High School (SVHS)

Small Virginia Middle School (SVMS)

Standards of Learning (SOL)

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

School leaders are always looking for ways to improve student learning. Many districts are considering changes to the traditional school calendar. Most of the research on modified or year-round school calendars are quantitative in nature, focusing on performance results (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Graves, 2010; Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010; Pedersen, 2015). Cuban (2008) found that even less research has been devoted to the teachers' perspectives employed in schools with a modified school calendar. This dissertation addressed the gap in research by examining the qualitative phenomenology of teachers providing extended learning opportunities during the weeks of intersession in a balanced calendar. This chapter contains a foundation for the problem that supports the need for this research, along with my situation within this study. The research questions that were derived from the problem and purpose statements are presented in this chapter. Pertinent definitions are given, and the significance of the study is stated. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework and related literature that guided the study. The central focus of the study was teachers' perspectives; thus, Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory provided a framework for this work. The implementation of the balanced calendar was considered a second-degree change; thus, this study also reviewed the literature on educational change to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. An additional attribute of this study that contributes to the literature was the setting took place in a rural school system. In recent decades, the National Science Foundation has noted the need for additional research in rural communities (National Science Foundation 2001, 2009, 2017). Chapter Three lays out the procedures, research design, and analysis for the study, including the details of what happened throughout the execution of the research. Chapter Four presents the

findings of the study. Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the results and gives the implications of the study.

Background

In response to federal requirements for the School Improvement Grant, many low-performing schools across the nation have increased learning time. In 2012, Virginia was granted waivers by the U.S. Department of Education from certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). One of the conditions of these waivers allows flexibility to redirect certain federal funding sources to address increased learning time. As a result, the House Joint Resolution 646 from the 2011 Virginia General Assembly directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to study the impact of year-round schools. The findings were presented in October 2012 in a report, *Review of Year-Round Schools*. This resulted in the 2013 Virginia General Assembly passing the 2013 Appropriation Act, which provided grants to interested school divisions to help in planning for the implementation of a year-round school calendar.

In 2016, 11 school divisions and 66 schools in Virginia were awarded more than $7.7 million in grants to fund the development and support of year-round calendars (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2016). A rural school system in Southwest Virginia, Small Virginia City Public Schools (SVCPS; pseudonym used for the school division in this study), applied for and received a grant to fund the study of year-round school options. Upon receiving the grant, a committee was formed to explore the various school calendar types that are used by schools today. Almost a year later, after numerous parent, school, and community meetings targeted at gaining input from stakeholders, a modified year-long calendar was recommended for

implementation the following school year.

The new calendar was a break from the traditional school calendar. However, it was also different from most year-round calendars in that it still included a summer break that was two weeks shorter than the traditional break. These two weeks were taken during the school year, one during the first semester and one during the second. The school system referred to the new calendar as a balanced calendar. The school day was extended 25 minutes each day. The new calendar included two intersession weeks during the school year. These weeks were designated as a time to provide remediation for students that may be struggling academically. Remediation was intended to address individual students' skill sets with which they are struggling. In addition to providing opportunities for remediation, the intersession weeks provided opportunities for enrichment for students who may not need remediation.

Each of the three schools within SVCPS developed a plan for remediation, including the procedures for identifying students for remediation. With the calendar revision, teachers worked all 10 of the remediation or enrichment days. During the intersession weeks, teachers teach half the day (either remediation or enrichment) and have planning for half the day. These designated days count for five teaching days and five workdays on the 200-day contract.

Teachers were allowed to voice their preference to teach either a remediation or enrichment class. Still, ultimately the schools' administrators made the final decision as to which teachers were assigned to a remedial or enrichment role. Most activities and lesson plans for the remediation and enrichment days are developed and implemented by the teachers. Teachers were asked to provide proposals to their principals for this week, which included the description of the activities along with any supplies or additional resources needed. The schools took advantage of partnerships with community organizations, like the local community school

of the arts, to offer limited activities and programs for students during these designated days. Job-shadowing opportunities were available for some students.

The Code of Virginia (22.1-79.1) states that local school boards are to schedule the first day for students after Labor Day unless a special waiver is granted. Typically, school systems in this region of Virginia receive a special waiver to start before Labor Day because of missing days due to inclement weather in the winter months. For the 2016–2017 balanced calendar, teachers started the second week of August, and students' first day was a week later. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 mandates that states set annual objectives for increasing student achievement. One result of NCLB is that schools, school divisions, and states must accomplish these objectives to meet adequate yearly progress. In 2012, NCLB was amended to allow states to request flexibility regarding certain requirements of NCLB. The states were required to provide comprehensive and rigorous plans to improve educational outcomes targeted at increasing equity, improving the quality of instruction, and closing the achievement gaps for all students. This amendment resulted in Virginia being granted waivers by the U.S. Department of Education for certain requirements of ESEA.

Under the approved ESEA waiver, Virginia's schools must meet increasing targets, referred to as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). To meet federal accountability requirements, the AMOs apply to all students in reading and mathematics, three proficiency gap groups, and other subgroups (VDOE, 2015). Standards of Learning (SOL) identify the minimum expectations of what Virginia students should know and can do at the end of each grade-level and course. There are three ways a school can meet the AMOs: (a) Standards of Learning (SOL) test results from the most recently completed school year, (b) test results based on a three-year average, or (c) by reducing the failure rate by 10%. The AMOs represent the percentage of

students within each subgroup in the lowest-performing schools that must pass SOL tests in reading and mathematics within six years. Although AMOs are annual goals for low performing schools, every school must meet these objectives (VDOE, 2017).

Many Virginia public schools are continually fighting the battle of declining academic achievement (Chandler, 2013). Although SVCPS has experienced academic success in the past, recent changes in the Virginia SOLs have left the school system searching for new strategies to better meet the needs of its students. SVCPS has a diverse student population, with 61.7% of the student population identified as economically disadvantaged, 17.2% as English language learners, and 10.3% as special needs students. A modified school calendar was approved for the 2016–2017 school year in anticipation that the additional time would give students the extra help they may need.

Mandated change in the educational environment often results in challenges. The challenges resulting from change can lead to opportunities for increased motivation and growth (Stivers & Cramer, 2009). However, "If educational reforms are required of teachers without understanding how teachers experience the change process, the likelihood of successful or sustainable implementation may be lessened" (Atchison, 2012, p. 1). Improper implementation is a common issue with mandated changes (Fullan, 2016; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

Over the past two decades, research on the impact of year-round schooling on student achievement in low-performing schools has had mixed results (McMurrer, Frizzell, & Yoshioka, 2015). More recent studies (Glines, 2012; Jez & Wassmer, 2015; Kidron & Lindsay, 2014) have investigated strategies at improving the use of the instructional time in a modified calendar setting. As an example, research by Kaplan, Farbman, Deich, and Padgette (2014) found that

allotting specific time for teacher professional development, collaboration, and feedback is essential when implementing a modified school calendar.

Extended learning activities benefit students when well-planned and implemented. Farbman (2015) found that having more engaged time with individualized support benefits students and that providing time for teacher collaboration and professional development promotes improved instruction while fostering a shared commitment to high expectations. Another benefit of modifying the school calendar is being able to provide enrichment opportunities that boost students' engagement (Farbman, 2015).

Situation to Self

I started my journey as an educator in 1990, graduating from Radford University with a Bachelor of Science in mathematics. I taught for 10 years in my hometown in Virginia and then went to North Carolina for six years. I taught middle school math, computer applications, and then took the position as instructional media and technology facilitator for the district. While there, I completed my master's degree in instructional technology from Appalachian State University in 2006. I then returned to Virginia as an instructional technology resource teacher until 2016. I continued my education journey and earned an educational specialist degree in educational leadership from Virginia Tech in 2011. In 2016, I took a teaching position in North Carolina, teaching eighth-grade math.

As an educator with much of my teaching experience in a rural school setting, the discussion of year-round schooling has been limited. Year-round education was something done in larger school systems, but less frequently considered in small, rural school districts. In the early 1900s, year-round schooling was a way to house more students. Year-round school again became popular in the 1970s and early 1980s. Often, one of the leading factors to support the

adoption of a year-round school calendar was the lack of classroom space (Zykowski, 1991).

The driving force for adopting a year-round school calendar for this school division is to help

close the achievement gap and enrich the curriculum. The term achievement gap refers to the

disparities in academic performance between Black and White, Hispanic and White, and

disadvantaged and advantaged students (Graves, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Traditionally the

SVCPS district has adopted a school calendar that was similar to the neighboring school systems.

The opening and closing dates were usually within one week of each other. This allowed for

some joint efforts like a regional summer school. For over 20 years, SVCPS has participated in a

regional summer school along with two of the surrounding school districts. Participating in a

regional summer school is no longer an option with the adoption of this calendar.

Breaking from a traditional school calendar for such a small school system is an

interesting endeavor and one that merits investigation. To understand the phenomenon of

teachers providing extended learning activities in a balanced calendar, I desired to give voice to

the teachers' lived experiences. Such research could inspire future studies of teachers'

perspectives on other educational initiatives or explore the extended learning activities from the

perspective of students, for example. This study may help provide practical suggestions for

others transitioning from a traditional calendar model to a balanced calendar.

The assumptions that led me to choose the phenomenological lens for this study allow me

to use inductive logic and study the topic in context (Creswell, 2013). An ontological stance

implies that the "researcher reports different perspectives as themes develop in the findings"

(Creswell, 2013, p. 21). As the researcher, I conducted the research from a Christian worldview,

respecting the participants and acknowledging their worth and value, ensuring that the

participants are informed and not deceived or misled as to the nature of the study (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). I found that the social-constructivist paradigm was the most appropriate to guide this research. Fraelich (1989) was the first to coin the term co-researcher. Fraelich (1989) encouraged each participant to join him as a "truthful seeker of knowledge and understanding with regard to the phenomenon" (p. 68). The research participants were viewed as being "on equal footing" (Fraelich, 1989, p. 68) with the researcher. In the constructivist paradigm, the primary goal of the research is to "seek understanding" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24).

Problem Statement

The summer months may be the most inequitable time for public school students in the United States (Alexander, Pitcock, & Boulay, 2016). This reality has caused many schools to look for ways to level the field of learning. In 2008, year-round schools operated in 30 states (Institute of Education Sciences & National Center for Education Statistics). During the 2011–2012 school year, Virginia had nine elementary schools in five districts that operated on a year-round calendar, which was less than 1% of all elementary schools in Virginia (JLARC, 2012). In 2011, the Virginia General Assembly directed the JLARC to study the efficacy of year-round schools. This assessment of Virginia year-round schools found "that Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students as a group are more likely to improve their test scores under the single-track year-round school model" (JLARC, 2012, p. 63). The 2013 General Assembly provided grants to assist school divisions in planning for the establishment of year-round school programs. SVCPS took advantage of this grant and implemented a balanced calendar in the 2014–2015 school year.

Virginia's approach to extending learning time has changed in recent years. Since 2012, Virginia schools that follow year-round schedules, distribute instructional days across 10, 11, or 12 months rather than across the traditional nine-month calendar. Summer break may be shorter,

while other breaks, known as intersessions, may be added. Intersessions include opportunities for remediation and enrichment. Since receiving the federal ESEA waivers, school systems receiving grants to expand learning time may use the grant funds for activities. This research may contribute to understanding how teachers experience teaching extended learning activities during the weeks of intersession of a balanced calendar.

Improving student achievement has been viewed by many in education as one of the primary purposes of schooling today (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). Over the last 30 years, many school systems in the United States have placed a major emphasis on improving student achievement, especially in reading, mathematics, and science (Biesta, 2015). SVCPS implemented a balanced calendar to improve student achievement.

The problem addressed in this study was how teachers in a rural school district in Southwest Virginia experience the changes inherent in providing extended learning activities during the week of intersession of a balanced calendar. Qualitative data from teacher interviews helped provide insight into the success of these weeks of extended learning activities. Quaglia and Lande (2017) proposed that hearing from teachers and understanding their experiences regarding an educational endeavor is crucial to the success of the initiative. Taking the time to hear the voice of the teachers, using interviews and focus group sessions, provided data to evaluate the effectiveness of the extended learning activities from the unique perspective of the teachers. It was the hope of this researcher that these teachers' voices will be heard. One aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on extended learning activities as they affect student achievement during the week of intersession in a balanced calendar.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. At this stage in the research, extended learning activities can be generally defined as remedial or enrichment lessons offered during the week of intersession. I investigated teachers' perspectives on the influence of the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of the balanced school calendar. The theory guiding this study was Albert Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy theory sheds light on the choices teachers make since these choices are strongly influenced by collective efficacy beliefs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to address a gap in the literature by exploring the perspectives of teachers regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. Some researchers believe that year-round calendars will be a natural progression in America (Weiss & Brow, 2003). The number of year-round public schools has steadily increased over the last decade (Gewertz, 2008). Many school districts across the country are looking at adjusting the traditional school calendar. More recently, Nebraska, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Virginia have extended their year-round school initiatives (Pedersen, 2015). With the rise of school systems that are adopting alternative calendars, there is a need for more studies that explore this topic.

Most empirical research on the topic of school calendars is quantitative studies of year-long calendars (Patall et al., 2010). Historically, the leading reason for implementing a year-long calendar has been to address overcrowding issues in large school districts. The study of year-round schools in a rural setting is limited (Kneese & Ballinger, 2009; Pedersen, 2015). For the past two decades, there has been a call for more research in rural school systems (National

Science Foundation 2001, 2009, 2017). This study addressed this gap.

This study examined a small rural district that adopted a balanced calendar for the hope of providing better remediation and enrichment opportunities for students. The theoretical framework for this research was based upon Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory. This theory provided a deeper understanding of emergent themes (positive or negative) for other school districts considering offering extended learning opportunities in a balanced calendar. This study can benefit stakeholders in other school districts in Virginia that are considering modifying the school calendar.

Research Questions

In qualitative studies, the research questions were intentionally "open-ended, evolving and non-directional" (Creswell, 2013, p. 138). The research questions were derived from the problem and purpose statements. It is the intent of phenomenological research questions to help reveal the essence and meaning of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Most qualitative research questions start with "what or how rather than why" to explore the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 138). This study examined teachers' perspectives on the influence of extended learning activities on student achievement during the intersession week of a balanced calendar. The perspectives voiced in this study can contribute to the current literature on extended learning activities in a balanced calendar setting by addressing the following questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement?

This question was designed to further develop an understanding of any patterns and themes exposing the essence of teacher perspectives on the extended learning activities during

the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar. Furthermore, the goal of this question was to

better understand teachers' perspectives on the experience of teaching during the intersession

weeks to address the gap in current research (Pedersen, 2015). Cheatham and Williams (2016)

stress the importance of schools offering extended learning activities, especially in the rural

school setting, to help counteract the "opportunity gaps" (p. 231) between rural and non-rural

students. The setting of this study was a rural community. The intent of research question one

was to promote "careful, comprehensive descriptions" and "vivid and accurate renderings of the

experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105).

    RQ2. What are teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities during the

        intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as enrichment efforts?

Intersession weeks provide an opportunity for enrichment activities. DuFour and DuFour

(2010) found that schools with effective enrichment opportunities are more likely to have higher

collective efficacy. The teachers in these schools were more likely to have higher self-efficacy.

Enrichment activities included direct instruction, mentoring, and other engaging activities

(Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010; Vandell, 2013). Successful enrichment programs were

designed to meet the needs of the student. Hands-on and project-based lesson designs were

common components of enrichment activities. The goal of this question was to further study

teachers' perspectives on enrichment activities and the influence on student achievement.

    RQ3. What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities during the

        intersession weeks of a balanced calendar?

Teachers are a vital part of a change in schools. Teachers' perspective is a powerful

resource, yet often underutilized (Quaglia & Lande, 2017). Based on years of research, Hattie

(2014) notes that teachers are one of the most powerful influences in student achievement. The

purpose of this question was to give the teachers a voice for future calendar initiatives.

Definitions

This section provides the definitions of terms relevant to the study. The definitions are not typical entries from the dictionary but were derived within the context of this study. The definitions are supported by the literature.

1.   *Balanced calendar* - The balanced calendar is a modified calendar that comprises some new concepts, such as two designated weeks of remediation programs and enrichment activities. The balanced calendar decreases the summer break and redistributes these days throughout the school year, adding vacation days throughout the school year to create breaks from instruction (Skinner, 2014). The approved calendar includes 170 teaching days with the two added weeks of remediation and enrichment, followed by a week-long break for students and staff.

2.   *Experiences* - Experiences are the consciousness that makes up an individual life, something personally encountered or lived through. Recognizing that personal experiences are essential to understanding the social world but are difficult to quantify, the qualitative research tradition emphasizes individuals' stories, reflections, perspectives, and beliefs as foundational to meaning-making (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For this study, the following definition for experiences was formulated to focus on the lived experiences of teachers that have provided extended learning activities during the intersession week of the balanced calendar.

3.   *Extended learning activities* - These activities are instructional modules offered during the week of intersession. Extended learning activities may be either remediation or enrichment activities. VDOE (2009a) notes that extended learning activities can take place before or after school, during the summer, and in the extended school calendar. Extended

learning opportunities are most effective when they are provided to the students who need them most, and they are designed to meet the individual needs of the student (Cheatham & Williams, 2016). The student must be given some choice.

4.   *Intersession weeks* - These are an additional two weeks designated by the school to provide remediation or enrichment activities for students (Skinner, 2014). Remediation sessions take place during the first half of the day. Students attending remediation can still participate in enrichment activities in the afternoon. Enrichment sessions are offered in the morning and afternoon sessions. Students recommended for remediation are required to attend the remediation sessions. The enrichment sessions are optional for students.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In this study, I sought to examine the perspectives of teachers regarding the influence on the extended learning activities on student achievement. Prior studies have demonstrated that teachers are vital to the success or failure in the implementation process of change in the educational setting (Alberti, 2012; Atchison, 2012). School leaders can use information from this study in the planning of remediation and enrichment programs in extended learning activities for students during the intersession weeks of a balanced school calendar. Another aim of this research was that data from this study could further assist teachers and school leaders in transitioning from a traditional calendar to a modified calendar.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter is organized into four sections, including an overview, theoretical framework, related literature, and a summary. The theoretical framework provided the key concepts and the meanings of these concepts. The research of theories helped develop a point of focus for the study. The research of literature provided a synthesis of the current information related to better understanding the study of examining teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement offered during the weeks of intersession in a balanced calendar, in a rural setting. The purpose of the literature review was to analyze and synthesize studies to demonstrate their collective significance for better understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Schwandt, 2007). Albert Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory, along with his work on collective efficacy, provided the theoretical framework for the current study. Teacher efficacy and collective teacher efficacy were related to most aspects of this study and supported by the findings in this literature review.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was appropriate for this study is Albert Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory. In his earlier work, Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as the belief that one has the capability to accomplish tasks regardless of outside influences. Later, he defined self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Bandura (1997) furthered described self-efficacy as a teacher's belief in capabilities to organize and execute actions needed to produce given goals within the classroom and school. Self-

efficacy is one of the four indicators of core self-evaluation and has been used to predict job satisfaction and job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Self-efficacy theory proposes that the choices teachers make are strongly influenced by collective efficacy beliefs. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) acknowledged that while teacher and collective efficacy perspectives relate empirically, they are distinct constructs theoretically that can have a unique impact on student achievement.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory provided the philosophical assumption that led to this body of research regarding teacher self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory helps give an understanding of behaviors in the educational setting. This theory focuses on learning through observation. Learning through observation, of course, occurs for students in the classroom, but this can also occur for the teachers who observe other teachers' providing extended learning opportunities during the weeks of intersession. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory indicates that others have some control over our behavior. Vicarious reinforcement may occur when teachers experience an emotional response to an observation of other teachers (Bandura, 1997). If a student observes other students having a positive experience during intersession, this may result in vicarious reinforcement for the student. Vicarious reinforcement, of course, can occur for teachers as well.

Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory holds that a person's knowledge base and behavior are directly related to observing others within the context of personal experiences, social interactions, and environment. Learned behaviors can then be central to shaping personality. One major indication of Bandura's (1986) theory is that personal, behavioral, and environmental factors influence the reproduction of observed behavior. The interaction of these

factors is called reciprocal determinism. For example, when trying to change one's behavior, you would look at trying to change their attitude, knowledge, and environment. During the weeks of intersession, teachers and students may experience reciprocal determinism within the different extended learning opportunities.

An individual's high or low self-efficacy regarding a certain behavior is an example of personal influence. Behavioral factors are those responses an individual experiences after they perform the behavior. Environmental factors include the resources and support that help make the environment more conducive to successfully performing a behavior. Bandura (1986) found that the personal, behavioral, and environmental factors that influence behavior are "triadic, dynamic, and reciprocal" (p. 26).

Another component of the social cognitive theory is the belief that efficacy is a foundation of human agency. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (p. 21). Bandura (1977) argued that just because a person understands that certain actions will result in desired outcomes, this knowledge is less likely to be acted upon when the individual lacks the belief they can accomplish the actions. Therefore, self-efficacy becomes a predictor of outcome expectancies. Outcome expectancies refer to individuals' estimates "that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Researchers have established that teachers' self-efficacy not only influences their adoption of new instructional practices, but teachers' beliefs also have an influence on their persistence and the depth of their implementation (Gabriele & Joram, 2007; Prawat & Jennings, 1997; Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, & MacGyvers, 2001). Decades of research show that teachers'

self-efficacy affects classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teachers' well-being (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Lemon and Garvis (2016) found that teacher self-efficacy beliefs determine a teacher's competence to engage with a task as well as their level of confidence. Hattie (2008) described learner self-efficacy as "the confidence or strength of belief that we have in ourselves that we can make our learning happen" (p. 46).

Teachers' self-efficacy is one of the most influential factors affecting teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of new instructional practices. Studies have indicated that a vast number of instructional improvement programs fail because they do not consider the factors that motivate teachers to engage in the initiative of change (Ford, Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, & Schween, 2017; Guskey, 1986). Teachers with lower self-efficacy are more focused on how the implementation of a new strategy would personally affect them. In comparison, teachers with higher self-efficacy focused on how the change would affect their students (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Teachers who like teaching and have confidence in their teaching abilities, along with a high level of self-efficacy, are more effective in the classroom (Guskey, 1988). These teachers also seemed to be more receptive to the implementation of new instructional practices. Teachers who had lower self-efficacy and were viewed as less effective seemed to be less receptive to the implementation of new instructional practices.

When applying the idea of self-efficacy to teachers implementing a balanced calendar, it would be expected that a teacher with high self-efficacy would focus on making sure the extended learning activities offered during the intersession weeks are worthwhile to the students. A teacher's self-efficacy directly relates to their belief that he or she can inspire learning in the school setting (Bandura, 1994; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Teacher efficacy can affect the quality of instructional activities. Ware and Kitsantas (2007) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy

are more likely to persevere with students who have challenges. Besides, teachers with higher

self-efficacy are more likely to plan appropriate activities and to put forth great effort in looking

for effective teaching materials. This theory of self-efficacy was essential to this study because a

teachers' belief that he or she can influence learning through extended learning activities

conducted during the intersession weeks was relevant to the academic achievement of students

participating in these activities.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

Efficacy beliefs influence teachers' focus and actions. When teachers at a school have a

sense of collective efficacy, they are motivated to pursue courses of action because they feel that

together they possess the capabilities to achieve positive outcomes (Donohoo, 2017). When

teachers share the belief that their joint actions can positively influence student outcomes,

student achievement increases (Donohoo, 2017). Bandura (1997) observed, "perceived

collective efficacy is an emergent group-level attribute rather than simply the sum of members'

perceived personal efficacies" (p. 478). Goddard et al. (2004) identified connections between

teachers' beliefs about the collective efficacy of their school (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000) and

student achievement. As they put it, "In addition to its strong relationship with student academic

outcomes, recent research in other fields also suggests the importance of collective efficacy

beliefs to goal attainment" (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 7).

Collective teacher efficacy can be described as the "collective self-perception that

teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the

educational impact of their homes and communities" (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 190).

Teachers with a higher sense of efficacy are more likely to collaborate with other teachers and to

participate in school activities that support school improvement (Poole & Okeafor, 1989). A

person's belief in their ability to effectively deal with various realities is one of the most prominent influences on their actions (Bandura, 1986).

Collective teacher efficacy and student achievement. It is important to consider the impact of collective teacher efficacy on student achievement. Teachers in a school can have a positive impact on student achievement when they share the belief that together they can overcome challenges and achieve goals (Donohoo, 2017). Hattie (2016) ranked collective teacher efficacy as the number one influence in student achievement with an effect size of 1.57. It is important to note that collective teacher efficacy is under the control of the school, not student, or home.

Numerous factors influence student achievement. The most prominent systems shown to affect student achievement are the curriculum, the student, the school, the home, the teacher, and the approaches to teaching (Hattie, 2008). A student's socio-economic status, home environment, and parental involvement are a few other influences on a student's academic performance.

Some factors under the student's control are the student's personal belief or expectations, their prior academic performance, and the student's motivation. A teacher's instructional approach and their expectations can influence student achievement. There are additional factors that are interdependent on student and teacher, such as homework, teacher clarity, teacher-student relationships, and feedback, to name a few. Additional factors that affect student achievement come from the school setting. For example, school size, school leadership, school calendar, academic programs, and professional development opportunities for teachers are factors that have been topics of research that have been shown to affect student achievement.

John Hattie (2008) set out to identify the influences that have the greatest impact on

student achievement in *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Recently, Hattie has added 400 studies to his research, including a meta-analysis by Eells (2011). Hattie (2016) determined that collective teacher efficacy has more than twice the effect of prior achievement and more than three times the effect of parental involvement and the home environment. Other research supports the importance of school-level and teacher-level influences on student achievement. Based on over 35 years of research, Marzano (2003) concluded, "Schools that are highly effective produce results that almost entirely overcome the effects of student backgrounds" (p. 7).

Donohoo (2017) found, "When teachers believe that together they and their colleagues can impact student achievement, they share a sense of collective teacher efficacy" (location 246). Therefore, it is imperative to consider the teachers' perspectives when implementing and evaluating programs. Giving teachers a voice is empowering and supports collective efficacy.

Change is more likely to be effective and enduring when teachers have a responsibility and a sense of ownership for the change process (Donohoo, 2017). Teachers will have greater confidence in the "conjoint capability" of other educators at their school when they perceive that their opinions are considered in important decisions (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 10). When teachers can influence and make relevant instructional decisions, the school is most likely to have a strong sense of collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004).

Four sources of efficacy. Goddard et al. (2004) identified four sources of efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Mastery experiences occur when a team experiences success that is perceived to be from causes within the team's control. Mastery experiences result in increased collective efficacy along with an expectation that the successful performance will repeat (Anderson, 2017).

The second most powerful source of collective efficacy is vicarious experiences. When teachers become aware of others who have experienced similar challenges and obstacles, increased expectations can result that they too can overcome similar circumstances (Donohoo, 2017). Collective teacher efficacy increases when teachers observe success in similar school settings. Vicarious experiences can be the result of visiting other sites, attending a conference, watching a video, or reading about it in a publication (Donohoo, 2017).

Social persuasion occurs when trustworthy and credible persuaders encourage groups to overcome challenges. Bandura (1977) found that the more credible the source of information, the more likely the change in efficacy will occur. Adams and Forsyth (2006) found that establishing standards of collaboration, cooperation, and openness supports social persuasion. Social persuasion at the school level can occur when school staff successfully convince other teachers that together they constitute an effective team (Donohoo, 2017). The more cohesive the faculty, the greater chance the teachers will be persuaded by sound arguments (Goddard et al., 2000).

Affective states are the least influential source of collective teacher efficacy. Affective states can be thought of as one's emotional state. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) referred to affective states as "the emotional tone of the organization" (p. 190). Affective states include one's feelings of anxiety or excitement associated with one's perspectives of his or her ability or incompetence (Donohoo, 2017). Bandura (1977) noted that people depend partially on their physiological state when judging their vulnerability to stress and level of anxiety. While acknowledging that the research on the impact of affective states on organizations is limited, Goddard et al. (2004) proposed that affective states can be influential in how organizations react and interpret the numerous challenges they may face.

Six enabling conditions that support collective efficacy. Donohoo (2017) identified

six enabling conditions that support collective efficacy. These are:

- advanced teacher influence

- goal consensus,

- teachers' knowledge about one another's work,

- cohesive staff,

- responsiveness of leadership, and

- effective systems of intervention.

Advanced teacher influence is present when teachers have the opportunity to assume

specific leadership roles along with the power to make decisions on school-wide issues. Studies

have indicated that there is a strong, positive relationship between the presence of teacher

leadership in a school and collective efficacy (Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Goddard, 2002). An

effective strategy for implementing change is to give teachers more influence in decisions

regarding school improvement issues (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teachers should be involved

in decisions concerning curriculum, assessment, student discipline, and professional

development. When teachers are given advanced influence, collective efficacy will increase, and

the teachers will feel empowered (Donohoo, 2017).

Establishing clear, attainable goals is a major component of school improvement plans.

When teachers are involved in the goal-setting process, they are more likely to work toward

accomplishing the goal (Donohoo, 2017). Kurz and Knight (2004) found that goal consensus

was a significant predictor of collective efficacy. Goal consensus not only supports collective

efficacy, but it has been shown to have a measurable impact on student achievement (Robinson,

Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2007). Bandura (1997) proposed that setting challenging goals is not only

evidence of high self-efficacy, but goal setting can enhance and sustain a person's motivation.

Teachers' knowledge about one another's work helps create confidence in another teacher's ability to impact student achievement (Donohoo, 2017). One of the few studies exploring the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and teachers' knowledge about other teachers' courses found that a significant correlation exists (Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989). Providing an opportunity for teachers to learn together, share instructional strategies, develop lessons, and observe other teachers in the classroom can help increase teachers' knowledge about one another's work (Donohoo, 2017). A cohesive staff can be defined as the "degree to which teachers agree with each other on fundamental and organizational issues" (Donohoo, 2017, p. 32). Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, and Gray (2004) noted that a cohesive faculty considers the skills and needs of the individual teachers when constructing team situations. Being a member of a cohesive staff can minimize the impact of negative emotions on collective efficacy beliefs (Ross et al., 2004). Some drawbacks can happen because of groupthink. Janis's (1972) work on groupthink, found that this phenomenon exists when members within a group constantly conform to the decisions of the group, good or bad. Katz, Earl, and Ben Jaafar (2009) identified "psychologically grounded dangers" (p. 8) of the group can include weakening of accountability and uniformity overriding diversity. They stated, "Groups are powerful, which means they can be powerfully wrong. Getting together without the discipline and specificity of collective deliberation can be a grand waste of time." (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 13). Protocols can be used to avoid the pitfalls of groupthink (Donohoo, 2017). Protocols are a set of guidelines agreed upon by the group, that help ensure that time to collaborate is used purposefully and efficiently. The greater the cohesion, the more opportunities teachers, will have to experience positive collaborations, which helps influence their perceptions of their colleagues'

efficacy (Ross et al., 2004).

Responsiveness of leadership is demonstrated in schools when leaders see it as their responsibility to support others to effectively and efficiently accomplish their duties (Donohoo, 2017). Responsive leaders do this while demonstrating respect and concern for their staff, which includes reducing distractions and protecting teachers from issues while providing the necessary resources teachers need to fulfill their job requirements. Responsiveness of leadership can result in teachers not only feeling supported, but this leadership style can help foster teachers' belief in their ability to impact student outcomes.

The sixth influencing factor to collective efficacy, according to Donohoo (2017), is effective systems of intervention. Effective systems of intervention ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve. When schools have productive remediation and enrichment programs in place, teachers experience a higher sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy (DuFour & DuFour, 2010).

Collective teacher efficacy has risen to the forefront of the educational debate. Collective efficacy is more likely to be strong and present in schools where teachers are a part of the school improvement decision making (Goddard et al., 2004). According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), teaching is a profession with shared purposes, collective responsibility, and mutual learning. Teachers must be active and productive members of learning communities supported by responsive leaders to be successful in the public-school arena.

When applying the idea of self-efficacy to teachers implementing a balanced calendar, it would imply that a teacher with high self-efficacy focuses on how the change will impact the students and the entire school. A teacher with low self-efficacy will be more concerned with how the implemented change will affect them personally (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster,

2009). A teacher's self-efficacy directly relates to the belief that he or she can inspire learning in the school setting (Bandura, 1994; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). This theory was essential to this study because a teachers' belief that he or she can influence learning through extended learning activities conducted during the intersession weeks was relevant to the academic achievement of students participating in these activities.

Related Literature

For this study, the related literature includes the historical background of the school calendar, which leads to an investigation into summer learning loss and previous research studies on alternative school calendars. Since the setting was in a rural area, the literature review contains research from rural settings. These sections demonstrate a gap in the literature for qualitative empirical studies on balanced calendar initiatives in rural settings (Alexander et al., 2016; Cheatham & Williams, 2016; Patall et al., 2010; Pedersen, 2015). Additionally, the review of literature on the topic of educational change is appropriate and relevant to this study. The change of a school calendar is a second-order change, or fundamental change, for teachers (Cuban, 1988). The implementation of the balanced calendar, which included the additional task of providing extended learning activities during the weeks of intersession, were mandated changes for the teachers involved. Top-down, mandated change is often met with resistance from teachers (Richardson & Placier, 2001). The central focus of this study was on teachers' perspectives; therefore, a review of pertinent literature on teachers' perspectives was included. Each section in related literature provides an additional piece of knowledge from the field that helps build further understanding of the phenomenon (Schwandt, 2007).

History of School Calendars

Traditionally, decisions regarding school calendars have been left to local school

districts. From the early establishment of public education, courts took the position that in most cases, local school districts and states should have the final say to the decisions and requirements of education (U.S. Const. amend. X; U.S. Const. amend. XIV). Many may argue that this has changed, but in most cases, decisions about calendars are still made at the local and state levels.

In rural areas, most school calendars accommodated the agricultural lifestyle of the citizens of that area by giving students summers off so that they could help their families with farming and harvesting crops. Since the children in urban areas were not dependent upon the agricultural lifestyle that was tied to the seasons, in the mid-1800s, many of these schools operated on a year-round school calendar (O'Sullivan, 2013). Many of these schools went well over 200 days a year. In 1842, Chicago schools lasted 240 days, New York City's schools went 245, and Detroit's schools extended to 260 days (Lapidos, 2008).

Attendance in school was not compulsory during the mid-1800s, and truancy became an issue, so many schools adopted the summers-off approach to combat this issue of poor and inconsistent attendance of students (O'Sullivan, 2013). Many states and school districts adopted a summer's off approach arguing (a) poorly ventilated school buildings were nearly insufferable during the hot summer months; (b) leaders in the community worried that hot, over-crowded classrooms could result in the spread of disease; and (c) wealthy residents frequently vacationed during the hottest months, and many middle-class school officials took vacations during the summer months (Lapidos, 2008).

The common school movement had an impact on school calendars. This movement sought to bring standardization and accountability to shape schools into a more rigorous Prussian model. The calendar was a starting point for this initiative. The summer break, as we know it today, emerged from the attempts to bring the rural school districts in line with the urban districts

(Glines, 1995a).

Even during the standardization movement, schools still had the flexibility to adjust their calendars to better fit their community needs (Glines, 1995a). Many school districts attempted to address over-crowding concerns by operating on a modified school calendar; and other districts looked at changing the school calendar to address academic needs of their students, one of the earliest examples was in Indiana 1904 (Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, & Melson, 2003). The schools operated on a four-quarter calendar with 12 weeks per quarter and the month of August off. Three quarters would equal one school year. The summer option allowed students to advance in their academic pathways. This calendar was abandoned in 1908 due to a lack of interest in the summer quarter by students (Glines, 1995b).

One first known year-round schools opened in 1904, in Bluffton, Indiana, under the leadership of school superintendent William Wirt (Sexton, 2003). The "Platoon System" was known as the "Gary System," after Gary, Indiana, the place where Superintendent William Wirt first initiated this calendar (Gary Plan, 2015). In this system, students participated in academic classes for half of the school day and non-academic classes the other half of the day. Schools were open throughout the year in this system. For over 25 years, this calendar was used in other school systems across the country. The platoon system drastically declined during the great depression due to severe budget cuts (Glines, 1995b).

The school year varied from two months to an entire school year in the 1930s (Elsbree, 1939). One of the first documented school schedules was in the town records of Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1645. The record indicated that for the first seven months of school, the schoolmaster was to start teaching at seven o'clock. The students were to be dismissed at five o'clock in the afternoon. In the last five months of school, the schoolmaster was to start teaching

at eight o'clock, and the students were to be dismissed at four o'clock in the afternoon (Elsbree, 1939). While in Georgia during this same time, the school day was to start at sunrise and conclude at five o'clock in the afternoon. This schedule was kept for the entire year (Bowden, 1932).

Another notable implementation of a year-round system occurred in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, from 1928 to 1938. It is perhaps the first attempt to implement a multi-track system. This plan was formed out of necessity to address an increase in population. The Aliquippa plan distributed the student enrollment by scheduling three-fourths of the children attending school and the other one-fourth scheduled on break for each quarter of the school year (Vanderslice, 1930). One of the benefits of this calendar was the reduction of cost in re-teaching students that failed (Vanderslice, 1933). This reduction was due in part from a student needing remediation that required only a quarter for remediation and not an entire semester. The reduced time resulted in a savings of 33%.

The onset of the depression years in the 1930s had an impact on many of the year-long calendars being abandoned. There were numerous efforts to revive the year-round school calendar from 1946–1966, but many districts adopting a year-round calendar from 1970–1990 did so to address over-crowding issues (Glines, 1997). Year-round schools had expanded to over 2,000 schools in 33 states by the early 1990s, with more than two million students enrolled in year-round programs (Pepper, 2009).

In the 1970s, one of the largest school systems in Virginia, Prince William County, adopted a 45–15 year-round multi-track school calendar. JLARC (2012) stated that the two main reasons schools implement a year-round calendar are improving academic achievement and increasing building capacity. The most common designs of year-round calendars are a single-

track and a multi-track calendar. If the main objective is improving academic achievement, then a single-track design is usually chosen. A multi-track design would be selected if the main objective were to "maximize building space, particularly during periods of rapidly rising enrollment rates" (JLARC, 2012, p. 7). The latter situation was the case for Prince William County Schools.

In the 1960s, Prince William County experienced rapid growth. In 1970, a Prince William County Schools staff committee recommended a 45–15 year-round plan to help alleviate overcrowding in district schools (Snyder, 1975). Originally, the 45–15 plan was developed and implemented at Valley View School District 96 in Lockport, Illinois. Prince William County modified this plan (Education Turnkey Systems, 1972). The 45–15 plan divided the students into four attendance groups. Three out of the four groups would attend school for 45 days, while a fourth group was on break for 15 days.

The Prince William County Schools (1978) technical report compared year-round and traditional schools in Prince William County, Virginia. This report found no significant difference in the education being provided on the 45–15 plan compared to the traditional calendar in Prince William County (Rasberry, 1992). Students at the high school showed no significant differences in their SAT scores or in the percentage of students who continued their education beyond high school compared to other students on traditional calendars (Rasberry, 1992). After nine years, Prince William County schools returned to a traditional calendar, "basing their decision on little academic improvement, few cost benefits and parent reaction" (Rasberry, 1992, p.8).

The number of school systems operating on a year-round calendar has never been the majority in Virginia. According to the JLARC (2012), a total of 19 school systems in Virginia

had used a type of year-round calendar since the early 1970s. In 2009, the number of schools

operating on a modified calendar in the Commonwealth was at its highest at 31 schools. Less

than one percent of Virginia schools in the 2011–2012 school year used a year-round calendar

(JLARC, 2012). As of 2016, year-round and extended school year grants to support the

development and implementation of year-round instructional programs were awarded to 66

schools in 11 school divisions in Virginia (VDOE, 2016). With the onset of additional schools

operating on modified school calendars, an additional study was needed to address the impact of

these initiatives on student learning.

Summer Slide

Summer slide is a learning loss that results from summer break. Summer slide also called

"summer fade" and "summer effect," has been the topic of research for over 100 years (Cooper

et al., 1996). Summer slide has been described as the lack of student growth during the summer

break and even academic decline in some cases (Cash, 2009; Mraz & Rasinski, 2007).

Researchers have found that minority and disadvantaged children are more likely to experience

summer slide (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004).

The faucet theory can help make sense of this phenomenon of seasonal patterns of

academic decline.

> When school is in session, the faucet is turned on for all children, the resources children
>
> need for learning are available to everyone, so all children gain. When school is not in
>
> session, children whose families are poor stop gaining because for them the faucet is
>
> turned off, the resources available to them in summer (mainly family resources) are not
>
> sufficient to promote their continued growth (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997, p. 37).
>
> Many resources for students stop when school closes. Unfortunately, the resources

available for economically disadvantaged students when school is out are often not adequate to support continued academic growth (Entwisle et al., 1997).

For the most part, American schools in the past, have made the necessary changes to the school calendars to better meet the needs of a changing society (Schulte, 2009). Summer vacation has been a long-standing tradition in public schools. The initial purpose of the summer break can be traced back to a preindustrial period that is not relevant for most students today (Pedersen, 2015). In the 1800s, many rural schools were open only for a few months per year, mostly during winter and summer, to accommodate the need for students to help with the planting during the spring and harvesting during the fall. At that same time, many urban schools operated all year long due to the influx of newly arrived immigrants (Schulte, 2009). Most schools today operate on a ten-month calendar with an extended break of eight to ten weeks during the summer (Pedersen, 2015).

Many researchers acknowledge that summer break is one of the leading causes of the educational decline many schools are experiencing, especially for the economically disadvantaged students that do not have access to enrichment opportunities after school or during the summer (Cash, 2009; Mraz & Rasinski, 2007; Pedersen, 2015). A meta-analysis conducted by Cooper et al. (1996) concluded that most students experience a summer learning loss, especially in math and spelling. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) found that summer reading loss for at-risk students was significant. Jensen (2014) identified three key issues to this phenomenon:

- Achievement gaps already exist for students among socio-economic and racial lines before these students enter kindergarten.

- Achievement gaps do not increase significantly during the school year since most

students learn at the same rate while school is in session.

- Achievement gaps widen during the summer period when students are not under the direction of teachers and schools.

Although the issue of summer slide has been well-documented, many schools have found addressing this problem to be challenging due to budget constraints and the lack of stakeholders' support (Pedersen, 2015). Many Americans see summer vacation as the backbone of the nation's school system (Weiss & Brown, 2005). The proposal of doing away with summer vacation has often been met with passionate opposition in many communities (Schulte, 2009).

Researchers on summer slide suggest that summer learning loss can play an influential role in schools' and teachers' performance accountability (Jensen, 2014). Accountability, holding schools responsible for student outcomes, is a major theme steering federal, state, and local education policy today. McEachin and Atteberry (2016) developed a specific data set designed to examine the potential of summer slide to bias research on school quality and accountability policies at the school level. The dataset used contained both fall and spring test scores for students in grades two through eight. For example, the addition of a fall test into the testing system lessens the potential for the summer break to bias school-level value-added models. Most spring-to-spring tests designed to measure student achievement do not account for summer learning loss, which biases the results and can hurt the performance standing on schools that serve disadvantaged students (McEachin, & Atteberry, 2016). Gershenson and Hayes (2018) gave the following example to explain how the spring to spring test can bias the value-added estimates for teachers. Suppose you have two equally effective first-grade teachers, and each teacher is assigned, one student. The first test is given during the spring of kindergarten, and at this time, both students have identical achievement levels (test scores = 3). However,

during the summer break, between kindergarten and first grade, one student continued learning while the other student experienced summer learning loss. As a result, the students entered first grade with test scores of 4 and 2, respectively. Let us assume the two students have the same propensities for learning and that all other schooling and home influences are held constant. If the school district uses the previous spring's test score as the lag score in the value-added model, the teacher of the student who continued to learn during summer will appear to be more effective. A spring-to-spring test does not account for the fact that the teacher of the student experiencing summer loss must spend more time re-teaching concepts from the previous school year; thus, this would limit the with-in year growth for the teacher with the student experiencing summer learning loss.

Summer slide may also have a negative financial impact. Clifford, Christeson, and O'Connor (2015) estimated that public schools in the United States waste approximately $21 billion a year because of summer learning loss. The estimates were calculated for at-risk students only, and this estimate did not factor in the learning loss experienced by more economically advantaged students. Clifford et al. (2015) specifically broke the numbers down for New York:

> New York State currently spends, on average, $19,550 per public school student each
> year. Because of the skills they lose over the summer, low-income students are
> effectively only getting eight out of the 10 months of education that we pay for, wasting
> $3,910 per child for the two months lost. (p. 4)

Summer slide is the learning loss that occurs when students are on summer break away from school. Researchers have concluded that this time away from school may have damaging effects on some students, specifically at-risk students (Bianco-Sheldon, 2007; Cooper et al.,

1996; Schulte, 2009). Summer slide year after year can result in at-risk students entering high school years behind academically compared to their peers (Pedersen, 2015). For many other students, summer break is time wasted. This wasted time can be better spent on providing students with enriching experiences that will help prepare them to be productive members of the global workforce (Pedersen, 2015). For SVCPS, a balanced calendar was implemented to help mitigate the summer slide for their students.

Alternative School Calendars

Research has indicated that the traditional 180-day calendar may not the best model for student learning (Ballinger & Kneese, 2006). The traditional 10 months may not the most effective means to instructing students in a fluid and consistent manner (Pedersen, 2015). To address the need for school reform, some public, private, and charter schools operate on non-traditional calendars. Some of the most common calendar reforms over the past decade include year-round school, which includes the balanced calendar model, extended school days, and an extended school year (Cuban, 2008). Most year-round calendars do not increase the number of school days but redistribute the standard 180-day school year across all 12 months rather than the traditional nine months. The three-month summer break is reduced, and additional weeks of break are added throughout the school year (JLARC, 2012). These modified calendars are known as a balanced calendar.

Balanced calendar. The balanced calendar model redistributes the required school days over 12 months (Pedersen, 2015). Students may start in September and end in August, but have more breaks interspersed throughout the year. Pedersen (2015) noted the balanced calendar has both advantages and disadvantages for stakeholders. The advantages of this approach are

- the decrease in students affected by summer slide, and

- a decrease in teacher burnout due to the additional breaks throughout the year.

The disadvantages of the balanced calendar are:

- the loss of summer vacation,

- limited time for school maintenance and repairs that are typically done in summer, and

- the loss of the teen summer workforce.

Balanced single-track 45-15. This model has 45 days of instruction followed by 15 days of break. The school year typically starts in September and finishes in early August. All students follow the same instructional and vacation calendar during the school year. Remedial and enrichment opportunities are offered during weeks of intersession that are scheduled throughout the school year, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Balanced 60-20. This model can be a single-track or multi-track calendar. In the multi-track model, students are assigned to one of several tracks, at least one track of students is on break at any point in the year (Depro & Rouse, 2015). Multi-track calendars have been viewed as a cost-effective option for schools experiencing overcrowding (Cooper et al., 2003; Daneshvary & Clauretie, 2001; Merino, 1983). This model has 60 days of instruction followed by 20 days of break. The school year is divided into trimesters beginning in September and ending in August. Remedial and enrichment opportunities are offered during weeks of intersession that are scheduled, each semester, one in the spring and one in the fall. This calendar is often used in schools with five tracks (Skinner, 2014).

Extended-year school calendar. This calendar adds school days to the calendar. The average number of days for this type of calendar is 220. This model varies from district to district (Pedersen, 2015). The purpose of an extended year calendar is to improve student

achievement by adding more instructional time. Communities have rejected this type of calendar, citing the cost of adding additional days to the school calendar could increase property taxes (Pedersen, 2015). Advocates of a traditional calendar have voiced concerns of an extended-year school calendar such as family vacation time, summer employment opportunities for students, and summer camps (Cook, 2005).

Extended school day. This model adds time to each school day. Most public schools operate on the standard 6.5 hours (Redd, Boccanfuso, Walker, Princiotta, Knewstub, & Moore, 2012). Extended school days are used to provide remediation, elective classes, or additional academic instruction (Pedersen, 2015). Some schools have extended the school day to provide afterschool childcare for their students. Schools can extend the school day on a short-term basis, such as providing afterschool sessions for a standardized exam.

Intersession instruction. The typical school year for most public schools in Virginia is the standard 180-day school year within nine months (September–June). Year-round calendars have been implemented for various reasons during the history of our educational system. Intersession weeks are cited as a major reason for improved performance among certain student subgroups (JLARC, 2012). Most often, a year-round school calendar redistributes the 180 days of instruction over 12 months.

In most cases, the total number of days is not necessarily increased, "rather, they reallocate existing instructional days across the year more evenly by dividing the traditional three-month summer vacation into shorter, more frequent breaks" (JLARC, 2012, p. ii). These breaks are known as intersessions. Intersession can be used for additional instruction or vacation time. In Virginia, during the 2011–2012 school year, only nine elementary schools operated on a year-round calendar (JLARC, 2012).

In 2012, many Virginia schools operating on a year-round calendar utilized a single-track calendar. The primary goal of these schools was to improve academic achievement. A distinctive trait of single-track year-round schools is the utilization of intersession weeks to provide extended learning activities. These intersession weeks provide an opportunity for remediation and enrichment.

Improving academic achievement is one of the main objectives of a single-track year-round calendar (Cooper et al., 1996). To examine the impact of year-round schools on academic achievement, the staff from JLARC conducted focus groups and interviews at the state, division, and school-level. Data analysis of SOL test scores from year-round schools in Virginia was conducted to assess students' performance over time.

This analysis of SOL test data showed that certain student subgroups attending year-round schools scored better than student subgroups on a traditional calendar (JLARC, 2012). Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students are more likely to experience improved test scores in a single-track year-round calendar model. "Timely and targeted intersession remediation can help these students avoid accumulated learning loss, which is especially important for subjects, such as math, that require students to master core concepts before they can move to new material" (JLARC, 2012, p. 4). Students who have inadequate educational opportunities outside the school setting benefit from the re-teaching of the recently taught concepts during the week of intersessions (JLARC, 2012).

While supplementary instruction is provided during intersessions, the core curriculum remains the same during the school year (JLARC, 2012). Remediation and enrichment opportunities are typically offered during intersession weeks. Many year-round schools in Virginia reported designing enrichment courses that were directly linked to SOLs. Enrichment

activities focus on offering students unique learning opportunities that would most likely not be possible on a traditional calendar. During intersession, students are strongly encouraged to participate, specifically those who have been identified as requiring remediation.

Intersession weeks and a reduced summer break may benefit certain students (JLARC, 2012). Interviews of the faculty of the nine Virginia elementary year-round schools found that it is a commonly held belief that students benefit from attending intersession. Most agreed that students benefit from the enrichment and remediation activities offered during the intersession weeks and that the shorter summer break helped to reduce academic decline that students normally experienced over summer (JLARC, 2012). The number and the length of intersessions vary from school to school. Some schools offer only a half-day while others offer full-day instruction.

When comparing student attendance during intersession weeks, Virginia reported 80% or more of the students attending intersession compared to 10 to 20 percent of the students in other states (JLARC, 2012). Some schools rely on teacher referrals to identify students for remediation, while many other schools offering intersession weeks rely on assessment results to identify students needing remediation. "Students identified for remediation courses may be 'invited,' but are often required or strongly encouraged to attend intersession courses in their areas of weakness" (JLARC, 2012, p. 10).

Small to moderate increases in total school expenditures for schools operating on a year-round calendar have been reported (JLARC, 2012). The cost of additional extended learning activities during intersession weeks was found to be the leading cause of the increase in spending. On average, Virginia year-round schools spent 3 percent more per pupil annually. Much of the funds used were to pay staff to teach students during the intersession weeks. Other

notable non-instructional expenditures included food services and transportation.

Educational Change

SVCPS experienced a drastic change in its demographics during the 1990s due to an increasing number of Hispanic students. As a result, SVCPS implemented changes in curriculum and instructional practices, professional development opportunities, and added English as a Second Language teacher and paraprofessional positions in the division. Later, after receiving a grant to study year-round school options, the school system formed a calendar committee that claimed that a balanced calendar would aide in providing additional help to students, specifically those identified as economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and students with special education needs. One distinguishing aspect of the balanced calendar is intersession. For the teacher, these weeks of instruction offer a change in the daily schedule, instructional practices, and the curriculum itself. For this study, it was important to consider theories of change to understand teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities offered during intersession weeks.

Change and stability. A fundamental principle of Cuban's theory of change and stability is that stability requires change (1992). Cuban (1984) categorized change as "incremental" or "fundamental" (p. 3). Incremental changes are changes intended to correct deficiencies in organizational procedures and policies. "Incremental change, also called first-order change, refers to the things we do to make improvements to existing practices, without altering structural issues like how the school is organized or how teachers perform their roles" (Stivers & Cramer, 2009, p. 30). In contrast, a fundamental change is a change that alters the organizational structure. "Fundamental change (also called second-order change) takes place when there is a sense that the current structures are not working and need to be transformed"

(Stivers & Cramer, 2009, p. 30).

Both change and stability are constants in every institution in society. Institutions must maintain routine procedures while implementing small and large changes. Reformers seek change that will revolutionize the institution (Cuban, 2012). Not all changes are necessarily transformative. Reformers often disregard the daily changes that occur since these changes do not appear to be at the level of transformative change. Another guiding principle in implementing any school reform that is often overlooked is the importance of clearly and publicly communicating to stakeholders the theory of change that drives the proposed reform (Cuban, 2012). Those who are expected to alter their work should understand the change being implemented.

The categories of adopters. Everett Rogers (2002) developed diffusion of innovations theory to explain the facets of how, why, and what rate new ideas and technology spread. Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated among the participants in a social system over time. Even though individuals may differ in socio-economic status, education, locality, and even in their readiness to adapt to a change, there exists a common and predictable pattern to how people deal with change. Rogers (2002) uses the term *innovativeness* to describe "the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system" (p. 990). In general, people can be grouped into one of the following five categories of innovativeness: (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, and (e) laggards (Rogers, 2002).

Innovators are the risk-takers (Rogers, 2002). These are usually the first to embrace innovation. When the benefits of the innovation start to appear, the next group to adopt the change are the early adopters. The enthusiasm and leadership of early adopters can provide

energy and leverage during the initial adoption stage of the change (Hargreaves, 2005). The early majority may take some time before completely adopting a new program. This group seldom takes a leadership role in innovation (Rogers, 2002). The late majority often has a high degree of skepticism and adopts the innovation because of pressure from their peers. The last group to adopt is the laggards; they are suspicious of change and seek to continue to do things in a traditional way (Rogers, 2002).

This distribution of the five categories of adopters follows a normal curve distribution (Rogers, 2002). Innovators represent the initial 2.5% of the individuals to adopt an innovation. The next 13.5% to adopt an innovation are the early adopters, followed by the early majority, which represents 34% of the individuals to adopt an innovation. The next 34% are the late majority. The last group of individuals to adopt an innovation are laggards, making up 16% (Rogers, 2002).

Fullan's meaning of change. Change can come about from voluntary actions or imposed involuntary actions. Either way, there are commonalities in how we respond to change. Fullan (2016) claims that understanding educational change requires not only understanding the meaning of change but also the process of change. Change is multidimensional. There are at least three dimensions in implementing any new educational change: materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs. All three components of change are needed to reach the desired educational outcomes of the initiative. Fullan (2016) posits that the change must occur in practice along the three dimensions for it to have a chance of affecting the outcome. Change in practice may occur at the teacher, school, or district levels.

The meaning of change becomes more complex the larger reform. Large-scale reform is difficult to accomplish because it involves individual and social change that requires shared

meaning (Fullan, 2016). Socially meaningful change in complex times will almost always be difficult to accomplish. The daily demands of classroom teachers can make the implementation of reform difficult (Huberman, 1983). Fullan (2016) makes a distinction between surface meaning and deep meaning. Surface meaning is most common in the educational setting. In contrast, deep meaning only happens when infrastructures and processes are developed "that engage teachers in developing and applying new knowledge, skills, and understandings" (p. 27).

The more commonly accepted model of the change process has three stages: (a) initiation, or adoption, (b) implementation, and (c) continuation (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Fullan (2016) expands on each of the phases of change noting that they are not linear but are more circular because "events at one phase can feed back to alter decisions made at previous stages, which then proceed to work their way through in a continuous interactive way" (p. 56). At the initiation or adoption phase, someone promotes or initiates a program. The next phase is when the change initiative moves to a phase of implementation, which can be a two-to-three-year process. The third phase is continuation or institutionalization. Fullan (2016) recommended evaluating the impact of a change initiative by considering how each of these three stages relates to outcomes, particularly student learning. The implementation of any reform should be considered when evaluating the results of a change initiative. For a change initiative to be successful, the implementation must be consistent and result in shared meaning. Superficial implementation often may have the appearance of consistent implementation but a lack of shared meaning and consensus among the teachers (Fullan, 2016).

Another outcome to consider is the organizational capacity that is the capacity to manage future change. The objectives of the change will frame the outcomes. The expected results can be measured by determining the degree of improvement in each objective. Common analysis of

change looks for "improved student learning and attitudes; new skills, attitudes, or satisfaction on the part of teachers and other school personnel; or improved problem-solving capacity of the school as an organization" (Fullan, 2016, p. 56).

Furthermore, because change is complex, challenging, and at times frustrating, Fullan (2009) advocated both focus and flexibility. The concept that best captures this notion is resilience. "Persistence and resilience are important because people often start with grand intentions and aspirations, but gradually lower them over time in the face of obstacles" (Fullan, 2009, p. 20). A better interpretation of facing obstacles is seeing them as opportunities to resolve issues so you can attain higher targets instead of problems that cause one to lower their expectations and goals.

Fullan (2010) provides a framework for improving leadership in the change process. The framework is composed of five interrelated components: moral purpose, core business, organizational improvement, developing others, and outward-facing. Moral purpose should be the centerpiece driving the change (Fullan, 2010). It is this idea, or "calling" that the higher purpose is to serve all children. Knowledge is also the main change force that drives success (Fullan, 2016). "Making a difference in the lives of students requires care, commitment, and passion as well as the intellectual know-how to do something about it" (Fullan, 2016, p.18).

Building upon years of research, Fullan (2009) identified principles that will increase the chances for success in implementing change. First, strategic planning helps advance and mold ideas and actions required to make the needed changes. Next, large-scale reform involves integrating pressure as well as support. Overcoming the fear of change will help in successful implementation. Another principle is to make clear distinctions between technical problems and adaptive problems. Besides, it is important to know the "implementation dip" (Fullan, 2009, p.

17). Finally, challenges will arise, so persistence is required in engaging others in change.

Implementation dip. Fullan (2001) defined this phenomenon as "a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings" (p. 40). The lack of technical knowledge and the fear of change itself are two problems commonly experienced during the implementation dip. During this phase, it is important that leaders still operate with a strong sense of moral purpose while measuring success in terms of results (Fullan, 2001). Keeping the organization going is essential at this stage of the implementation. Fullan (2009) found "since change involves grappling with new beliefs and understandings and new skills, competencies, and behaviors, changes will not go smoothly in the early stages of implementation (even if there has been implementation preparation)" (p. 18). Even changes that are notable and worthwhile will have an awkward learning period. Strategies such as an increase in support and training can help reduce the duration of the implementation dip; of course, this depends on the complexity of the change. Fullan (2009) warned that not recognizing the implementation dip might result in people giving up without giving the idea a fighting chance.

The coherence framework. Fullan and Quinn (2016) developed a coherence framework to provide a road map for leaders in education to help implement and sustain change to accomplish maximum results. The four essential components of this framework are: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. These are not linear but work simultaneously. Focusing direction can be thought of as developing a point of departure. Collaborative cultures, or professional capital, sharpens and clarifies the direction of the change.

Deep learning occurs when students experience authentic engagement in real-world

challenges (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018). Deep learning requires new pedagogies to be built upon these four components: learning partnerships, learning environments, pedagogical practices, and leverage digital ubiquitously. Innovation must be tied to these components to accomplish deep learning.

The fourth component of the coherence model is securing accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Too little accountability will result in a lack of focus. Too much accountability may result in people becoming demotivated, causing them to try to avoid this part, which may cause a distraction to the process. Individual accountability is present when individually and collectively, a group has a sense of responsibility to each other (Fullan, 2011). No amount of external accountability will be effective in the absence of internal accountability (Carnoy, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003). Individual accountability precedes external accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Relationships matter. Fullan (2009) advocated working together to build and strengthen the capacity to achieve meaningful change. Capacity building relationships can impact the phases of change. Donohoo (2017) affirmed that change is reliant on relationships within a system. Wheatley (1992) found that organizations are impacted and influenced by relationships. The dynamics of professional relationships directly influence the change process.

Over the last decade, the study of educational change has shifted from how to implement a reform initiative on how to build capacity for those involved (Fullan, 2016). Research has shown that there are no one-size-fits-all set of rules for achieving change (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984; Fullan, 1999; Huberman & Miles, 1994). What works in one setting might not work in another setting.

When evaluating educational change, leaders should consider the collective efficacy

beliefs of the staff by examining the conditions to determine the degree of support that is present to promote the proposed change (Donohoo, 2017). Determining the degree of support is necessary to establish the next steps. This evaluation process should not be a one-time event but a "cycle of inquiry" (Donohoo, 2017, location 1836). Teachers are empowered when they are involved in meaningful decisions in the change process.

Cost and benefits of change. Educational change can have a short-term and long-term impact. When evaluating the impact of a change initiative, it is important to consider the cost and benefits of the change. Reeves (2016) places educational change initiatives into four possible categories: easy cuts, turkeys, heroes, and investments.

- *Easy cuts* have low costs and low benefits.

- *Turkeys* represent high-cost, low-benefit programs.

- *Heroes* high benefits with low-cost opportunities

- *Investments,* both the costs and benefits are high.

The cost and benefits of an initiative can predict the life span of the program (Reeves, 2016). Easy-cuts initiatives can be easily discarded and fall by the wayside, while turkeys may seem to be never-ending. Many technology initiatives are examples of turkey programs. Fullan (2014) found that numerous expensive technology initiatives produced little change in students' collaboration, exploration, and model building; instead, the technology was used mostly for information retrieval. These high costs, low benefits programs are often sponsored by groups with powerful political connections (Reeves, 2016).

Heroes are initiatives that are high benefits and low cost. At first thought, it might seem that these programs would be easily adopted and sustained. Yet, it is incredibly challenging to convince others that low-cost, high-benefit initiatives are worth the effort (Reeves, 2016).

Investment initiatives are high cost and produce a high benefit. The rare technology initiative that has a positive impact on student achievement would be an example of investment.

Limited Research in Rural Education

SVCPS could be classified as a remote town since it has a territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area (Institute of Education Sciences & National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; VDOE, 2009b). It is important to note that rural schools often serve minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Lichter, Roscigno, & Condron, 2003). This is the case for SVCPS. Despite this fact, Hardré (2008) found that there is limited systematic research, only about 6% of the published K–12 teacher research in rural settings. Cheatham and Williams (2016) noted that research, public policy, and humanitarian efforts have failed to address the distinct challenges rural localities face when trying to reduce the "opportunity gaps to bring about more equitable educational outcomes between rural and non-rural children" (p. 231).

Doing more with less is something many rural schools have done consistently throughout the years. Recognizing the limited research in rural areas, the National Science Foundation has called for more research in rural communities and schools (2001, 2009, and 2017).

Teachers' Perspectives Generally

Teacher experiences and perspectives are powerful resources. This researcher sought to understand teachers' perspectives on the influence of extended learning activities on student achievement; therefore, it is appropriate to review the literature on this topic. The ESSA (2015) included measures to provide more opportunities for teacher training and teacher leadership. Unfortunately, teachers' voices have been underutilized in education, even in the wake of the

reauthorization of the ESSA (Quaglia & Lande, 2017). Teachers must be heard if positive change is to occur in schools. Hattie (2014), after years of extensive research and analysis, found that teachers are one of the most commanding influences in student learning. Erickson (1982) contended that teachers' insights about learning are a vital part of students' learning environment.

Teachers prefer to learn from each other. Fullan (2016) found a strong body of evidence that supports the notion that teachers prefer to gain ideas from other teachers. Yet, it must be noted that evidence exists that leaders must take steps to promote occasions for teachers to interact with each other in focused collaborative communities; otherwise, opportunities will be limited (Fullan, 2016).

Over the past few decades, many school systems in the United States and other western countries have placed major emphasis on improving student achievement, especially in reading, mathematics, and science (Biesta, 2015). Improving in these narrow domains has been viewed by some in education as the primary purpose of schooling. One result of this type of thought is that students are viewed as being successful if they achieve high levels of proficiency in these isolated domains (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). Hattie (2014), after years of extensive research and analysis, identified the following six signposts for excellence in the school setting:

1. Teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning.

2. Teachers need to be directive, influential, caring, and actively and passionately engaged in the process of teaching and learning.

3. Teachers need to be aware of what each and every student in their class is thinking and what they know, be able to construct meaning and meaningful experiences in light of this knowledge of the students, and have proficient

knowledge and understanding of their subject content so that they can provide meaningful and appropriate feedback such that each student moves progressively through the curriculum levels.

4. Teachers and students need to know the learning intentions and the criteria for student success for their lessons, know how well they are attaining these criteria for all students, and know where to go next in light of the gap between students' current knowledge and understanding and the success criteria of "Where are you going?" "How are you going?" and "Where to next?"

5. Teachers need to move from the single idea to multiple ideas, and to relate and then extend these ideas such that learners construct, and reconstruct, knowledge and ideas. It is not the knowledge or ideas, but the learner's construction of this knowledge and ideas that is critical.

6. School leaders and teachers need to create schools, staffrooms, and classroom environments in which error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, in which discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed, and in which teachers can feel safe to learn, re-learn, and explore knowledge and understanding. (pp. 18–19)

Quaglia and Lande (2017) identified principles that affect the sharing of perspectives by teachers. These principles are self-worth, engagement, and purpose. These principles should be cultivated, especially for novice teachers.

The first principle is self-worth. It is important that teachers feel accepted for who they are as an individual and professional (Quaglia & Lande, 2017). There must be a safe environment where expressing varying views is respected and not ridiculed. Teachers

experience self-worth when they have a sense of accomplishment for their labors. Quaglia and Lande (2017) found it is beneficial for teachers to have a mentor, someone who is regarded as a hero, a person who is considered trustworthy.

The next principle that guides teachers in sharing their perspectives is engagement. Engagement occurs in learning and teaching environments that are creative and promote risk-taking in a safe setting (Quaglia & Lande, 2017). Teachers are willing to take risks because they do not fear negative repercussions of a failure or a success. Teachers experience engagement when they enjoy what they do. They have fun!

The third principle is purpose. Purpose occurs when teachers take roles of leadership (Quaglia & Lande, 2017). Teachers develop a sense of purpose when they are viewed as professionals and are given a chance to apply their knowledge and skills. Teachers with purpose take responsibility for their actions. Teachers with purpose have confidence that what they do will have a positive impact on others. Quaglia and Lande (2017) admitted that purpose is the most challenging principle to develop, but it is the most important in influencing teachers to share their perspectives.

Quaglia and Lande (2017) noted that these guiding principles increase self-efficacy. These guiding principles support overall school improvement programs. Ignoring these guiding principles has a negative effect on self-efficacy. The absence of these principles correlates with the increased occurrence of teachers' attrition and dissatisfaction, especially during the first years of their teaching careers (Quaglia & Lande, 2017).

Teachers' perspectives on a balanced calendar. A year-round calendar has been shown to provide more flexibility in teacher planning and flexibility, which can have a positive influence on teachers' working conditions and job satisfaction (Anderson & Walberg, 1998).

Haser and Nasser (2003) found that teachers who had previously taught in a traditional calendar noted several benefits of a year-round calendar: "more professional choices and flexibility and increased job satisfaction" (p. 67).

Haser and Nasser (2005) conducted qualitative case studies to research year-round education in three Title I, elementary schools. The schools were Title I school because at least 40% of the student population were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Title I schools receive additional federal funds for instruction. Teachers in these studies were overall positive about the modified calendars, especially regarding intersession and the weeks of breaks spread out throughout the school year. The teachers in the study earned additional pay for teaching during intersession.

Teachers from these case studies expressed the following benefits:

- The opportunity to earn additional pay for teaching during intersession

- The opportunity to co-teach and team with other teachers and other professionals not employed by the school as a K–6 teacher but contracted for intersession

- The opportunity to travel and take a vacation during the off-season

- The opportunity for professional reflection and de-stress

- The enhanced educational opportunity for students

- The additional support of the curriculum through activities during intersession

One distinguishing aspect of the balanced calendar is intersession. For the teacher, these weeks of instruction offer changes in the daily schedule, instructional practices, and the curriculum itself. It was important to consider theories of change to understand teachers' perspectives on the influence of extended learning activities during intersession weeks.

When implementing changes, such as a calendar initiative, teachers must be included in the planning and execution of the change (Pedersen, 2015).

Cuban (2008) describes the research on school calendars to be "skimpy" (p. 244), lacking the rigor and longevity of empirical studies. Further, Cuban (2008) states teachers' perspectives regarding the use of time and school have been disregarded for decades. This study will help address the gap in research by hearing the voices of teachers regarding the influence of extended learning activities in intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting.

Teachers' perspectives on learning. It is important to consider research on effective teaching strategies that promote student achievement. A teacher's view of his or her role in student learning is a key premise to learning. It is the perceptions that teachers have about their role in the learning process that creates a mind-frame that affects student learning (Hattie, 2014). Of course, teachers need to use research-based methods and data to drive instructional practices, but effective teachers view themselves as "evaluators of their effect on students" (Hattie, 2014, p. 31). Successful teachers

- focus on students' cognitive engagement with the content of what it is that is being taught;

- focus on developing a way of thinking and reasoning that emphasizes problem-solving and teaching strategies relating to the content that they wish students to learn;

- focus on imparting new knowledge and understanding, and then monitor how students gain fluency and appreciation in this new knowledge;

- focus on providing feedback in an appropriate and timely manner to help students to attain the worthwhile goals of the lesson;

- seek feedback about their effect on the progress and proficiency of all of their

    students;

- have deep understanding about how we learn; and

- focus on seeing learning through the eyes of the students, appreciating their fits

    and starts in learning, and their often non-linear progressions to the goals,

    supporting their deliberate practice, providing feedback about their errors and

    misdirection, and caring that the students get to the goals and that the students

    share the teacher's passion for the material being learned. (Hattie, 2014, p. 19)

A teacher's perspective on student achievement may depend on the teacher's mindset. Dweck (2006) determined that everyone has a mindset toward learning. These mindsets have been shown to influence student achievement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). Dweck (2006) found that teachers who believe that student achievement is changeable are more successful than teachers who view student achievement as fixed.

A growth mindset is not just about beliefs. It requires coordinating action. Dweck (2015) cautions that many teachers who say they have a growth mindset do not. Research indicates that it is not enough for a teacher to agree or even declare that student achievement is changeable; it must be a core belief followed by actions in the classroom (Sun, 2015). Teachers who understand the effect of having a growth mindset will do whatever it takes to promote learning in their students (Dweck, 2015).

When considering the perspectives of teachers who are providing enrichment and remedial learning activities during the weeks of intersession of a balanced calendar, it was beneficial to consider the influence of the teachers' mindsets. It was expected that teachers with a growth mindset had a more positive expectancy about the impact of the intersession week on

student achievement. Teachers with a growth mindset were expected to be more likely to plan lessons that were rich and suited to their students' needs. Teachers with a more fixed mindset might not believe that the time spent during intersession weeks makes any significant difference in student achievement. These teachers might not spend as much time planning and preparing extended learning activities for the intersession week.

Teachers' perspectives on remediation and enrichment. Self-efficacy can influence teachers' views of remediation and enrichment activities. DuFour and DuFour (2010) noted that in schools with effective remediation and enrichment programs, teachers are more likely to have higher self-efficacy and higher collective efficacy. In these schools, the belief that the teachers together can positively influence student achievement has greater influence in creating an environment of high expectancy than the teachers' beliefs in their students' ability alone.

A teacher's self-efficacy can influence their approach to remediation. Teachers who have collective efficacy are more likely to take on challenging activities (Donohoo, 2017). Teachers who have a high sense of collective efficacy are more prone to persevere with more challenging students because they believe that together they can meet these students' needs. Teachers with high self-efficacy see the failure of their students as motivation for increased teacher effort (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

A teacher's persistence can play a role in the success of a remediation program. Goddard et al. (2000) found that collective teacher efficacy influences a teacher's persistence as well as the degree of effort they give daily. Teacher persistence has been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) noted: "school staffs with high collective teacher efficacy display persistence and resiliency when working with students who are having difficulty improving achievement levels" (p. 194).

A teacher's self-efficacy can influence their perspective on enrichment. Teachers with higher self-efficacy have a greater willingness to try new approaches with pedagogy (Donohoo, 2017). Enrichment activities are beyond the scope of the tested standards. Enrichment provides opportunities for students to improve academically, improve socially, and explore interests. Enrichment activities may require more planning and preparation than the average daily lesson. Teachers with greater self-efficacy are more likely to try new activities during the week of intersession.

Teachers' perspectives on parental relationships. The importance of parental involvement in education has been recognized for decades (Department of Education and Science, 1967). Epstein and Dauber (1988) researched elementary and middle school teachers' and parents' attitudes and practices of parent involvement. Overall, most teachers expressed a positive attitude toward parental involvement. Elementary school programs that targeted parental involvement were more structured and positive than the middle schools in the study. Jacobson (2005) reported that most new teachers believe that working well with parents is required to be effective as a teacher and that this is one of the greatest challenges they face. Teachers' approach toward parental involvement can influence parental involvement (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Teachers who use different methods of communication, such as emails, newsletters, webpage, phone calls, or remind apps are more likely to see increased parent participation.

Bryk and Schneider's (2002) work on school and community relationships in Chicago demonstrates the influence of teachers' perspectives can have on parental involvement. The following four components must be present to have relational trust between school and

community: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Bryk and Schneider

(2002) found that in low-trust schools,

> Teachers criticized parents for their lack of interest in education, family drug
>
> dependency, and unemployment. They complained that much in their students' home
>
> structures impeded learning, and they took a generally dim view of the quality of
>
> parenting that was occurring. (p. 48)

In contrast, in high-trust schools, "teachers constantly spoke about the importance of

respecting parents, regardless of their background or education achievement. Although many

students came from troubled homes, teachers did not attempt to distance themselves from their

students or their families" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 84).

Collective teacher efficacy can predict parental involvement for a school (Ross & Gray,

2006). The more confident teachers are in their abilities, the more likely parents are welcomed

and included in the school. Parental involvement can present challenges for teachers. Teachers

may face criticism or negative feedback with increased involvement of parents. Still, staff with

high collective teacher efficacy is more likely to face these challenges to encourage parental

participation.

Several studies and meta-analyses have found that parental involvement influences

students' academic achievement (Castro, Expósito-Casas, López-Martín, Lizasoain, Navarro-

Asencio, & Gaviria, 2015, 2015; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005,

2007, 2014; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Wilder, 2014). Effective parental

involvement promotes parent-teacher relationships, increases teacher morale, and contributes to a

positive school climate (Hornby, 2011). Hattie (2008) found that the effect size for parental

involvement on student academic achievement is 0.51. The effect size was used to provide "a

common expression of the magnitude of study outcomes for many types of outcome variables, such as school achievement" (p. 9). For example, an effect size of $d = 1$ would indicate a one standard deviation increase. In the case of student achievement, this would be like advancing a child's academic achievement by two or three years, which would be a 50% increase in the rate of learning. When implementing a program, an effect size of 1 would indicate that the students receiving the treatment did better than 84% of the students not receiving the treatment.

Summary

Teachers had an important role in providing extended learning opportunities to students during intersession weeks in a balanced calendar. The choices of school calendars are influenced by many factors. Some modified calendars are chosen to address over-crowding while others are adopted to help address the academic needs of students. Recent state grant initiatives have encouraged schools to explore and implement year-round school options (VDOE, 2016). SVCPS received a state grant that was used to fund the balanced calendar initiative.

This type of change in the school calendar is a fundamental or second-order change (Cuban, 1988). The success of these calendar initiatives is influenced by the teachers affected by the change (Fullan, 2016; Hattie, 2014). In this study, information was collected from participants to identify ways in which the implementation of calendar changes could promote student achievement. Teachers who see improving student learning as a moral purpose might view the change in the calendar as meaningful and worthwhile. Considering the teachers' views of the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement was vital information for this current change brought on by the balanced calendar and for similar change initiatives in the future. As Fullan (2016) stated, "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it's as simple and as complex as that" (p. 97).

Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory contributes knowledge to the influences of behaviors and motivation of students and teachers. Intersession weeks are opportunities to improve student learning by modeling and reinforcing what has been previously taught in the classroom. Intersession weeks provide opportunities for students to be exposed to more hands-on and real-world experiences. When teachers observe other teachers having a positive experience and positive results during the intersession weeks, they are more likely to be encouraged to expect positive results from the extended learning activities that they plan and implement. A component of Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy directly relate to this study. Teachers' beliefs about their ability to produce results affect the effort they give. Teachers must feel confident that they can implement a change. When teachers are confident that they can implement the change, then their self-efficacy and collective efficacy will increase. Teachers with high self-efficacy would be expected to view the extended learning activities as worthwhile opportunities for students. Teachers that are members of a school that has high collective teacher efficacy are more likely to view the opportunity to offer remedial and enrichment opportunities using the extended learning activities as a worthwhile endeavor.

The location for this study was in a rural setting. There is a gap in the literature on K-12 public school teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement in a balanced calendar in a rural setting. Furthermore, limited studies exist that have used a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the essence of the shared experiences of teachers who teach in a balanced calendar. There have been preliminary studies that have indicated the crux of the success of the balanced calendar will be the academic achievement of students in specific subgroups (Cooper et al. 2003; JLARC, 2012). More

systematic research of rural school divisions such as SVCPS that serve minority and

socioeconomically disadvantaged populations is needed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement at a small rural school division in Southwest Virginia during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar. This study addressed the gap in the literature regarding the influence. This study addressed the gap in the literature regarding the effect of the Extended School Year Grant Program by describing teachers' perspectives on the balanced calendar and extended learning activities in a rural school setting. For this research, teachers' perspectives were studied. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus groups served as the data collection method in this phenomenological research study to allow teachers to share their perspectives and experiences. This chapter gives an overview of the research design, including the rationale for the selection of the school system, the participant criteria, the plan used for data collection, and the data analysis. The trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations are addressed in this chapter.

Design

This study is a qualitative study using the transcendental phenomenology design. A qualitative study was appropriate for this research because the focus was on the "wholeness of the experience . . . searching for meanings and essences of the experience rather than the measurements and explanations" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). A phenomenological approach was best for this study because phenomenological studies seek to explore not only what has been experienced individually but also considers the overall experiences of a related group of individuals (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) highlighted two types of phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and the transcendental phenomenology.

Hermeneutical phenomenology is research that is founded on lived experiences and then interpreted through the "texts" of life (van Manen, 1990). Transcendental phenomenology entails a setting aside of preconceived ideas regarding a phenomenon and then experiencing them with a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental approach focused less on the researcher's interpretations and more on the description of the experiences of the participants. Moustakas (1994) built on Edmund Husserl's (1931) idea of epoche. Epoche, also known as bracketing, occurs when the researcher sets aside their personal experiences to better perceive the phenomenon with a fresh perspective (Creswell, 2013). This study sought to examine the teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement in a rural setting. A qualitative design was selected for this study because of the inductive, explorative nature of the research. A transcendental approach allowed for the investigation of the phenomenon from the teachers' perspective and focused on their experiences and descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the participants' descriptions of their experiences are the primary source of knowledge. This research focused on the descriptions of experiences, not personal analysis or rationalizations (Moustakas, 1994). The study used purposeful sampling. The participants were teachers in a small rural school system in Virginia that implemented a balanced calendar, which included two weeks of intersession. The intersession weeks were designated for remediation and enrichment opportunities that offer extended learning activities. The study used face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The data collection techniques and methods of this investigation were appropriate and have been applied in qualitative studies using a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013).

The study used a transcendental phenomenological research design. The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1931) is credited with first developing the human scientific study of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) acknowledged that a transcendental phenomenology approach is appropriate when the researcher wants to try to eliminate presupposition or prejudgment. Eliminating presupposition or prejudgment requires the researcher to look openly at things while not being moved by the habits of the natural world. The task is to describe things as they are. This process requires the researcher to merge "what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings: thus a unity of the real and the ideal" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27). Achieving this unity happens within the realms of intuition and self-reflection.

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used for this research since the aim was to examine the perspectives of teachers who provided extended learning activities in a balanced calendar, using the procedures established by Moustakas (1994). Transcendental phenomenology aims to examine the shared experiences of a phenomenon with a fresh perspective while consciously removing any bias, assumptions, and prejudgment (Moustakas, 1994). This method requires the researcher to engage in epoche or bracketing. The transcendental approach required me as the researcher to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Epoche is important to help the researcher better understand how the phenomenon is experienced by the participants and not just how the phenomenon is perceived by the researcher. The participants in this study were viewed as joint contributors and investigators to the findings of the research, which was consistent with the transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) noted one purpose of phenomenological research is to provide findings that may be used to influence future research. The researcher becomes an expert on the studied topic. Being the expert requires looking at prior findings from previous research. It was expected that the research would develop new knowledge throughout the study, which could help shape future studies that could extend and deepen the knowledge on the topic. Since the adoption of a new calendar was the result of a grant sponsored by the Virginia General Assembly (JLARC, 2012), it was important to provide research that may be used in future studies of extended school year incentive programs.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement?

RQ2. What are teachers' perspectives about the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as an enrichment effort?

RQ3. What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar?

Setting

The setting for the study was a small school system in an independent city in the southwestern part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Pseudonyms were assigned to the site, the participating school division, and individual schools within the division. The pseudonym of the city is Small Virginia City, and the pseudonym of the school division is Small Virginia City Public Schools (SVCPS) system. The school district is composed of one elementary school (SVES), one middle school (SVMS), and one high school (SVHS).

Small Virginia City

Nestled in southern Appalachia, with a population of just over 7,000, Small Virginia City

was founded in 1906. The city's population slowly grew to 2,500 in the 1930 Census and

surpassed 5,000 in the 1950 Census (Forstall, 1995). The population growth continued at a

steady pace with 6,000 in 1970 and 7,000 in the 2000 Census. Racial demographics show a

small but steady population of African Americans throughout the city's existence, with a

noticeable emergence of Hispanics in the 2000 census, increasing slightly in the 2010 census, as

shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Small Virginia City Demographics by Race

Year	African American	Hispanic	Other	White
1910	N/A			755
1930	148		17	2379
1950	327		24	4897
1970	338		7	5933
1980	311		16	6127
2000	428	757	31	5887
2010	439	989	7 (American Indian and Alaska Native); 37 (Asian); 8 (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander)	6044

In the past, the city's industry consisted of the manufacture of furniture, textiles, mirrors,

and hardwood flooring. In addition to industry, residents have found employment in bordering

counties on Christmas-tree, apple, and cabbage farms. With the recent decline in the economy,

the city has endured the closing of several factories, leaving many of its citizens unemployed.

The unemployment rate for 2013 was 8.5% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). For 2008–2012,

the number of citizens below the poverty level was 28.3%

A result of the decline in the economy and an increase in the unemployment rate is more citizens are going hungry. The findings of a study indicated that Small Virginia City has one of the highest rates in Virginia of people going hungry or experiencing "food insecurity," (as cited in Brooke, 2014, para 2). Brooke estimated that 1,060 people, or 15.2% of the population, do not have enough to eat. The city has several food banks and a soup kitchen to help address this issue. Another program focusing on hunger is the Backpack Buddies, a national program that has a local chapter that meets at the Presbyterian Church located downtown. Volunteers meet at the church on Thursdays during the school year to fill backpacks with nutritious meals. On Fridays, students who are registered for the program take home a backpack full of enough food to last for the weekend. One noted advantage of the balanced calendar is that students have an opportunity to attend school 10 additional days. During school days, students receive breakfast, lunch, and, if they participate in any after-school activity, an after-school snack.

Small Virginia City Public Schools

SVCPS is in the downtown district. The school division has an elementary school, middle school, high school, and central offices all within walking distance. The SVCPS School Board consists of five members who are appointed by the City Council. The school district's administration consists of a superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of student services, career and technical education coordinator/director of testing, three principals, and three assistant principals. In October 2013, the school system applied for and received a grant to fund the study of year-round school options. A year later, after receiving input from stakeholders, a balanced calendar was recommended and approved for implementation in the 2014–2015 school year. SVCPS serves 1,404 students in grades Pre-K through Grade 12 with 122 teachers. SVCPS has a diverse student population, with 65.8% of the student population identified as economically

disadvantaged, 17.2% as English language learners, and 10.3% as eligible for special education services.

Small Virginia Elementary School

SVES is a Pre-K through fourth grade, Title I school with approximately 500 students and 45 teachers, with 49% of the teachers having a master's degree (VDOE, 2014). The administration consists of one principal and one assistant principal. Additional support staff includes a guidance counselor, a secretary, a bookkeeper, a school nurse, and a resource officer. Racial/ethnic demographics are identified in Table 2.

Table 2

SVES Student Racial/Ethnic Group Demographics

Racial/ethnic group	Students (n)	Students (%)
White	336	58.8
Black/African American	46	8.0
Hispanic	166	29.0
Asian	*	*
Students with Disabilities	60	10.5
Economically Disadvantaged (Receiving free or reduced-price lunch)	404	70.7
Limited English Proficient	125	21.9

* Denotes fewer than 10 students in the subgroup population

Small Virginia Middle School

SVMS is located on the same campus as the high school. The schools share the cafeteria, library, and auditorium. The school consists of Grades 5, 6, and 7. There are approximately 300 students in the middle school and 36 teachers, five of these teachers also teach at the high school, with 40% of the teachers holding a master's degree. The administration consists of one principal and one assistant principal. Additional support staff includes a guidance counselor, a secretary/bookkeeper, a school nurse, and a resource officer. The resource officer is shared with the high school. Racial/ethnic demographics are identified in Table 3.

Table 3

SVMS Student Racial/Ethnic Group Demographics

Racial/ethnic group	Students (n)	Students (%)
White	191	64.0
Black/African American	23	7.8
Hispanic	69	23.0
Asian	*	*
Students with Disabilities	39	13.0
Economically Disadvantaged (Receiving free or reduced-price lunch)	195	65.1
Limited English Proficient	57	19.0

* Denotes fewer than 10 students in the subgroup population

Small Virginia High School

SVHS has approximately 530 students in Grades 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. There are 46 teachers, including five who also teach classes at the middle school. Forty-five percent attained a master's degree. The administration consists of one principal and one assistant principal. Additional support staff includes two guidance counselors, two secretaries, a bookkeeper, a school nurse, an athletic director, and a resource officer who is shared with the middle school. Racial/ethnic demographics are identified in Table 4.

Table 4

SVHS Student Racial/Ethnic Group Demographics

Racial/ethnic group	Students (n)	Students (%)
White	339	63.9%
Black/African American	47	8.8%
Hispanic	130	24.6%
Asian	*	*
Students with Disabilities	38	7.2%
Economically Disadvantaged (Receiving free or reduced-price lunch)	286	53.9%
Limited English Proficient	69	13.1%

* Denotes fewer than 10 students in the subgroup population.

Participants

In a transcendental phenomenological research study, participants are often thought of as co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Fraelich (1989) identified participants in a research study as being on "equal footing" (p. 68) with the researcher. This view of the participants helps establish a relationship between the researcher and co-researchers, where each participant can contribute their rich experiences during the interview. The participant becomes a truth-seeker regarding shared lived experiences of the phenomenon. A broad cross-section of participants was used to provide breadth and depth to the context. Teachers from the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels were selected. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants that have experienced the phenomenon of teachers providing extended learning activities in a balanced calendar (Moustakas, 1994).

Selection of Teacher Participants

Teachers were selected for participation based on

- Experience teaching during the week of intersession in a balanced calendar

- Overall teaching experience (1–3 years, 4–10, 11–19, and more than 20 years)

- Teaching assignment (classroom teacher, special education teacher, and specialty teacher)

A purposeful sampling strategy with maximum variation across school assignment, years of experience, and teaching assignment was applied (see Table 5).

Table 5

Selection of Participants Matrix

School	Years teaching in balanced calendar	Overall teaching experience	Teaching assignment
Elementary (SVES)			
Middle (SVMS)			
High (SVHS)			

The sample was 18 teachers, representing each school, with various teaching experiences, and saturation of data and themes was achieved (Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984; Moustakas, 1994; Riemen, 1986). A questionnaire was used to purposefully select participants. A research study consent form (Appendix E) was sent to prospective participants that outlined the purpose of the study and informed them of their confidentiality within the study. Each participant was asked to consent in writing to participate in the study. Consistent with the transcendental phenomenological approach, participants of the study were regarded as joint contributors and investigators to the findings of the research (Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures

No data was collected until the full submission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed, and the approval by the IRB was received. Once the IRB approved the study, a letter was sent to the superintendent through an email describing the plans for the study and asking for permission to complete the study within the school division (see Appendix F). After the superintendent approved the study, an email was sent to the principal of each school to set up a meeting to describe the research, ask for their participation, and ask for permission to contact teachers to participate (see Appendix G). A sampling frame helped to define the teachers who are eligible to participate in this study (Given, 2008). The principals of each school provided a list of teachers that had previously taught during the weeks of intersession. After verifying site approval, all the identified teachers were emailed. The email contained information about the study, along with the informed consent form, which included consent for audio recording individual and focus group interviews for later transcription, as well as a link to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix H).

I met individually with each interested potential participant, explained the study, and answered any questions regarding this study.

The email invitation included a link to the questionnaire and informed consent. The questionnaire requested the grade-level the teachers instruct during the regular year, and the week of intersession, subject taught, years of teaching, and validation of teaching in a balanced calendar for one semester or more during the 2018–2019 school year or previous school years. I then contacted teachers who have experienced the phenomenon of developing and implementing extended learning activities in a balanced calendar to set up individual interviews. Participants were entered into a drawing to win one of five $20 gift cards.

This study used three types of data collection, including interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. All interviews were audio-recorded to guarantee the accuracy, then transcribed, and member checked for correctness. Data analysis employed systematic procedures that established guidelines for assembling the textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Data analysis consisted of coding and searching for notable statements and themes that helped uncover the essence of the shared experience for the study participants. Trustworthiness was accomplished by triangulation of multiple sources, member checking of transcripts, bracketing, and rich, thick descriptions. Creswell (2013) recognized trustworthiness as a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all add to the value and accuracy of the study. Ethical considerations were carried out by complying with the IRB policies and procedures to properly store and secure materials. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for site and participant names.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) are credited with introducing the idea of the researcher's unique role as a human instrument in scientific inquiry. The uniqueness is,

> Only people construct and bring meaning into the world through their qualities of sensitivity, responsiveness, and flexibility, making them the most appropriate instrument for inquiries aiming to arrive at understanding, meaning, the promotion of critical awareness, emancipation, and movement toward deconstruction or decolonization.
>
> (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013)

In qualitative design, the researcher is the key instrument that collects data through interviews of the participants, observations of behavior, and document analysis (Creswell, 2013). The researcher may use a questionnaire or instrument developed by other researchers, but most often, the questions used are designed by the researcher. As the human instrument in this study, my role is to serve in the capacity of a non-participant observer.

In a phenomenological approach, the researcher is the primary human instrument of data collection and data analysis, so the potential exists for research bias (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher can be influenced, consciously, or unconsciously, by his or her personal views and values which may align with or diverge from the participants of the study. Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) found this to be the case often, when "the researcher has a strong affinity with the population under study" (p. 1). Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) explained the researcher's ability to acknowledge one's views, opinions, values, and interests is important and can affect bracketing. Bracketing is used in phenomenological studies as a method of demonstrating validity. The researchers must be aware of their own beliefs and preconceptions before they can attempt to put them aside (Chan et al., 2013). As the human instrument of this study, I bracketed

or set aside my feelings, preconceptions, or assumptions associated with this phenomenon. I was

a parent a student of SVCPS, so I had preconceived ideas regarding the calendar. I believed that

there were advantages for my child attending SVCPS. My child was pursuing an advanced

studies diploma, and she participated in sports. When I was the instructional technology

resource teacher of SVCPS, I established relationships with many of the teachers in the school

district. One of my responsibilities in this position was to provide training and support to the

instructional technology needs of the teachers. I was not in a supervisory role over any of the

teachers in the school system. I highly respected the role of teachers in general; I aimed to

examine the "what" and "how" of the teachers' experiences (Moustakas, 1994) in providing

extended learning activities for students in a balanced calendar.

As an educator with much of my teaching experience in a rural school setting, the

discussion of year-round school has been limited if non- existent for the years I have been in

education. Year-round education was something done in larger school systems, not something

that you would expect in a rural school system in Southwest Virginia. Breaking from a

traditional school calendar for such a small school system was an interesting endeavor and one

that merits investigation. To understand the phenomenon of teachers providing extended

learning activities in a balanced calendar, I desired to give voice to the teachers' lived

experiences. Such research could foster motivation for future studies and provide practical

suggestions for others transitioning from a traditional calendar model to a balanced calendar.

I sought to gain understanding from the participant's perspective using a descriptive

paradigm to help shape the study. The philosophical assumptions that directed me to choose the

phenomenological lens for this study allowed me to use inductive logic and study the topic in

context (Creswell, 2013). An ontological stance implies that the "researcher reports different

perspectives as themes develop findings" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). As the researcher, I conducted the research from a Christian worldview, respecting the participants and acknowledging their worth and value, ensuring that the participants were informed and not deceived or misled as to the nature of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection

Data collection did not begin until receiving permission from the IRB and receiving informed consent from school administrators and all participants. The method of data collection in a qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study is more than following a list of procedures (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Data collection includes obtaining permissions, developing a sound qualitative sampling strategy, making decisions regarding how interviews will be recorded, then how the recordings will be stored, and anticipating and addresses ethical issues that may arise (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) recommended that the collection of data be systematic, disciplined, and orderly. Therefore, after obtaining approval from the IRB, I began a systematic, organized process for the collection of data for this study.

For this study, I used interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Data triangulation provided safeguards to the validity of a qualitative study (Schwandt, 2007). Qualitative researchers employ triangulation by using multiple and distinct methods, sources, theories, and at times, investigators to provide supporting evidence (Creswell, 2013; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2015). The process of obtaining corroborating evidence from different sources helps shed light on a perspective or emerging theme (Creswell, 2013).

Data was collected from individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. I developed an interview protocol using the initial research questions and possible

domains to develop interview questions (see Appendix A and C). Once initial interview questions were ready, they were tested for content validity. When content validation was complete, individual interviews were scheduled with participants at an agreed-upon time and place. The interviews took no longer than an hour. After individual interviews, I contacted the potential focus group participants to schedule focus group interviews. Focus groups were conducted at the elementary and middle school at an agreed-upon time. The focus group interviews lasted no longer than an hour. I recorded and transcribed data, then used phenomenological reduction to unveil any emerging themes or perspectives as part of the data analysis process (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Document review and analysis were conducted, including the review and analysis of any documents provided by the participants.

Individual Interviews

I conducted individual interviews with teachers at an agreed-upon time and location at the convenience of the participant. Creswell (2013) recommends determining the research questions to be answered by the interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and scheduled ahead of time to accommodate the participant's schedule and to minimize any disruption to instruction. The interviews took less than an hour. The interviews were semi-structured with questions that were open-ended, general, and focused on exploring the teachers' perspectives on the influence of extended learning activities conducted during the intersession weeks. Semi-structured interviews are often associated with qualitative interviewing (Warren, 2002). Brinkmann (2013) recognized one objective of qualitative research is "to provide a first-order understanding through concrete description" (p. 23). Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) literally applied the term *inter-view* as the interchange of views between two people having a dialogue on a topic of shared interest.

Furthermore, Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) defined the semi-structured qualitative research interview, "as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 3). In contrast to a structured interview, a semi-structured interview provides more flexibility to have dialogue and follow-up of viewpoints the interviewee feels to be important (Brinkmann, 2013). In comparison to an unstructured interview, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to maintain the focus of the discussion to stay on topics related to the research project.

Parker (2005) argued there is no such thing as a completely structured interview "because people always say things that spill beyond the structure, before the interview starts and when the recorder has been turned off" (p. 53). These comments are often key to understanding the interviewee's answer to the asked question (Brinkmann, 2013). In the same manner that there may be no such thing as a completely structured interview, Brinkmann (2013) argued that there is no such thing as a completely unstructured interview "since the interviewer always has an idea about what should take place in the conversation" (p. 18). Brinkmann (2013) further expanded on this thought by stating, "There are no such things as non-leading questions. All questions lead the interviewee in certain directions" (p. 19). Moustakas (1994) endorses using structured and semi-structured interviews to reveal the emotions, reflections, and judgments of participants. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to promote discussion. Giorgi (1997) noted, "Questions are generally broad and open-ended so that the subject has sufficient opportunity to express his or her viewpoint extensively" (p. 245). Of course, a concern with broad questions is it gives the participants opportunities to veer off-topic (Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured, open-ended questions instead of broad, open-ended questions can help keep the participants on the topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Development of interview protocol. An interview protocol was developed using the initial research questions, possible domains, and domain definitions (see Appendix C) as guides to develop interview questions (see Appendix A). I used an interview protocol to provide consistency and reliability to the study. All the individual interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for review by the researcher. Interviews took place at an agreed-upon location and time that was convenient for the participant and took no longer than one hour. A panel of experts was selected to review the interview items for content validation. I sharpened up interview questions and procedures with the help of the assistant superintendent of the Small City School Division and a distinguished college professor with over 40 years' experience in the education field. Sampson (2004) and Yin (2014) recommend refining questions and procedures through pilot testing. This technique helps develop research instruments and identify any observer bias (Creswell, 2013).

The interview questions, by design, reflected the research questions. The research questions frame what the researcher wants to understand, while the interview questions are designed to gain understanding from the participants (Maxwell, 2013). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) point out that although the research questions may be constructed in a "theoretical language" (p. 158), the interview questions should be "in the everyday language of the interviewees" (p. 158). As the researcher, I used my knowledge of the contexts of the study and my understanding of potential participants, to develop interview questions that were clear and accessible to participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The questions for the individual interviews were as follows:

1. Describe the setting and topic of your teaching assignment during the week of intersession.

Possible follow-up questions:

(a) Did you teach more than one session for any weeks of intersession?

(b) Was your session(s) remedial or enrichment in design?

2. Describe your preparation for the week of intersession.

3. Describe your students for the week of intersession.

Possible follow-up questions:

(a) How many students did you have?

(b) What was the grade(s) were your students?

(c) Had you taught all your students before?

4. Describe your experience during a week of intersession.

5. What advantages have you experienced with the balanced calendar?

6. What disadvantages have you experienced with the balanced calendar?

7. What influence has the intersession weeks had on your students academically?

8. How has the balanced calendar provided enrichment opportunities for your students?

9. If you could, what would you do differently during the next intersession week?

10. What would you recommend to other schools considering a balanced calendar?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience teaching in a balanced calendar?

Castillo-Montoya (2016) recommends creating a matrix to map out the interview to check the alignment of questions to the research questions. Furthermore, the development of this matrix can help identify any information gaps. A question matrix can also help the researcher determine if there need to be any additional questions added, or if any of the questions need to be

removed. I utilized a question matrix (Appendix B) to help evaluate the interview questions as to their relevance to the study.

Questions one through three, provided background information that was relevant to this study. These questions were introductory and helped set the stage for the interview to begin easily by asking for narrative descriptions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Questions four through six served as transition questions. These questions provided opportunities for the participants to get more comfortable describing experiences (Patton, 2015). Questions seven through eleven were key questions. Key questions, also referred to as main questions, are the interview questions that relate the most directly to the research questions and overall purpose of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). These questions typically provide the most relevant information to the study (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Question 12 served as a closing question. Closing questions help bring closure to the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Testing the interview protocol. The amended interview protocol was tested with a support staff member in the same division not used in the study. This test interview was not used in the study, but, like the participants in the study, they had experience teaching during the intersession week of a balanced calendar. The participant was selected as follows: An email will be sent to a support staff member who has previously taught a session during intersession week (see Appendix I). If they reply affirmatively, they were contacted to arrange an interview time and location for the interview. Written consent was obtained before the interviews began. The interview was recorded with the consent of the participant. When the test interview was completed, the test interview participant concluded their commitment to the study. The convenience and purposeful sample ensured that the test interview was conducted with support staff that was familiar with teaching during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar.

Test interview data was analyzed, and changes made as needed to the interview protocol. When this process was complete, interviews were scheduled with actual participants using the final interview protocol.

Administering the interview protocol. The administration of the interview protocol was completed in the following steps: scheduling the interviews, acquiring informed consent, and interviewing the participants. The interviews were scheduled with teachers at an agreed-upon time and location. At the beginning of the interview, using the final interview protocol, I greeted the participant, introduced myself, and reviewed the purpose of the study and the participants' role in the study. I went over the expectations for the participant. I provided the participant with a consent form, which we read together. I was available to answer any questions the participant might have. I obtained written consent (see Appendix E) from the participants, keeping a copy, and providing the participants a copy of the consent form. After receiving written consent, I conducted the interview using the final interview protocol.

When conducting the interviews, I asked one question at a time and tried to refrain from interrupting participants when they are speaking (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I acknowledged understanding and interest by nodding or other gestures. When appropriate, I asked clarifying questions as needed and provided transition statements from one topic to another, to express thanks to the participants, and, if necessary, made known any intentions to follow up before the end of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). After the participants took part in their individual recorded interview (if they consented to be recorded), their commitment to the study concluded.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews were conducted at the elementary and middle school. The focus group at the elementary school had six participants from that school. The focus group held at the

middle school had three participants from middle school and one participant from the high school. Focus groups are beneficial in qualitative research when the interviewees interact and cooperate (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007). Focus groups are often conducted at the preliminary or exploratory phases of a study (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In other instances, focus groups occur after the completion of a program to evaluate the impact or perhaps generate further areas of research. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the participants of the study to gain rich descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The recommended size for focus groups is seven to ten participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Creswell (2013) recommends having a meeting place free of distraction that allows the participants to feel at ease. Focus group interviews took place in the media center at the elementary school and a classroom at the middle school. The interviews were recorded. Each focus group took place after school, at an agreed-upon date and time. Focus group interviews took no longer than one hour. After each focus group interview, the recordings were transcribed and made available for review by the participants. The focus group discussion prompts were constructed to explore teachers' perspectives concerning the three main research questions utilizing primarily open-ended questions (Appendix D). I utilized a question matrix (Appendix B) to help evaluate the focus group prompts as to their relevance to the study.

The following were the focus group discussion prompts:

1. Give five adjectives to describe the balanced calendar.

2. What do you like most about teaching in the balanced calendar?

3. What do you like the least about teaching in the balanced calendar?

4. How does the balanced calendar influence your students' learning?

5.   How would you evaluate the balanced calendar for improving student achievement?

6.   How would you evaluate the balanced calendar providing enrichment activities?

7.   For school systems considering this type of calendar, what would you say to them?

8.   Is this an adequate summary?

9.   Have we missed anything?

Krueger (2006) explains that the prompts for a focus group interview should be carefully sequenced and focused on the major topic of the study. Constructing the questions to "progressively direct the attention of the participant toward the topics of greatest interest to the researchers" helps create sequenced and focused prompts (Krueger, 2006, p. 363). For this study, the prompts for the focus groups were designed to promote further discussion of the participants' views (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Krueger (2000) provides the different categories of questions to use throughout the focus group interview; these are (1) opening prompts, (2) introductory prompts, (3) transition prompts, (4) key prompts, and (5) ending prompts. For this study, prompts one and two served as opening prompts. These prompts help introduced the topic of the teachers' experiences in the balanced calendar. Prompt three was a transition prompt that moved the discussion toward the teachers' views on the influence of the extended learning activities. Prompts four and five were key prompts that sought to further encourage discussion of the teachers' views on the extended learning activities and how these activities influenced student achievement and provided enrichment opportunities. Prompts six and seven were ending prompts. Prompt eight was the final question for the focus group interview.

Morgan (2012) shares that the core focus of a focus group is to have a conversation about "something" relevant to the study. Focus groups can provide rich data (Barbour, 2007). The semi-structured format helped keep the discussion focused on the topic and encouraged participation for all the participants.

Document Analysis

Documents provide a source of data in qualitative research. Paradigm shifts and theoretical advances in qualitative research has expanded the use of documents as a form of data collection (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Public and private documents are two types of data that researchers use (Creswell, 2013). Documents for this study included the following: intersession descriptions, attendance sheets, brochures, newspapers (clippings/articles), press releases, lists of field trips, teachers' intersession assignments, students' intersession assignments, students' sample work from intersession, and survey data. I asked participants to identify other documents that might be useful to this investigation. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating print and electronic documents that require the researcher to select the documents, then appraise or make sense of the content to synthesize the data contained in the document. Document analysis involves examining and interpreting the data to extract meaning, increase understanding, and advance empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).

Data Analysis

In a phenomenological study, the researcher not only meditates but also describes the data and thus the world, producing a greater reflection of events (van Manen, 1990). A transcendental approach has the researcher set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). I used epoche or bracketing as the first step in

phenomenological reduction. Phenomenological reduction includes bracketing, horizonalizing, organizing themes, and constructing a textural description as part of the process used in data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, I set aside biases and assumptions using reflective notes to better understand the experiences of the participants of the study. The design used the systematic methods of Moustakas (1994) to analyze the data. I identified significant statements from participants, clustering these statements into meaning units and themes. Next, I synthesized the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textural and structural descriptions), and then constructed a composite description of the meanings and convey the overall essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The final phase of data analysis was to represent the "essence" of the experience in discussions (Creswell, 2013).

Epoche

Husserl (1931) is credited with the first introducing the concept of epoche, also known as bracketing. Moustakas (1994) identified epoche, as the first stage of data analysis in phenomenological research, where the researcher deliberately sets aside their personal experiences to approach the examination of the phenomenon with a fresh perspective. LeVasseur (2003) described epoche or bracketing to be suspending one's personal views intentionally to foster inquisitiveness and reflection.

Therefore, before conducting interviews with the participants, I documented my feelings and views based upon past experiences when I worked in a school system with a balanced calendar and as a parent of a child attending a school with a balanced calendar, to interview from a new and fresh perspective. Furthermore, before conducting an analysis of individual and focus group interview transcripts and documents, I bracketed any experiences, thoughts, and feelings I had about the study to view the information from a new perspective.

Reflective Field Notes

Creswell (2013) describes qualitative analysis as a spiral process since the steps of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are interrelated and not stand-alone phases, and they can occur simultaneously during the research. Qualitative data analysis is a reflective process that begins during data collection rather than after data collection has concluded (Stake, 1995). Both interview protocols (Appendices A and C) were used to capture subjective and objective data during data collection. Using the protocols allowed me to reflectively consider my thoughts and impressions while collecting raw data instead of waiting until all the data has been collected to begin analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Organization of Data

Moustakas' (1994) data analysis method includes the organization of data which "begins when the researcher places the transcribed interviews before him or her and studies the material through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis" (p. 118). Data analysis is not a linear process; instead, it requires customization, revision, and choreography (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Creswell (2013) acknowledges that even though there are distinct differences in qualitative researchers' methods for analytic procedures, "the analysis process conforms to a general contour" (p. 182). Creswell uses a spiral to represent this contour. Data management is described as the first loop of Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral. The organization of data includes "horizonalizing the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having an equal value" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). The significant statements are then categorized into themes. Repetitive statements are removed. Textural descriptions are developed using clustered themes. The meanings and essences of the phenomenon are constructed from the textural and structural descriptions.

Early on, qualitative researchers begin organizing the data into computer files, which assists in the analysis of the text. The process used by the researcher will be the same for coding by hand or using a computer. I used the Microsoft Excel program to assist with the organization, reduction, analysis, and retrieval of data.

Phenomenological Reduction

Transcendental phenomenology places emphasis on a transcendental element such as imagination, intuition, and universal structures (Husserl, 1931). The analytical process of transcendental phenomenology includes phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas' (1994) method of organizing and analyzing phenomenological data is derived from methods suggested by Colaizzi (1973), Keen (1975), and Stevick (1971). It includes the following seven steps:

a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for the description of the experience.

b. Record all relevant statements.

c. List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.

d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.

e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.

f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of your experience.

g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience. (p. 122)

Creswell's (2013) presented a simplified version of Moustakas' (1994) Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method:

- Describe personal experiences with the phenomenon being studied.

- Develop a list of significant statements.

- Group the significant statements into themes.

- Write a description of "what" the participants experienced.

- Write a description of "how" the experience happened.

- Write a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon. (p. 193)

Moustakas (1994) perceived phenomenological reduction, to begin with bracketing, then move on to horizonalizing, then clustering the horizons into themes, and finally developing the themes into a coherent textural description of the phenomenon. Agar (1980) recommends the researcher immersing themselves into the data by carefully reading through the transcripts of the interviews several times before breaking it down into parts. I used memoing, a technique of making notes in the transcripts that helped identify themes (Creswell, 2013). These memos were "short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader" (Creswell, 2013, p. 183).

I reduced the data into themes using horizonalization. The horizonalization of the data requires treating each statement of equal worth, then establishing lists of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements. The data is sorted into categories using the process of coding (Creswell, 2013). I identified a segment of text and assigned it a code label. The computer allowed for searches and printouts of these text segments for a given code. The purpose of coding was to organize the horizonalized statements into meaning units, which were later categorized into common themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). This process was repeated to look for "new folds of the manifold features that exist in every phenomenon and that

we explicate as we look again and again" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92). Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction involves "describing in textural language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also in terms of the internal act of consciousness . . . the rhythm and relationship between the phenomenon and the self" (p. 90). For the final task of phenomenological reduction, I constructed a complete textural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Imaginative Variation

Significant statements and themes were used to write a description of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A textural description was written to describe the "what" the participants experienced, including specific examples from the data (Creswell, 2013). Then a structural description of how the participants experienced the phenomenon was written (Creswell, 2013). The objective of imaginative variation "is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). This process of writing both textural and structural descriptions helped me develop strong classifications of the themes related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Essence of the Phenomenon

Moustakas' (1994) final step is the "integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (p. 100). The essence of the phenomenon is also known as the essential or invariant structure (Creswell, 2013). This writing is descriptive, and usually one or two paragraphs long. I wrote a composite description of the phenomenon, integrating both my textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013). The resulting passage described the "essence" of the participants'

experiences explaining the "what" and "how" of their experiences in context (Creswell, 2013).

Van Manen (1990) viewed data analysis as "phenomenological reflection" (p. 77). Although van

Manen's (1990) method is less structured, the purpose is to gain the essential meaning by

examining statements for themes. The final stage of data analysis is to reach a universal

description of the essence of the experiences. I took the individual textural-structural

descriptions of the participants and constructed a composite of the textural-structural description

of the meanings and essences into a description that universally depicts the group (Moustakas,

1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established through standards of validation and evaluation.

"Qualitative researchers strive for 'understanding,' that deep structure of knowledge that comes

from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to

obtain detailed meanings" (Creswell, 2013, p. 243). Terms used for validation and reliability for

this research were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). To safeguard trustworthiness in this study, I utilized

triangulation, member checks, an audit trail, and thick descriptions.

Credibility

In qualitative research, validity is also known as credibility, truth, and value (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). The credibility of this study is the authenticity of the findings and conclusions

based on hearing from the voices of the participants in the context of this study (Hays & Singh,

2014). Credibility was established by using systematic methods of collecting, organizing, and

analyzing the data. I intended to provide assurance that the data was properly collected and

interpreted so that the findings accurately reflected the real-world happenings of this study (Yin,

2015). I demonstrated credibility as the human instrument by discussing my personal and professional biography, educational journey, and any assumptions I brought to this research.

Triangulation. The triangulation of data (note the methods) provided deeper insight into a phenomenon by using multiple sources of data to increase the credibility of the research, it allowed for cross-verification to provided corroborating evidence (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2015). For this study, I collected three forms of data (a) individual interviews, (b) document analysis, and (c) focus group interviews to search for patterns and developing themes. In the process of data analysis, I used coding, memoing, and member checks.

Member checks. Member check was used to allow participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of transcripts and comment on the accuracy of interpretation. I used member checks after each interview. After I transcribed the individual interview, I offered each participant a copy of the interview transcript "so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). For the focus group discussions, I offered the participants my preliminary data analysis, including descriptions and themes. Creswell (2013) recommends asking the participants for their views of the analysis, and for anything that may have been missed.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability were established through an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified dependability and confirmability as major components needed to establish rigor in qualitative research. Dependability specifically references the consistency of the results across researchers, over time. Confirmability denotes the degree in which the findings of a study genuinely reflect the participants' viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Audit trail. An audit trail provides systematic evidence of the data collection and analysis procedures for this study (Schwandt, 2007). Components of the audit trail included a timeline of research activities, contact information of participants, informed consent forms, data collections, interview protocols, field notes, memos, a reflexive journal, transcripts, and audio recordings. Audit trail items are kept in a locked file cabinet. Any electronic files that are part of the audit trail were password protected. A reflexive journal was used to document my thoughts throughout the research process. Hays and Singh (2014) state, "the nature of qualitative inquiry creates several moments throughout the research process wherein researchers need to reflect upon how the participants, data collection, and data analysis are impacting them personally and professionally" (p. 205). The audit trail provided an opportunity for reflexivity and helped in record-keeping for this study (Schwandt, 2007).

Transferability

Transferability is also known as naturalistic generalizability (Stake, 1995). By giving rich, detailed descriptions of the participants, setting, and research process, the reader can make decisions about what aspects of the study would apply to another setting or other individuals (Hays & Singh, 2014). I provided a thick description of the data "so that judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere" (Schwandt et al., 2007, p. 19).

Thick descriptions. Thick descriptions were used in qualitative research to give an accurate account of the circumstances as well as the motivations, intentions, and meanings that depict a specific occurrence (Schwandt, 2007). Yin (2015) explained that rich descriptions are achieved when the researcher collects data "describe real-world events in great detail. The greater detail not only provides a richer rendition of events but also can help to reduce the

researcher's selectivity and reflexive influences in reporting about the event" (p. 340). When

appropriate, I used direct quotations from the participants to provide rich, thick details. I

provided thick description by providing sufficient detail about the setting, the participants, and

the research process (Hays & Singh, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were consciously addressed. Ethical considerations for the study

included attaining approval by Liberty University's IRB and receiving site approval. All

participants completed an informed consent form to participate in the study with the option for

audio recording consent. To provide confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for the site and the

participants. Data is stored in a secure place; hard copy files are stored in a locked cabinet, and

electronic files are stored on my personal computer and are password protected. Data will be

kept for three years. Digital recordings will be destroyed after three years of the conclusion of

the study. I did not hold any position of influence over the participants. Participants were

informed that his or her participation was strictly on a volunteer basis, and the participants could

withdraw at any time. Creswell (2013) recommends addressing ethical concerns by

"establishing supportive, respectful relationships without stereotyping and using labels that

participants will not embrace, acknowledging whose voices will be represented in our final

study" (p. 56).

Summary

The approaches used in this study were consistent with a phenomenology research

design. The methods for gathering data in this study included interviews, focus groups, and

document analysis. In this chapter, I provided an overview of the research design, including the

rationale for the selection of the school system, the participant criteria, the plan used for data

collection, and data analysis. Finally, I addressed the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. In this chapter, I present the results of the data analysis. This study examined the experiences of 18 participants that have previously taught during intersession of a balanced calendar. I provide brief descriptions of the participants. In this chapter, I describe the theme development process for this study, as previously outlined in Chapter Three. I expound on the themes that surfaced through the process of qualitative transcendental phenomenology design. The final step of the data analysis was to integrate the composite textural description and the composite structural description into a composite textural and structural synthesis. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement?

RQ2. What are teachers' perspectives about the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as an enrichment effort?

RQ3. What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar?

Participants

This study examined teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of extended learning activities on student achievement in a small rural school division in Southwest Virginia. All the teachers taught at least one session in an intersession week of a balanced calendar. All the

teachers taught an enrichment and a remediation session. The teachers ranged in teaching experience from four years to over 20 years of experience. Eleven teachers were from the elementary school, five teachers were from middle school, and two teachers were from high school. One high school teacher had previously taught at the elementary school. Two teachers were the intersession coordinators for their schools. All the participants said they would recommend this type of calendar to other schools, and they all said they hope to continue with the balanced calendar. Each participant answered questions on the questionnaire to provide information regarding their experiences (see Table 6).

Table 6

Participant Information

Participant	School	Teaching Assignment	Number of times Participated in Intersession	Teaching Experience
Jennifer	Elementary	Kindergarten	5 or more	> 20 years
Amy	Elementary	Pre-K	5 or more	11-15 years
Melissa	Elementary	Third grade	5 or more	> 20 years
Lisa	Elementary	Second grade	5 or more	> 20 years
Samantha	Elementary	Fourth SPED	3	4-10 years
Karen	Middle	Seventh ELA	5 or more	> 20 years
Patricia	Middle	Sixth math	5 or more	16-20 years
Nicole	High	12th Government	5 or more	> 20 years
Lynn	Elementary	Second grade	3	11-15 years
Mandy	Elementary	Second grade	4	4-10 years
Kelly	Elementary	Third grade	5 or more	4-10 years

Participant	School	Teaching Assignment	Number of times Participated in Intersession	Teaching Experience
Sandra	Elementary	Third grade	5 or more	16-20 years
Leslie	Elementary	Specialty	5 or more	11-15 years
Chloe	Elementary	Pre-K	5 or more	> 20 years
Annie	Middle	Seventh science	5 or more	> 20 years
Teresa	Middle	Seventh civics	5 or more	> 20 years
Deena	Middle	Fifth science	1	4-10 years
Carolyn	High	Ninth ELA	5 or more	11-15 years

Jennifer

Jennifer is a kindergarten teacher. She has over 20 years' experience teaching kindergarten students. She has taught during every intersession week since the district adopted the balanced calendar. She has taught both remedial and enrichment sessions. Jennifer has had students from other grade-levels, but most recently, she has taught sessions exclusively for kindergarten students. When planning lessons for intersession, Jennifer said she tries to incorporate STEM activities for her students. She said she usually teaches a morning remediation session and an afternoon enrichment session. She acknowledged that it takes a lot of time to prepare the extended learning activities for the week of intersession. She said that teaching two sessions during intersession is very taxing mentally and physically. Despite the increased workload, Jennifer believed the results from theses extended learning activities are worth the effort. She said she believed the remediation was beneficial for kindergarten students.

Amy

Amy is a pre-school special education teacher. She has between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience. Her experience teaching during intersession was unique in that she kept her same students and daily schedule. Amy enjoyed having the chance to veer from the standards and pacing guide for the week of intersession. She planned and prepared different extended learning activities for her students during intersession week. She appreciated having the opportunity to be creative and offer high-interest, hands-on activities for her students. She liked that teachers could choose extended learning activities based on their interests and passions. Amy shared some problems she has with the intersession. One of Amy's concerns was she believed the workload for elementary teachers is more than the workload for teachers from middle and high school. She explained that most elementary students participated during intersession, and many elementary teachers felt pressured to teach two sessions to provide enough places for the students to go. Another issue Amy pointed out was there were too many students in some elementary sessions. She explained that the guideline was if two teachers worked together, the class size for that session increased to forty students instead of twenty. In her opinion, this was too many students, even with two teachers. Although Amy provided some criticism of the intersession weeks, she believed students benefit from the balanced calendar and hoped the district would continue with it in the future.

Melissa

Melissa is a third-grade teacher. She has taught for over 20 years and has participated in all the intersessions weeks. She has taught both enrichment and remediation sessions. In her remediation sessions, she reviewed major concepts and skills previously taught. She made an effort to create extended learning activities that are high interest and fun for the students. She offered the students incentives and prizes for coming to remediation. Melissa felt that by the end

of the week, she gained a better understanding of where her students were. The remedial

sessions for third-grade students had a class size of eight to ten students. During the remediation

session for third-grade students, the students split their time between math and reading. Melissa

said she usually teaches only one session because she found it was too hard teaching a morning

and afternoon session. Melissa said she believed students and parents liked the balanced

calendar. Melissa did offer recommendations. She would like to see more participation from

people in the community. She recommended that other schools look at implementing a balanced

calendar.

Lisa

Lisa has taught second-grade students at the elementary school for over 20 years. She

has taught remediation and enrichment sessions. She is the intersession coordinator for the

elementary school. All the remediation sessions she has taught have been with second-grade

students. The class size for second-grade remediation is usually set at 10 students. Lisa said she

uses independent stations to help break the students into smaller groups. The second-grade

remediation teachers broke-up the session into two mini-sessions, about an hour and a half each.

Some students got two mini-sessions of just math or just reading, or one math and one reading.

Lisa said she liked the flexibility the second-grade teachers had to do what they believed worked

best for their students during the week of intersession. Lisa has experienced teaching enrichment

sessions to students in kindergarten to second grade and another session to third to fourth-grade

students. Lisa said she believed one of the best things about the intersession weeks was the

enrichment activities that would otherwise not be possible during a traditional calendar. Another

aspect that Lisa liked is remediation. The extended learning activities in remediation sessions

during intersession were well-planned, targeted, individualized instruction for the students. Lisa

emphasized the importance of planning and preparation for the success of the sessions. She said she uses fun, hands-on activities for remediation. She said she usually saw academic growth in her students after a week of remediation. As for the students that attended enrichment sessions, Lisa said they were excited and wanted to share the wonderful experiences they had during the enrichment sessions when they got back to school.

Samantha

Samantha is a fourth-grade special education teacher and has taught during six weeks of intersession. She usually taught fourth-grade students in a morning remediation session and said she usually chose to teach an afternoon enrichment session. One thing she liked about the enrichment sessions was the opportunity to connect to students through extended learning activities. Preparation was intense and time-consuming. During the last intersession, the fourth grade had enrichment and remediation for only three days, and then all the fourth-grade students took an overnight field trip to Jamestown the last two days of the week. Fourth-grade remediation had a class size of seven students or less. Samantha said one of the drawbacks she has experienced was seeing how disappointed the students were because they were recommended for remediation. When designing the extended learning activities for her sessions, Samantha focused on implementing real-life, 21st-century skills when creating lesson plans for that week. She noted that teaching students in multiple grade-levels requires good behavioral management skills from the teacher. Samantha said she thought teachers needed to be structured and organized during the week of intersession. She admitted teaching two sessions was exhausting, but she believed it was worth it. Samantha made it clear that she loved teaching during intersession, but it was also nice to have a much-needed week off after intersession.

Karen

Karen is a seventh-grade language arts teacher that has taught during every intersession week. She has over twenty years of experience. Most of her experience has been teaching reading remediation for her seventh-grade students. She shared a particular session where the topic was the Titanic, and the week of intersession concluded with an overnight field trip to Pigeon Forge, TN, to visit the Titanic Museum. She pointed out that this type of unit study tied to a field trip would be difficult to accomplish in the regular cycle of a traditional school year. Over the years during intersession, the students have had a chance to go to Williamsburg, Virginia Beach, Washington, D.C., and Asheville, NC, to name a few destinations. Karen said she usually chooses a book study for the intersession week that will connect to the field trip's destination. There have been occasions when the field trip took place during the first part of the week, and then remediation sessions took place in the last two or three days. Karen said she believed the organization of the week for intersession allowed the teacher to implement more creative and fun activities for the remediation sessions.

The class sizes for remediation were smaller than Karen's regular classes. During remediation, Karen divided the students into smaller groups of 12 students or less. Karen described the atmosphere of her sessions as relaxed but very structured. Karen shared that typically, two teachers had seventh-grade reading remediation, and two teachers had seventh-grade math remediation. The students usually switched between two sessions as determined by their individual needs. Data from formative assessments helped determine which students were required to attend remediation.

To keep it interesting for her students, Karen used different topics for the fall and spring sessions. Intersession weeks for the seventh grade usually included a field trip. Students who participated in remediation sessions during intersession were eligible to go on the field trip as

well as students who had previously attended after-school tutoring during the school year. Karen said she believed the field trips during the week of intersession were an incentive for students to volunteer for the after-school tutoring.

Karen made it clear that she does not use the intersession week for test preparation; instead, she focused on improving skills, such as fluency. She said she usually saw improvement in the students' fluency by the end of the intersession week. Another skill Karen said she typically saw improvement in was students drawing conclusions and making inferences; she said she believed this was mainly due to the discussions the students had in the small groups.

Another outcome Karen indicated was the students get real-life experience from intersession. For example, in the math sessions, students calculated the distance to York Town and then mapped out the route. Then the students discussed the methods of transportation during the revolution era, and the students calculated the distance to York Town on horseback, making a comparison to modern-day travel. Karen pointed out that some of her students had never been to the beach and walked on the sand or had the opportunity to ride on a boat. Several of her students had never stayed in a hotel or eaten at a buffet-style, all you can eat, restaurant.

Karen recommended that other schools considering this type of calendar plan early and with a set goal in mind. The preparation was perhaps the most time-consuming. Karen started preparing for the weeks of intersession at the beginning of the school year. She said it is important to plan with the desired result in mind. You need to know what you want your outcomes to be for the week. Even though Karen said the week of intersession could be stressful, she hoped to continue this calendar because, for the middle school students, it works well.

Patricia

Patricia teaches sixth-grade math students and has 16-20 years' experience as a classroom teacher. She has taught in every intersession the district has had. Patricia taught both a remediation and enrichment session. She said that all the sixth-grade teachers taught remediation sessions, to keep the remediation class sizes down. Her remediation session had only sixth-grade students. Her afternoon enrichment session was for sixth and seventh-grade students. Patricia worked with other teachers from the school during the enrichment session. They took the students swimming at the local recreation center for the first part of the afternoon enrichment session. Lifeguards helped give swim instruction to the students. Then the students came back to the school and made a craft, and another time they cooked something simple like cupcakes.

Patricia said she liked intersession because it allowed her to develop stronger relationships with the students. For example, she said she was able to discover her students' weaknesses and strengths by the end of the week. She noted that the students' end of grade state assessments has been higher since adopting the balanced calendar. In most cases, Patricia said she believed her students enjoyed the intersession week more than the regular weeks of school. She said she planned hands-on activities and group projects that would be challenging to do in a regular school day due to class size and time constraints.

One topic Patricia addressed was word problems. She said some of her students would not even try to solve a word problem, or they gave up after a few minutes. She used the intersession time to break down the process and worked through problems in groups of two. She had the students use a highlighter to select keywords and phrases; then, the students drew a picture that depicted the problem. She modeled a few practice problems for the students first. Another activity Patricia said she liked was to have the students create a math cheer book. She said she liked tying their math to real-life applications, so one additional activity Patricia

mentioned was to have her students answer math problems from a restaurant menu. Then

students created and answered their questions from the menu. As an extension of this activity,

the students created their menus. The students visited other students' restaurants. Patricia said

she gave her students $20 (play money) to spend at the other students' restaurants. The students

provided a detailed sales slip showing their transactions.

Patricia said she believed her students gained confidence during intersession. The

students got individualized instruction and received help on the skills they need. Patricia

admitted initially she dreaded the thought of teaching during the week of intersession. Still, once

she did it and seen the positive results with her students, she has changed her mind and now

believed intersession is effective and worthwhile for her students.

Nicole

Nicole is a high school teacher with over 20 years of teaching experience. She has taught

during every intersession held at the high school. Nicole has taught both remediation and

enrichment sessions. She shared some of her experiences with the enrichment sessions she

taught. Most enrichment sessions were history and government themed. Some sessions included

visits to historically Black colleges, a local community college, and other universities. Another

enrichment session included a field trip to the National Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro, NC.

Interested students signed-up voluntarily, but for some honors and A.P. students, the field trip

held during this session was a required grade in the class. Nicole admitted that it is sometimes a

challenge to entice high school students to give up a week off from school to attend an

enrichment session. She said she felt that many students worked hard during the regular weeks

of school, so they would not have to attend remediation during the week of intersession. For the

high school students, getting an extra week off seemed to be motivated to maintain good

attendance and to keep their grades up. Nicole said she thought the preparation for a week of intersession was more difficult than preparing for her regular classroom teaching.

With remediation, she prepared activities that will help address weaknesses her students may have. She said that remediation classes were by grade-level at the high school and individualized as much as possible for the students. Nicole said she believed that remediation sessions were more effective if you target skills and not just making up work. She said she might have a student for only one hour because the student required remediation in other classes. Nicole said sharing students with other remediation sessions made it difficult to plan activities.

She stated that the intersession weeks had a positive impact on the students academically. She liked that the week of intersession provided opportunities for field trips to colleges, universities, and museums that would be challenging to do in the regular school year.

She shared some negative impacts that she believed the intersession week had on teachers, especially when it came to workload. She said the planning was intense, and the balanced calendar caused the last day of school to be in the middle of June this past school year. She pointed out that if you are a high school teacher that taught during summer school, you would start teaching the next week after the end of school and then teach for another four weeks. She felt this scenario could lead to teacher burnout. She added that if you had snow days, the year seemed extra-long.

Nicole pointed out a drawback for some students. She said that for some of her students, having to attend intersession felt like punishment for not working hard enough or for not passing a specific test. By the time the student gets to the high school, she said, chances were the students had been involved in numerous remediation sessions. The teacher had to overcome a negative mindset for the student who had been required to attend remediation year after year.

Nicole finished the interview, declaring that overall, intersession had been positive for her students, and she would like to continue with this calendar.

Lynn

Lynn is a second-grade teacher and has taught during three weeks of intersession. She has been teaching for 10 years. She has taught both remediation and enrichment sessions. Lynn said she usually taught a morning and afternoon session during the intersession week.

She shared that one benefit of the balanced calendar was that the extended learning activities gave students a chance to experience things that they normally do not get to experience during the regular school day. Lynn said she thought the enrichment sessions motivated for some struggling students to come to school and put forth effort because, during the weeks of intersession, these students had a chance to shine during the enrichment sessions.

Lynn pointed out that the intersession weeks benefited teachers because teachers got a chance to display their strengths through the sessions they taught. She believed that professional learning took place for teachers during intersession. In many instances, teachers worked together during a session. She said she had gained ideas from other teachers she worked with during the week of intersession. The one downside to working with other teachers, according to Lynn, was that the class sizes for a two-teacher session were often 40 students. She said that having that many students in one class were challenging for the teachers and the students.

Mandy admitted that the balanced calendar might not be a perfect model, but that overall, it did work for her school. She recommended evaluating what worked and being willing to change what did not work. She said she would like to continue teaching in a balanced calendar.

Mandy

Mandy is a second-grade teacher that has experience with enrichment and remediation during intersession week. She has four years of teaching experience overall. She said she liked the enrichment sessions best and enjoyed seeing how students from different grade levels interacted with each other. She said she typically taught a morning and afternoon session during the intersession weeks.

Mandy said that occasionally the school had contracted retired teachers to help with remediation for this week. Second-grade teachers typically required most of their students to attend remediation. With so many students, Mandy said she often taught students in remediation that she did not normally have during the regular school year. She wondered if it would be better to keep her regular students during remediation.

Mandy said that teaching during intersession was a ton of work, but it was worth it. She said she felt the intersession weeks provided experiences for the students that many would not have if not for the balanced calendar.

Kelly

Kelly is a third-grade teacher that usually teaches remediation but has taught one session of enrichment. She has taught for five years. Even though she has taught mostly remediation, she said the enrichment sessions allowed many of her students to flourish by giving them a place to show off their talents.

Kelly said that the third-grade teachers tried different group rotations for their students during previous years of intersession but concluded that having each third-grade teacher work with your own students seemed to produce the best results. Kelly said as for her remediation sessions, even though she got to work with her students, she would like to have smaller groups to work with.

Kelly shared what she felt was one drawback to intersession. Kelly admitted that when the students came back from the week off after intersession, she had to spend time reviewing procedures and expectations for the students. This was the case during the fall session because the students had been in school for only six weeks before intersession.

Kelly concluded that she would promote this type of calendar to other schools. The benefit for the students outweighed the work required. She said she hoped the school system would continue with the balanced calendar.

Sandra

Sandra has taught for over 15 years. Previously, she taught second grade for 10 years and third grade for the last five years. She said she normally taught remediation for math and reading but has taught enrichment sessions twice.

Most remediation sessions had been with her homeroom students. Sandra said she preferred working with her students during remediation. She said she believed that knowing her students made it easier to provide effective, targeted lessons for the week of remediation.

Sandra said that for her, the enrichment sessions required more preparation than the remediation sessions. She shared that the last couple of years had been even more successful for teachers and students because the students knew what to expect, and for the most part, they looked forward to this week.

One thing Sandra said she did not like about the calendar was the extended school day. School officials extended the school day hours when they adopted the balanced calendar. She said the added time to the school day was too long of a day for the elementary students. She said she believed the shorter day was just as productive and not as tiring.

Sandra's final comments were very positive about the weeks of intersession. She said she felt fortunate to teach in a school with a balanced calendar. The intersession weeks allowed more community involvement and interactions. Another thing Sandra said she liked about the week of intersession was that it provided a much-needed change of pace for teachers. She said she looked forward to these weeks.

Leslie

Leslie is a specialty teacher for the elementary school with 15 years' experience. She has taught remediation for third-grade math students, but most of her sessions had been enrichment. It was her experience that the preparation for enrichment was harder than the preparation for remediation. The remediation sessions she participated in were for third-grade students only while the enrichment sessions were for kindergarten through fourth-grade students. She has taught in more enrichment sessions than remediation sessions.

As a specialty teacher, Leslie worked with almost all the students sometime during the school year. She mentioned that one of her favorite things about the enrichment sessions was the opportunity to see the students in different settings. For the enrichment sessions, she said the kids were excited, actively involved, and not just sitting at a desk. She admitted it was challenging to plan three and a half hours of fun for five straight days, but it was worth it. She said even though enrichment was more work than remediation, it was fun for the students and teachers. She said she liked to see the students excited to come to school during the weeks of intersession.

Leslie shared she felt the weeks of intersession allowed the students to connect more with other teachers and students. She said she had gotten to know her students better during the

weeks of intersession. She said she believed her enrichment sessions allowed her to share experiences with the students that she was then able to build upon the rest of the school year.

Leslie said she liked the balanced calendar but admitted after the second intersession week the school year seemed very long, especially given that the area school systems ended their school years almost a month earlier than they did. She also shared that at times she felt five days of intersession was too long and that the students seemed burned out. She suggested that three days might be better instead of five, especially for the sessions that have 40 students.

Chloe

Chloe is a pre-k teacher that has over 20 years' experience in pre-k and kindergarten. She explained that her situation during the intersession week was different from the other grade-level teachers at her school, in that her students did not have the opportunity to sign-up for sessions during intersession. Instead, Chloe kept her students for intersession week.

For the intersession weeks, she said she planned enrichment activities for her students. One such activity was a study of different cultures that included a field trip to ethnic restaurants during the week. Chloe shared that intersession allows her to plan field trips to places many of her students had never been, such as an Italian restaurant or a pumpkin patch.

Another thing Chloe said she liked about intersession was getting a week off in the fall and spring. The late end date for the school calendar was what Chloe said she liked the least about the balanced calendar. She said going to the second week in June was too long for the students, especially since there was usually just a two-day break after the spring intersession week and the last day of school.

Annie

Annie is a seventh a grade science teacher with over twenty years of teaching experience. She has taught in enrichment and remediation sessions. The remediation sessions have been in math and language arts. When teaching remediation sessions, Annie said it was important to present concepts in a different way from what the students have normally done in the regular classroom. It was her goal that the students in her remediation sessions catch up on any skills they had a deficiency in and to gain confidence when they went back to the regular classroom. Annie said she believed the extended learning activities should be fun and interactive for the students.

She shared that one of her initial concerns regarding the balanced calendar was that the students might feel inferior because they were required to attend a week of remediation. Annie said this had not been the case with her students. In her opinion, most seventh-grade remediation students were okay about attending sessions. She said she believed that students were able to see their successes more because of being with other students who were struggling in the same content area. Annie said she thought operating on this balanced calendar was a motivation for her students to work hard and do their best during the regular class sessions to keep from being required to go remediation. Annie said she felt that by the end of the intersession week, most of her students seen it as a good thing. She shared that based on conversations she had with her remediation students, they were more confident with the content and felt that the week of remediation was worthwhile.

Annie said that enrichment sessions had allowed the students to do some really fun and exciting things. For example, she shared that during a couple of the intersession weeks, the seventh-grade students took a field trip to Washington, D.C. Other enrichment sessions Annie has taught were a STEM theme that included field trips. One field trip for this session was to a

community college where the students used a 3-D printer and got a chance to fly drones. During the most recent enrichment session, Annie's enrichment session had an escape room theme, which included a field trip to an escape room and a virtual reality lab.

Annie pointed out several things she liked about the balanced calendar. She shared that one thing she liked most was the change in routine from a traditional school calendar. According to Annie, the intersession week provided a break from the regular school schedule and gave teachers a chance to give more direct, individualized instruction to struggling students. She said she liked that the intersession weeks provided an opportunity for all students to participate in some outstanding enrichment activities. In Annie's opinion, intersession provided the students the opportunities to do things they would not otherwise have a chance to do in a traditional calendar. She said she thought it was great that everyone got a full week off after each intersession week. Annie said she was initially concerned that she would have to spend time re-teaching after returning from the week of intersession and the break week, but she has been surprised to find that this was not the case with her students.

Annie said she hoped they never go back to a traditional school calendar. She said she liked the break in the routine. She liked the weeks off. The teachers and students return to school after intersession refreshed and more ready to learn, in her opinion.

Teresa

Teresa is a seventh-grade social studies teacher with five years' experience as a teacher. She has helped with math remediation sessions and served as a chaperone on two of the Washington D.C. field trips enrichment sessions. She has also helped with a Lego enrichment session, and a gamed themed enrichment session. For the math remediation sessions, she worked with the seventh-grade math teacher. The math teacher planned the extended learning

activities for the small groups. Teresa said she felt the small groups were an ideal method for remediation because it allowed for more individualized, one-to-one help for the students. Teresa said she found that working with the regular math teacher gave her the support and assurance that she was providing quality instruction.

Teresa said she believed the enrichment sessions had a positive impact on students learning. For example, students had an opportunity to do something they would otherwise not have had a chance to do. Students might have signed-up for an enrichment session they knew very little about and discovered new interests by the end of the week.

Teresa said that she liked the break week after the intersession weeks, and she thought the students liked the week of the break as well. One thing she said she did not like about the balanced calendar was that when there were snow days, the school year seemed especially longer than when there were snow days during the traditional school calendar she taught. She pointed out that the past school year was a year with many days missed for snow, and as a result, they got only six weeks off for summer break, which Teresa felt was too short.

Deena

This school year was Deena's first year in the school district and has participated in only one week of intersession. She taught both remediation and an enrichment session. She is the fifth-grade science teacher with four years of teaching experience. She shared that she liked that the students were able to get more one-on-one help in the remediation sessions and that the students got to experience some enrichment activities that were not possible to offer during a regular school day, for example, the many field trips. Deena said her favorite thing about teaching in a balanced calendar was the benefits of the extended learning activities for her students. Deena shared that her students were still excited about what they did when they got

back from the break week. She said that she benefited from time off provided by the break week. She got much-needed rest and came back ready to tackle the next quarter.

Deena said there were some challenges for her with her first week of intersession. She said it was hard to plan enough activities for five days of morning remediation and five days of afternoon enrichment sessions. She said having students all day without a break because she taught both, a remediation and enrichment session was tough.

Carolyn

Carolyn is a ninth-grade English teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. She has taught several remediation sessions and one enrichment session. She said she liked the change in the everyday routine that the weeks of intersession provided. She said she thought the remediation sessions were beneficial because she could focus on a smaller group of students and target their needs by using different approaches in a setting with more extended time than she would typically have in a regular class period.

Carolyn shared that she believed that the weeks of intersession was an opportunity to get students excited about learning. She said that doing remediation or enrichment the right way made the difference. She said the teacher must plan rich, engaging activities. She said her hard work was worth it when a student had a breakthrough and finally got a concept they had struggled with before.

Carolyn said she would like to see more high school students participate during the intersession weeks. She previously taught at the elementary school and was the intersession coordinator for the school. She said teaching during intersession at the high school was very different from teaching at the elementary school. The majority of elementary students attended intersession. The attendance at the high school was much less. She admitted there might be

numerous reasons for this, but she would like to survey the students to find out ideas for this week that would entice the high school students to attend. Another difference she mentioned was the reactions of her high school students when they were required to go to remediation. Several of her high school students seemed deflated that they had to attend remediation.

Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of extended learning activities on student achievement. Individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis were the sources of data for this study. I used Moustakas' (1994) method for transcendental phenomenology to analyze data. The process included phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation.

Theme Development

I used epoche or bracketing as the first step in phenomenological reduction. Using reflective notes, I set aside as much as possible my perceived experiences to better understand the experiences of the participants of the study. I needed to write down my feelings and opinions from when I worked in a school system with a balanced calendar. I also addressed my views as a parent of a child that attended a school with a balanced calendar. I did not want my experiences or biases to influence the data I collected from the participants. Throughout the data collection' process, I wrote memos and made reflective notes of my thoughts and feelings to help me clarify my thoughts and consider possible emerging themes. I used Microsoft Excel to assist with the organization, reduction, analysis, and retrieval of data. I identified significant statements from participants, clustering these statements into meaning units and themes (see Table 7). Moustakas (1994) described this process as horizonalization. Next, I synthesized the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textural and structural descriptions) and

constructed a composite description of the meanings to convey the overall essence of the experience.

Table 7

Assigned Codes & Repeated Words/Phrases

Assigned Codes	Repeated Words/Phrases
Student Learning (SL)	Positive impact; makes a difference; learning more than standards; student confidence; explore & discover; hands-on; higher-level; fun
Teacher choice (TC)	Choose session(s) & topic
Student Motivation (SM)	Students excited to come to school; students work hard to not come to remediation
Workload (W)	Week is exhausting; tiring; planning is a lot of work; remediation less work than enrichment; teaching two sessions is hard
Recommendations (RC)	Want to keep it; try it; worth it; planning is key to success; small classes; make it fun; a different approach for remediation; small group remediation; hands-on remediation; remediate own students
Change (C)	Teach something different; change of pace; relaxed atmosphere
Relationships (R)	Chance to work with other teachers; builds relationships with students; students work with students from different grade-levels; make connections
Opinions/Values (OV)	Younger students tired; three days enough; week too long; great opportunities for students (kids); worth it
Outcomes (O)	Positive impact on students; new experiences for students; students showcase different talents; students catch up
Behaviors (B)	Must be structured; organized; planning important

Individual interviews. I developed an interview protocol using the research questions, possible domains, and domain definitions as a guide to developing interview questions. A two-person panel of experts - the assistant superintendent of the Small City School Division and a distinguished college professor with over 40 years' experience in the education field - reviewed the interview items for content validation. I revised the questions based on the panel's recommendations. I piloted the amended interview protocol with an assistant principal from the

school division. This interview was not used in the study. I made minor changes to the interview protocol based on the analyzed test interview data. After this, I scheduled interviews with the participants. All the individual interviews were face to face and lasted between 30 minutes and 50 minutes. The setting for the individual interviews was the teachers' classroom after school. I digitally recorded and later transcribed the interviews.

Focus group interviews. After completing the individual interviews. I conducted two focus group interviews. The first focus group interview took place at the elementary school in the media center after school with six elementary teachers. This interview took less than an hour. The teachers were aquatinted with each other. I gave each participant a chance to answer each question. All the teachers said they like having a week off in the fall and spring. One of the participants shared the frustration of going so late into June. The last day of school was two weeks later than originally scheduled due to missed snow days.

The second focus group took place at the middle school in a science classroom. This classroom served as the location for faculty meetings at the school since it was a large room on the main floor with the most seating. Three middle school teachers and one high school teacher attended. The meeting took place the week after the break week. I digitally recorded and later transcribed the focus group interviews. All the teachers said they liked the week off. The conversations with the middle school teachers often focused on the many enriching experiences their students had outside the school building during intersession, especially the many field trips at no cost to their students. The one high school teacher had previously taught in elementary school, and she compared her experiences teaching at both schools. She thought it might be better if the high school students were more involved in planning for the intersession weeks. She noted that most elementary students attend while significantly fewer high school students attend

intersession. I enjoyed the rich and thoughtful discussions. It was evident that the teachers had a sense of pride in the many opportunities their students had attending enrichment sessions during intersession.

Document analysis. During the data collection process, I requested documents from the participants of the study and the administrators of schools. I received documents from the assistant superintendent, elementary principal, one elementary teacher, and one middle school teacher. Documents included survey results, copies of students' work, session proposals, intersession' brochures, lists of teaching assignments during intersession, attendance sheets, media releases, budget requests, and student remediation recommendations.

The assistant superintendent shared the results of a teacher survey regarding the calendar options for the upcoming school year. This document displayed the teacher's preference of calendar, their assigned school, and any comments they made. Six high school teachers made comments regarding the balanced calendar.

The elementary principal shared the school year's intersession Google folder. The Google folder had eighteen files and one folder containing fourteen files for the spring intersession. Files included descriptions of sessions, materials requested, brochures, press releases, student session assignments, attendance sheets, teacher's helpers, permission forms, bus assignments, field trip schedules, session numbers, room assignments, and teacher checklists. The organization and details of this folder demonstrated the amount of planning and preparation required for each intersession week.

One elementary teacher and one middle school teacher shared examples of student work. The teachers' willingness to share this demonstrated their confidence in providing effective extended learning activities for their students. Both samples were from remediation sessions.

Themes. I reduced the data into themes using horizonalization. I read the participants'
transcripts several times, looking for significant statements. For each transcript, I marked
statements that referred to the phenomenon of providing extended learning activities in a
balanced calendar and created a separate document of these statements for each participant.
These statements were the horizons. I removed any overlapping or repetitive statements from
the horizons. I used a color-coding method to highlight each significant statement. I underlined
statements that were associated with more than one domain.   I created a spreadsheet to help
organize the statements into categories. I combined the significant statements into one
document. I examined the statements to identify emerging themes. I clustered statements into
themes. I examined the significant statements in the context of the research questions. I used
EXCEL to help me organize these statements by each research question. I repeated the process.
I reread the transcripts, looking at how the participants described their experiences with
remediation compared to their experiences with enrichment and then, again, looking at
participants' recommendations. I used EXCEL to help organize these significant statements in
the context of remediation, enrichment, and recommendations. I clustered these statements into
themes.

Next, I wrote a composite textural description, a composite structural description, and a
composite textural and structural synthesis. Moustakas (1994) proposed using imaginative
variation to discover meanings of the phenomenon from different perspectives. The composite
textural and structural descriptions were derived from the participants' experiences. I used
significant statements to write a description of the participants' experiences. I wrote a textural
description to describe "what" the participants experienced and included specific examples from
the data. Then, I wrote a structural description of "how" the participants experienced extended

learning activities. This process of writing both textural and structural descriptions helped me

uncover the themes. Twelve themes became evident (see Appendix J). From these themes

emerged the following five common themes: (a) great opportunities, (b) hard work, (c) student-

motivation, (d) planning is key, and (e) want to keep it.

   Great opportunities. A predominant theme shared by 15 of the 18 participants was great

opportunities. The intersession weeks offer remediation and enrichment opportunities. The

teachers used assessment data, student performance data, and teacher recommendations, to

identify students who were required to attend remediation during intersession. With so much

effort and attention given to this process of selecting students to receive targeted instruction

during remediation, I initially believed that the impact of the remediation session would be a

common theme, but this was not the case. It was apparent that teachers consider great

opportunities for students as the main benefit of the intersession weeks. Deena shared, "Students

get to experience things they would otherwise not get to experience." Nicole said, "Intersession

has allowed me to take my students to places that would not be possible in a regular school

year." Even the youngest students have opportunities outside the school walls during

intersession. Chloe, a pre-k teacher, shared that many of her students, "have never had a chance

to visit a pumpkin patch or eat at an Italian restaurant." Chloe further said intersession gave her

students a chance to "experience these places in a safe environment." Lisa believed, "The reason

intersession weeks were implemented was to provide great opportunities for our students."

   Intersession weeks have provided an opportunity for field trips. Field trips have included

visiting nearby localities and businesses, such as the local bookstore, the fire station, or

recreation center, just to name a few. Some field trips have been overnight. The fourth-grade

students visited Jamestown, Virginia. The seventh-grade students went to Washington D.C. and

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Twelfth-grade students have visited several colleges and museums in Virginia and North Carolina. Annie explained that "Many students from the community don't have a lot of opportunities to do the things we do during intersession. The intersession funding picks up the cost, so students benefit."

Hard work. Twelve of the 18 participants described teaching during intersession as hard work. Sandra described the week of intersession as "taxing." Samantha said the week "is exhausting." Lisa called the week of intersession "tiresome." Each of these teachers admitted that despite the increased workload, intersession is worth the extra work. Part of the extra work is in the preparation it takes to provide hands-on, engaging activities.

During intersession, there was a morning and afternoon session. Most sessions were three and a half-hours. Several teachers elected to teach both sessions. Lisa said, "It's tough to teach two sessions. You don't get a break…as soon as the day is over, you have to prepare for the next day's sessions….It's exhausting." I found it interesting that all the participants had taught two sessions at least once before. I believe this fact gave the participants greater insight regarding the extended learning activities offered during intersession. At the elementary school, 25 out of 38 teachers taught two sessions for the previous intersession week. Teachers received a stipend for teaching an extra session, but several teachers said they found teaching two sessions was too hard. Melissa shared, "I would rather have my planning time in the afternoons." Melissa continued stating, "Another reason I do not choose to teach an extra session is because if you teach two sessions, you have to make up two and a half workdays at another time." Amy stated that "Teachers teaching two sessions should not have to make-up the workdays…it should be understood that if you are teaching two sessions, you are working and preparing after school and at home."

Most participants have taught both remediation and enrichment sessions. Several of these teachers pointed out that teaching a remediation session was easier than teaching an enrichment session. Lynn has taught both remediation and enrichment. She said, "Enrichment is a lot of work; remediation is less work." Most participants I interviewed said when it came to remediation, they usually taught their students or students from the teacher's assigned grade-level. Melissa said that the teachers in her grade-level found that "If you can keep your students during remediation, it's best for the teacher and student." Karen said having her students for remediation allowed her to have a "less formal and more relaxed classroom setting for the students" during intersession week.

In contrast, enrichment sessions are often multi-grade-level with students the teacher has not had before. The topics for enrichment are often new topics for the teachers. Samantha shared her experience teaching a cooking enrichment session for Kindergarten through fourth-grade students. She said she realized after the first day, "She had overestimated the abilities of the kindergarten students to measure the ingredients." She had to "change the way she partnered the students and create fill-in activities," so she could work with the younger students in smaller groups. Jennifer shared her experience teaching an enrichment session where she had to adjust better accommodate the students. Jennifer previously taught a Lego coding enrichment session using iPads. She had more students in the afternoon, so she said, "I had to regroup and change what I was doing so that I did not have five students in a group. I added two additional groups, I had a Thomas the Train set, so that became a group, and I added a Lego group." Enrichment sessions are often new experiences for the teacher as well as the student, which may make it more work than teaching a remediation session.

Student-motivation. Another theme that emerged was student-motivation. Students recommended for remediation are required to attend intersession weeks. Ten participants voiced the belief that students worked harder during the regular school year to not have to attend remediation. At the middle school, teachers used an overnight field trip during intersession as motivation for students. Karen said, "Students volunteer to attend afterschool remediation because they know they will be eligible to attend the remediation overnight field trip during intersession." Nicole teaches at the high school, and she said, "Intersession is motivation for students to work hard and show up for school so they will not be required to attend." Annie shared that view. She said, "For some kids it motivates them to try to do their best, so they are not required to come during the remediation week, even though they may choose to come and do enrichment activities, they don't want to be told they have to attend remediation."

Planning is key. Each school in the district has a designated intersession coordinator to help with the planning of the intersession weeks. The grade-level teachers planned the overnight field trips, and the individual session teacher or teachers taking the day field trip did most of the planning for their outings. Karen said the planning was a "double-edged sword. The first time we did, it took an exorbitant amount of planning…. It has gotten easier, but you still have to put the planning into it." The elementary intersession coordinator helped by keeping a daily schedule of field trips, including the sponsoring teacher, destination, departure time, return time, assigned bus number, and the assigned bus driver. The elementary school utilized retired teachers, teacher aides, and student volunteers from the middle and high school to help during intersession. The coordinator and administration planned the daily schedules of these support personnel for the week.

Teachers submitted their proposals and needed resources several weeks before the intersession week. Karen said, "Anytime you do a project-based lesson, it takes planning." Leslie said that even though she has taught in every intersession, "the planning is still hard." Soon after the start of school, planning for the upcoming fall intersession began. Leslie said, "It is tough to plan three and a half-hour of enriching fun for five straight days." During intersession, teachers are required to teach one session for one-half of the day, and then they have a workday for the remaining half of the day if they do not elect to teach two sessions. If a teacher elects to teach two sessions, they are required to make-up two and a half workdays. Leslie pointed out that even though you "have this designated planning time….Planning has to be done before intersession takes place....You have to turn in your proposal along with a list of your supplies several weeks before." Amy said, "Teachers have to do a lot of planning for intersession…its very involved." Samantha said, "Planning for this one week of intersession… is the most planning" she does "all school year for just one week" of activities, but she said, "It's worth it." Samantha furthered shared, "The key to being successful during intersession is to plan and plan early." Lisa said, "Enrichment takes a lot more time to plan for." She recommended, "To get started in the planning process early and not wait to the last minute. It takes a while to get everything together…planning has to start right after school begins."

Planning for intersessions included determining which students would be required to attend remediation. Karen said that she met with the grade-level math teacher and an administrator to " go over the list of students recommended to attend remediation, so they have an idea who will be splitting time between math and reading and who will be only reading or only math." At the high school, Nicole said that she has met with other teachers to "plan the students' schedule since a lot of times a student will need remediation in more than one class, so

you have to work out a way to divide the time between the other classes." In the elementary school, third and fourth grade-level teachers met to determine how many students would be required to attend remediation and how many teachers would need to teach remediation sessions and how many teachers would be needed to teach enrichment sessions. Melissa said, "Typically out of six third grade teachers, only one will do an enrichment session, while the rest are doing remediation to accommodate the large number of students." Samantha taught a fourth-grade remediation session in the morning and enrichment in the afternoon. The morning remediation was for fourth-grade students only. Samantha said, "The fourth-grade teachers decided which students needed remediation and in what areas."

Retired teachers, teacher aides, student volunteers, and other teachers provided additional help to teachers. In these situations, the session teacher usually planned for the assigned helpers. For example, Teresa helped with math remediation. Teresa said, "I took a small group out of the class and worked with the students completing activities the math teacher had planned." In this circumstance, Teresa said, "I did not have to plan, but the math teacher did the planning."

Want to keep it. During the interviews and focus group discussions, all the participants shared that they want to keep this type of calendar. Amy shared that even though she would like to see some changes, she "would not like to see it go away." Annie said, "I hope we never go back to a straight-through calendar." She said the students benefit from remediation and enrichment, but the break-in routine, doing something different, was good. She further explained, "The teachers come back refreshed, and the students are refreshed." Mandy stated that the balanced calendar "is worth it. It's a ton of work, whether its remediation or enrichment…but I think for us, it makes sense to keep doing it." Kelly said, "I would promote this calendar to other schools…if given a choice to continue with this calendar or go back to

what we used to do, I would continue." Karen said, for her seventh-grade students, "The intersession weeks work well. I hope we keep doing it." Patricia said, "Initially, I was not looking forward to intersession…but I have totally changed my mind…I like the week of intersession. I think it is great."

Research Questions

To help me answer the research questions, I again used the process of coding to help organize the horizonalization statements into meaning units. I then organized significant statements related to the research questions (see Appendix K). Moustakas (1994) recommended repeating the process to uncover additional aspects of the phenomenon.

RQ1. What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement? I designed this research question to identify teachers' perspectives on the impact the extended learning activities offered during the week of intersession had on student achievement. Teachers shared that the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks had a positive impact on student achievement. Teachers shared that the extended learning activities influenced student achievement by building students' confidence. An indirect influence on student achievement was students' perceptions of being required to attend. Students were motivated to work hard and do their best, so they would not have to attend remediation sessions. Teachers shared that extended learning activities helped catch-up students academically by providing remediation during the school year. While most participants shared their perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks influenced student achievement, some teachers shared their views about how the overall balanced calendar, or the weeks of intersession influenced student achievement. The influences

on student achievement discussed in this section go beyond extended learning activities specifically. The discussion of student achievement includes the influence of the intersession weeks, and the balanced calendar, overall.

Positive impact. Nine teachers shared their opinions that extended learning activities had a positive impact on student achievement. Jennifer said, "We have kindergarten students who lack fine motor skills. I can use intersession to focus on improving this skill." Melissa said, "I can work with small groups during remediation, so I am able to see what skills or concepts still need work and what skills and concepts the students know." Patricia shared that she believed the remediation sessions had helped her students' end-of-grade scores. She stated, "Since we implemented intersession week, my test scores have improved." Samantha said she had observed a positive impact on student achievement that was beyond the curriculum standards. She said, "I think that throughout the whole process, the students are learning, and it may not be the learning that we are used to seeing. It's more problem solving, applying skills; it's more real-life skills." Annie shared that her students have seen a positive impact from the remediation sessions. She said, "One of the first sessions I taught was remediation, and at the end of the week, I asked my students what their feelings were about the week. All of them were positive about the week that it helped them, and the time was worthwhile." Amy said it depends on the extended learning activity as to the impact. She explained, "If you are just doing a craft session, you're cutting and gluing. It's all fun and great, but the students already know how to do that. But, if you are truly exposing the student to something they may not be able to be exposed to otherwise, I do think this has a positive impact on the students."

Builds confidence. Seven teachers expressed the opinion that their students gained confidence through the extended learning activities offered during the intersession weeks.

Patricia used the extended learning activities in remediation sessions to address concepts her

students struggle in, such as word problems in math. She broke down the process, modeled a

word problem, and then had the students work in small groups. She said by the end of the week,

"My students are more confident. Before, they might not even attempt to start a word problem.

By the end of the week, they're highlighting keywords and even illustrating the problem." Annie

stated that after the intersession week of remediation, "Students come back to school more

confident."

   Students' perceptions of being required to attend. I have already discussed that many

of the teachers believe that the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks were a

motivation for the students to work hard during the regular school days so they would not be

required to attend remediation during the intersession week. Required attendance was identified

as an influence on student achievement. One downside mentioned by some participants when

asked about the influence of the extended learning activities offered during remediation sessions

was the students' perceptions of being required to attend. This opinion seemed to be more

prevalent among the participants from middle and high school. Carolyn shared, "That it was

really disheartening to see how upset the kids were when they did learn they would have to come

to remediation. It was a scarlet letter on their back because they had to come to intersession."

She further shared that for some of her students, she did believe they worked hard not to be

required, but they needed additional help. She said in these cases, "She felt bad for having to

invite them to remediation." Nicole said, "For some of the students who struggle, it almost feels

like punishment."

   Remediation during the school year. Several teachers indicated that they believed that

one influence of the extended learning activities to student learning was providing remediation

opportunities to students during the school year. Jennifer said, "The purpose for the balanced calendar is to give students who need remediation… time to get caught up." Nicole shared that she believed the purpose of the intersession weeks were "to help our low-achieving students get the help they need to move forward academically and to give students who need it, a chance to get caught up." Melissa said she believed the school district implemented the balanced calendar because "The calendar committee looked for the best way to offer remediation for students who need it."

RQ2. What are teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as enrichment efforts? I constructed this question to further study teachers' perspectives on the enrichment activities offered during the week of intersession. The discussion of this question goes beyond the extended learning activities to include the teachers' perspectives on enrichment efforts from the weeks of intersession and the balanced calendar. As discussed earlier, a major theme from the data was great opportunities. This theme directly relates to research question two. Teachers shared that the extended learning activities offered during the week of intersession provided students a chance to experience things beyond the regular classroom setting that would not be possible during the regular school day. In addition to great opportunities, I uncovered the following commonalities from the data, (a) fun, (b) change of pace, and (c) builds relationships.

Great opportunities. Teachers shared numerous examples of great opportunities their students had during the intersession weeks. Lynn shared specific extended learning activities such as the Lego robotics, marvel superheroes with STEM challenges, and Fairy Tale STEM Challenges that she offered students during enrichment sessions. Lynn said, "Students get to experience things they normally wouldn't get to in the regular classroom setting." Melissa

talked about the extended learning activities she offered during an enrichment session. The topic

of her enrichment session was wood-working. The students were mostly boys from the second,

third, and fourth grades. The students made and painted wooden birdhouses and stools. Local

businesses donated the wood used for the projects. During the week, the students toured a local

furniture factory and a local wood-working business. Melissa shared, "Students got to see the

project from beginning to end and then visit businesses related to the project in the same week.

This just isn't possible during the regular school calendar." Several teachers talked about some

the field trips their students took during intersession. Some field trips were just for the day while

others were overnight. Samantha shared that the entire fourth grade went to Jamestown during a

week of intersession. Karen shared that seventh-grade students had the opportunity to go to

Washington DC and Pigeon Forge, TN, during previous intersessions.

       Fun. Seven teachers described different aspects of intersession as fun. Karen said, "It's

stressful, but I think we finish the week or activities and just marvel at just the fun, the sheer fun.

It's more relaxed. The kids are relaxed. The teachers are relaxed. You see sides to the students'

personality that you don't get to see in the normal class setting." Teresa shared that she enjoyed

seeing the different interests of the students. She said, "It's fun to see what sessions the students

sign-up for." Kelly shared that she liked to see the students "flourish…and shine" during

intersession. Students were able to sign-up for enrichment sessions that showed their gifts and

talents. Kelly furthered shared, "Its fun to see the students excited about coming to school."

Several teachers shared that they intentionally tried to plan fun activities for the students.

Melissa said she enjoys looking back at all the pictures taken with all the smiling faces. She

further added, "We try to make this week fun for our students." Annie enthusiastically stated,

"Enrichment is fun! The kids love this week."

Change of pace. The intersession weeks and the extended learning activities, during these weeks, and the enrichment activities specifically provided a change of pace for the students and the teachers. Through enrichment sessions, students had a chance to do and experience things that were different from the routines and procedures of the regular school setting. During enrichment sessions, students were in a class with different students than they are usually with, and with students from different grade-levels. Students had one or more different teachers. Leslie shared she enjoyed the change of pace. She said, "I like the change in routine for the students and teachers. It's good to see the students not seated at a desk but instead up doing something."

Eight teachers shared that intersession was a welcomed change of pace for them, even though it was a lot of work. Patricia simply stated, "I like the change of pace." Annie said that intersession "gives teachers and students a break from the regular routine." Carolyn expressed a similar view, "The thing I like best about it is, it changes up our everyday routine….We get to do something different….I like the change."

Builds relationships. For several teachers, the extended learning activities offered during enrichment sessions provided a setting in which relationships were cultivated. Six teachers shared that the extended learning activities offered during enrichment sessions allowed them opportunities to build relationships. Lynn said she liked, "getting to work with other teachers and learn from their strengths." Teresa shared that she has helped with the Washington D.C. trip a couple of times. She said, "You get to know the other teachers better and establish deeper bonds, especially when you take seventh-graders on an overnight field trip to D.C." Patricia said she liked "getting to work with different teachers during enrichment." Patricia shared that she and another teacher, from a different grade-level, took students to the local

recreation center for swimming along with other activities, such as crafts and baking. Patricia

said she enjoyed getting to plan and teach with the other teacher because it gave her a chance to

get to know her colleague better.

Several participants mentioned that they felt the extended learning activities offered

during the enrichment sessions helped them build better relationships with the students. Leslie

shared, "I like getting to see the students in a different setting. I think enrichment sessions help

build teacher-student relationships…I get a chance to establish a connection with the students

during intersession. I think students will learn more from a teacher that they feel connected to."

Samantha shared why she liked to teach an enrichment session. She said, "I like teaching

enrichment because it gives me a chance to connect to my students in a different way."

During enrichment, sometimes students from different grade-levels were in the same

session. Having students from different grade-levels gave students a chance to build

relationships with other students. Samantha said she enjoyed how students established

relationships with other students from different grades during enrichment. She said, "I like to

see how the students interact with the other grade-levels during enrichment." Mandy shared this

view. She stated, "I like that the different grade-levels interact with each other. You have

second, third, and fourth-graders all doing something together instead of just the same kids all

the time."

RQ3.   What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities

during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar? I used research question three to

reveal teachers' recommendations regarding the extended learning activities offered during

intersession. Participants made recommendations for future extended learning activities in

remediation sessions and enrichment sessions. All the participants expressed a desire to keep the

balanced calendar with the remediation and enrichment sessions. Many participants recommended putting effort and time in planning for the intersession weeks.

Recommendations for remediation. Some participants pointed out the importance of using a different approach during remediation sessions. Melissa shared, "It's important to make remediation fun and not just rely on worksheets. If all you do is worksheets, then students get bored by Tuesday or Wednesday. I try to do something different than we normally do in the regular classroom. I also use prizes during this week as an incentive for my students to want to keep coming back. It doesn't have to be much; it doesn't take much to motivate these students." Karen said remediation activities should be well planned and engaging. She said, "I use remediation time to work on skills, not test preparation. You must be structured and organized, but the activities need to be fun and hands-on for the students."

Several participants recommended using small groups and, when possible, keeping your own students for an effective remediation week. Kelly said, "We found it works best to remediate your own students because you already know your own kids." Melissa said working with her students allowed her as the teacher, "to get a clearer picture of where the students are and what they are still struggling with." Lisa said she thought a remediation class size of usually 10-12 students worked well. She said that she would "break them into smaller groups. They would have some independent stations, and I can work with a small group. A small group helps me give one-to-one attention." Samantha said, "In all of the remediation sessions I teach, I use small group rotations because I find it easier to do and to be able to manage. For enrichment, I have four to five students per group."

Recommendations for enrichment. Smaller class size was one of the recommendations from participants. Participants from the elementary school pointed out that enrichment sessions

were usually 20 students for one teacher and 40 students if two teachers worked together. Amy recommended reducing this number. She stated, "I recommend a reduction in class size for the enrichment sessions and to get more help with these sessions." Jennifer shared, "I think 40 students are too many for most enrichment sessions, even with two teachers." Mandy said, "I taught a couple of enrichment sessions where you have 40 kids all week, and it is a lot. It is hard to manage that many kids and keep them going for three hours. Forty kids in one classroom, it's very hard to keep them all together."

Participants from the elementary school recommended reducing the number of days of enrichment for the younger students. Lynn said, "I think five days of enrichment is too long for the younger students. I think three days might work better." Jennifer stated, "I think we should look at reducing the number of days of enrichment for the younger students. This could help." Leslie said, "In the enrichment week, it's exciting at the beginning, but the students start getting burn-out toward the end of the week. I wonder if it would be better to shorten the enrichment week, maybe have it for only three days."

Participants recommended using community resources during enrichment. Enrichment can be a great opportunity to get community members involved. Melissa stated, "I would like to see more involvement from people in the community…I think it is good to get people outside the school involved so they can see all that we accomplish for our students." Sandra said, "We are blessed to have strong community support and resources. I know some systems can't do this model because they don't have the resources like we do downtown to take the field trips we get to take. I hope we always have strong community involvement."

Composite Textural Description

The composite textural description is a combination of the participants' individual textural descriptions. The discussed themes helped me frame the composite textural description. All the participants had taught remediation and enrichment sessions. Participants shared numerous examples of the opportunities their students had during intersession, from hands-on STEM activities, day field trips, and overnight field trips. I sensed the pride the participants had when sharing a specific enrichment session, they had previously taught. Several teachers said the students had opportunities they would not have had otherwise without the balanced calendar.

There were many field trips and experiences outside the typical classroom setting. Many teachers shared that the opportunities the students had were the best part of this week. Deena shared that her "students get to experience things they would otherwise not get to experience, like the field trips they get to take." She said her students still talk about what they did during intersession, weeks later. Several teachers shared that during enrichment, the students were excited to be at schools.

Several participants mentioned the change of pace for the teachers. For teachers who taught only one session, the week was less hectic than the regular school weeks because the teacher got a half-day each day of planning time. A few of the teachers described their intersession week as a more relaxed and laid-back week. Several teachers described some aspects of the week as fun. Karen shared that the daily routine during intersession was less formal, yet she admitted she was "still organized and structured."

Intersession was a change from the normal daily routine of the regular school year for the teachers and the students. The week held new experiences in some cases with new students. Leslie said she loved getting to see the students in a different light. Teresa shared she was

"surprised by what some of the students sign-up for." She said she thought it was good for the students to take advantage of this week to try new things.

All of the participating teachers referred to the hard work that goes into preparing for a week of intersession. Many of the elementary teachers said that remediation sessions were easier to prepare for than enrichment sessions. All participants had previously taught two sessions at least once during a week of intersession. Several teachers, all of those that taught two sessions, they were exhausted by the end of the week. Teachers who taught two sessions were with students all day with no planning time. One teacher said it was difficult not to have any planning time. Lisa said, "You don't get a break from the kids, so as soon as the day is over, you have to rush and get ready for the next day."

Several teachers said they tried to plan activities that were engaging and fun for the students. Teachers who shared about remediation said it was important to do something different during the intersession. Many of the participants shared that the enrichment sessions gave them a chance to interact with the students in a different way. During intersession week, some of the teachers said they liked that they get to build relationships with the students.

Some teachers worked with other teachers they do not typically work with. Mandy said that there was a lot of "professional learning' that goes on during the week. Teachers could work together. The organization of intersession lends to a teamwork approach for the intersession week. Intersession was an all-hands-on-deck week. Designated helpers were assigned to the teachers. These helpers were other teachers, aides, retired teachers, community volunteers, and student volunteers. Each school had a designated intersession coordinator to help with the logistics of the week.

At the elementary level, students reported to their regular classroom the first thing to take attendance and get a lunch count. Students received a ticket to their first session. Students reported to their first session. At the beginning of the session, the teacher took attendance for the session. Students were served lunch before the first session ended. At the elementary school, students received a second ticket indicating their assignment for the second half of the day. Some students only stayed half the day.

At the middle and high school levels, students reported directly to their first session where the teacher took attendance and then began. At the middle school, there was a break for the students halfway through the session. One of the middle school teachers said this was when the students who needed remediation in more than one area would switch to other remediation sessions. For example, if the students had math first, then they switched to reading or vice versa. Students went to lunch toward the end of the first session. After the first session ended, students reported to the second session or went home for the day. A couple of the middle school teachers described the students as more relaxed and at ease during intersession.

At the high school, students may be in a specific remediation session for only one hour because the students were required to attend multiple remediation classes. Some high school students had remediation in science, English, math, or history. In the case where students were required to attend more than one remediation session, they split their time among the different sessions. One of the high school teachers said this situation made it difficult to plan. For some of the high school advanced courses such as chemistry, AP History, or Honors government class, students had to come to school at specified times during intersession week and complete assignments. Students were served lunch toward the end of the first enrichment session at the high school, then went home or to the second enrichment session.

The participants who taught at the middle school or high school level said they believed their students worked hard during the regular school year to try not to have to attend remediation during intersession. One of the high school teachers shared that the intersession motivates the students to do excellent, so they do not have to attend. Having an extra week off from school was an incentive for many of the students to complete their assignments and do their best according to many of the participants. Some of the participants shared that for the students who were required to attend remediation, the reactions of the students were negative.

All participants said they would recommend this type of calendar to other schools. All participants said they hoped to continue with this calendar. Some of the participants said they would like to look at making changes. Two of the participants said the school year was too long. One of the participants said the extended regular school day was too long. Three teachers said it would be good to have a calendar committee to determine any needed improvements. Several elementary teachers suggested reducing class sizes and having a shorter week for younger students. A couple of participants from the elementary commented that they thought the high school teachers had little to do during intersession because not many high school students attended. Some of the middle school and high school teachers said the elementary school teachers worked particularly hard during intersession because of the large number of students that attended during intersession.

<div align="center">**Composite Structural Description**</div>

The composite structural description is an analysis of how participants experienced providing extended learning activities during a week of intersession. Most of the work for the teachers happened well before the week of intersession. Leslie admitted, "By the first of September, the pressure is on to decide what you're going to teach during intersession."

Teachers had to decide what session or sessions they want to teach during intersession. Then the teachers wrote-up and submitted a proposal to the intersession coordinator by a predetermined deadline.

Along with the description of the session, the teacher included a list of needed resources and a budget for these resources. When the teachers received final approval for the intersession assignment, teachers continued the planning process. Many teachers admitted the planning was most of the work. Annie said for overnight field trips, such as the field trip to Washington, DC, the planning had to begin a few weeks after school started in the fall. Closer to the week of intersession, the teachers met to decide which students would be required to attend remediation.

At the elementary school, Amy said that the administration usually asked for additional volunteers to teach an enrichment session to help keep the class sizes down. Typically, there are around twenty remediation sessions at the elementary school. During a past intersession week, 25 teachers taught two sessions. At the elementary level, retired teachers were hired to help during intersession at substitute pay rates. Volunteers from the community were enlisted to help. The local school of the arts offered enrichment sessions for the elementary students. The recreation center aquatics staff helped with middle school enrichment sessions held at the indoor swimming pool at the recreation center.

All students received intersession brochures describing the enrichment sessions. The brochures included deadline dates to sign-up. The intersession coordinator and administration determined room assignments and session assignments for students. Schools handled the logistics of the day differently. At the elementary school, students went to homeroom, were given a ticket, and were sent to their morning session. Teachers took attendance in homeroom

and during their sessions. At the middle and high schools, students reported directly to their

session. The teachers then took attendance.

By the end of the week, teachers reported being tired and looking forward to a much-

needed week off. Many of the lower-grade- level teachers said that three days of remediation or

enrichment might be better for the younger students. Many teachers said the younger students

seemed tired or, as Jennifer put it, "burned out." All of the teachers said they liked the week off

in the fall and spring. Annie said, "The teachers and students return to school refreshed and

ready to tackle the rest of the year."

Composite Textural and Structural Synthesis

Moustakas' (1994) final phase of the phenomenology model requires the integration of

the textural and structural descriptions into a unified description of the essences of the

participants' experiences of the phenomenon. I integrated both my textural and structural

descriptions into a composite description of the phenomenon. In this study, I developed a

composite textural and structural synthesis by examining teachers' perspectives regarding the

influence of the extended learning activities offered during the weeks of intersession. The

synthesis revealed that the participants shared both challenging and beneficial experiences they

had while providing extended learning activities during a week of intersession.

Challenges included the intense planning that was required for this one week of activities.

Karen said the planning was a "double-edged sword. The first time we did it took an exorbitant

amount of planning…; it has gotten easier, but you still have to put the planning into it."

Another challenge described by the participants was that the week was tiring, especially if you

taught both the morning and the afternoon session. Melissa said, "By the end of the week of

intersession the teachers are absolutely 100% exhausted. This doesn't make sense because,

especially, with remediation, we are going at a slower pace with a smaller number of students."

Overall, participants shared their perspectives on the benefits of the extended learning

activities, such as the great opportunities for the students, the motivation the intersession gives

students to do their best during the regular school year so they will not have to attend

remediation, and the change of pace the week of intersession gives both teachers and students.

Deena said, "Students get to experience things they would otherwise not get to experience."

Intersession provides motivation for students to work hard, so they do not have to attend

remediation. Annie said, "I think for some kids it motivates them to try to do their best…, so

they don't have to be required to come to remediation week, even though they may choose to

come and do enrichment activities….The students know that how they are performing in class

will determine this." Participants liked the change of pace the intersession weeks provided.

Leslie said, "I like the change in routine for the students and teachers." The teachers felt the

extended learning activities had a positive impact on student achievement. The participants said

they would like to keep the balanced calendar, and that they would recommend the balanced

calendar to other school districts.

Summary

Chapter Four included the results of this study using the voices of the participants. This

chapter contains a description of the 18 participants who had provided extended learning

activities during enrichment or remediation sessions during the week of intersession in a

balanced calendar in a small rural school district. The theme development process and the

emerging themes were discussed in this chapter. This chapter presented the results in the context

of the research questions. The final step was to develop a composite textural and structural

synthesis of the essence of the phenomenon. The following chapter is a discussion of the

findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. This chapter contains a summary of the findings, discussions of the findings concerning the theoretical and empirical literature, and the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. Included in this chapter are the delimitations and limitations of the study, along with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This study sought to answer three research questions related to the experience of teachers providing extended learning activities in a balanced calendar. First, "What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement?" (RQ1). Teachers with experience teaching during an intersession week of a balanced calendar believed that the extended learning activities offered during the week of intersession impacted student achievement in numerous ways. Teachers shared that the remediation sessions helped many students get caught up during the regular school year. Students received targeted, individualized instruction in a small group setting that helped closed learning gaps. Teachers identified an indirect influence that the extended learning activities had on student achievement. Middle and high school teachers found that their students worked harder during the regular school year, so they would not have to attend the remediation session. Elementary and middle school teachers shared circumstances where the extended learning activities affected student achievement beyond the curriculum standards. Many of the extended learning activities offered during intersession cultivated leadership, problem-solving, team-building, and critical thinking skills.

Teachers reported that many of their students gained confidence after attending intersession week.

Secondly, "What are teachers' perspectives about the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as an enrichment effort?" (RQ2). Teachers believed the extended learning activities offered during the enrichment sessions provided great opportunities for their students. Students got to experience enriching activities that would not have been possible in a traditional school calendar. Most teachers shared that they put a lot of time into planning fun and engaging activities, including but not limited to, one-day and overnight field trips. Participants talked most about the enrichment experiences offered during the interviews. It was obvious that the teachers were very proud of the opportunities their students had during the enrichment sessions.

Lastly, "What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar?" (RQ3). All the participants shared that they would like to continue with the balanced calendar. They all said they would recommend this type of calendar to other schools. Teachers from each school shared the importance of planning in that you must plan early, and the activities need to be hands-on, fun, and engaging. According to the participants, the extended learning activities offered during the intersession week needed to be different from what the students normally do in their regular classroom.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of the research about the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed earlier in this report. The results of this study may address a gap in the literature by exploring the perspectives of teachers regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement in a rural setting. Theoretical discussions

include Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, teachers' self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy. Empirical discussions include summer slide, educational change, and teachers' perspectives on extended learning activities.

Theoretical Literature

Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory provided a framework for this study. His theory emphasizes learning through observation. During intersession, participants shared examples of their students' gaining positive interactions with other students. Building relationships was a theme among the participants. This theme included relationships students established with other students during their enrichment or remediation sessions. The experiences of 18 participants who provided extended learning activities during intersession were examined. Results indicated that learning occurred for students and teachers through observation. Three of the participants shared that they believed their students gained confidence as a learner by the end of the intersession week because of the small group, targeted instruction, and the interactions with the other students struggling in the same area. Four of the participants shared that their students talked about their experiences during enrichment sessions weeks later. Students were excited about working with students from other classes and grade-levels during enrichment.

Bandura (1977) explained that vicarious reinforcement could occur when one experienced an emotional response to an observation of others. Observations can include but are not limited to visual observation, a comment from another teacher, or observation of another's behavior. During intersession, teachers were able to work with other teachers with whom they typically did not get to work. Some of the participants shared that intersession provided a chance for them to observe students and other teachers in a different light. The numerous one-day and overnight field trips influenced students learning by exposing them to experiences that were not

possible during the regular day. Teachers shared their belief that these experiences positively affected their students by building students' confidence with learning, building relationships with other students and teachers, and providing enriching opportunities beyond the curriculum.

Teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers' self-efficacy influences their attitudes regarding the implementation of instructional practices and can ultimately determine the success of instructional programs (Ford, Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, & Schween, 2017; Guskey, 1986). The data in this study support this conclusion, as well. The participants viewed intersession and extended learning activities offered through remediation and enrichment as positive instructional efforts for their students. The participants talked about what they did to prepare and described the actions they took during intersession to make this time effective for their students. Seven of the participants specifically shared that they believed their students gained confidence during intersession. Hattie (2008) described learner self-efficacy as "the confidence or strength of belief that we have in ourselves that we can make our learning happen" (p. 46). Annie, one of the participants, said,

> Remediation is for kids that need some extra help....You're presenting things in a
> different way, so hopefully, you are catching the students up on any skills that they had a
> deficiency in, and when they come back to the regular classroom after intersession,
> they're feeling more confident. The activities are set-up in a more fun and interactive
> way to engage the students more.

The teachers believed that they were positively affecting their students' learning by building their confidence during intersession.

Teachers in this study shared the importance of creating extended learning activities that were fun, engaging, and different from what the student would typically do in the regular school

setting. It was evident that the teachers were proud of the extended learning activities they had created for their students. The data in this study support the theory of self-efficacy in that the teachers' confidence and pride in their instructional methods influenced student confidence and learning during the intersession weeks.

Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found support for the idea that teachers with lower self-efficacy would be more likely to focus on how the implementation of a new strategy would personally affect them, while teachers with a higher self-efficacy would be more focused on how the new strategy would affect their students (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Some of the participants shared examples of how the balanced calendar negatively affected them. Participants who taught pre-k shared some criticisms of how the intersession weeks affected them personally. Amy shared that she did not think it was fair that elementary teachers worked more than teachers from the other schools during intersession. She said, "Ninety-nine percent of our students will come during the week of intersession. High school barely has any students attend. Middle school is just a little better. It feels like the elementary teachers…get an extra week to their school year." The findings of this study found that the elementary school had the greatest percent of students attending intersession, but this did not indicate that the workload for the teachers at the middle and high school was less than the workload of the teachers at the elementary school. Amy went on to share the positive attributes of the intersession weeks. When I asked her if she would recommend this calendar, she replied, "Yes, after all the negative stuff I've said, I do think it is a good thing." Her last statement was, "I hope I didn't sound too negative. There are some big things I would like to see changed, but I would not want this to go away."

The participants who taught pre-k s said that they kept their regular students for the entire day during intersession. Amy said,

> Initially, my two, three, and four-year-old students weren't invited to participate. So, they were home for two weeks. The other pre-k students did attend. The pre-k teachers had their own students, but they prepared special activities for them. I went to administration and asked if I could do this….In the past two sessions, I have worked with my own students.

Both pre-k teachers said they plan special hands-on activities for their students. Chloe used these weeks to take her students on day field trips to places such as an Italian restaurant, fire station, and pumpkin patch, to name a few destinations. However, Chloe did have some criticism of the balanced calendar. Chloe stated that,

> It's hard to be in school until June 12th, when the students are pretty much done by May 1st…. It's hard to be in school that long because you don't have a break. You have two days off between spring intersession week and June 12. You have only two days off for Easter. It's a 'tough row to hoe.' Getting out toward the end of May was awesome.

The experiences of the pre-k teachers were different from the other participants, in that their teaching assignments during intersession were the same as they were during the regular school year. This circumstance may have influenced their frustration with some of the aspects of the calendar. Unlike other teachers, they did not have an opportunity to work with different students or teachers. They did not get a half-day workday during intersession. Their class sizes were the same, and the structure of their day remained the same as it did on a regular school day. Unlike these pre-K teachers, the other participants had the opportunity to work with different

students in different settings during intersession, and, perhaps, this condition had a positive impact on teacher efficacy for those participants.

   Collective teacher efficacy. Tschannen-Moran & Barr (2004) described collective teacher efficacy as the "collective self-perception that teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities" (p. 190). The theme of great opportunities in the findings of this study is evidence of the presence of collective teacher efficacy among the participants. Teachers described the enriching learning activities provided for their students. Numerous times teachers gave examples of first-time experiences the students had through intersession, such as eating at a specific type of restaurant, visiting museums, seeing the ocean, riding on a boat, to name a few examples. Melissa shared, "The parents, the students, and the teachers liked this calendar so much that they have kept doing it."

   When exploring improvements, the participants would like to see in the balanced calendar; several teachers shared that a committee of teachers could accomplish this goal. Leslie said, "I think that after we have done it for so many years…we need to have a committee of teachers reevaluate what needs to be changed." Participants demonstrated that they have confidence in other teachers to evaluate and make recommendations for improving the balanced calendar.

   Teachers had input into their teaching assignments during intersession. This input promoted teacher ownership and buy-in to the intersession weeks. Donohoo (2017) found that providing teachers, this type of voice is empowering and supports collective efficacy. Goddard et al. (2004) found that teachers' confidence increased when they believed their opinions were considered. The participants of this study shared instances where they influenced important

instructional decisions such as determining which students should attend remediation, what sessions were taught, and how the remediation should be carried out, thus indicating a strong sense of collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004).

Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states are four sources of efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). Mastery experiences happen when teachers experience the success that results from actions within their control. Anderson (2017) found that mastery experiences result in increased collective efficacy when there is an expectation that the performance can be replicated. Some of the experiences described by the participants could be categorized as mastery experiences. The overnight field trips the middle school teachers planned were examples of mastery experiences. Karen shared that during the first few intersessions, field trips were for a smaller select group of students, but later, the overnight trips were offered to the entire grade-level of students. This scenario was the case for the fourth-grade teachers, too. The remediation sessions described by Karen and Patricia could be described as mastery experiences. In both instances, the teachers described, in detail, their actions in planning and implementing extended learning activities and their expected outcomes for the students. Both teachers provided evidence of their students' successes from remediation during the week of intersession.

Vicarious experiences are an influential source of collective efficacy. The teachers were aware of other teachers who had experienced some of the same challenges and obstacles they had during intersession. Seeing other teachers overcome similar circumstances to be successful during intersession can increase collective efficacy. Lynn said one of the things she liked most about intersession was "working with other coworkers and learning from their strengths. Like, if one teacher is not strong in technology, but the other is, then you can learn a lot during that

time." Donohoo (2017) held that collective teacher efficacy increases when teachers observe

success in similar school settings.

Social persuasion is an influence on collective efficacy. Social persuasion happens when

persuaders, viewed as trustworthy and credible, encourage the group to persevere and overcome

challenges. Social persuasion was evident for many of the participants in this study. Participants

that were second and third-grade teachers shared that their grade level would meet as a team to

decide how many teachers would teach remediation versus enrichment based on the needs of

their students. Establishing standards of collaboration, cooperation, and openness support social

persuasion (Adams & Forsyth, 2006). At the school level, social persuasion occurs when school

staff successfully convince other teachers that together, they constitute an effective team

(Donohoo, 2017). Social persuasion occurred at the elementary school. Some of the elementary

participants shared that school staff persuaded teachers to teach two sessions instead of one to

meet the needs of the students. Goddard et al. (2000) found that the more cohesive the faculty,

the greater chance that teachers will be persuaded by sound arguments.

Another influential source of collective teacher efficacy is affective states or one's

emotional state. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) offered that affective states are "the

emotional tone of the organization" (p. 190). Affective states can be described as the teachers'

feelings of excitement associated with their belief in his or her ability, or as the teachers' feelings

of anxiety associated with their belief in his or her incompetence. Teachers shared their

enthusiasm when describing the extended learning activities that they provided during

intersession weeks. Teachers did not seem anxious but came across confident in their ability to

provide effective extended learning activities for their students during intersession. A few

participants described the intersession week as a more relaxed week; others used the word "fun"

to describe the week and its activities. Sandra described her emotional state during intersession. She said, "It's our week to breathe and not feel stressed coming to work, feeling like as soon as we get there, we have to be ready to go. Intersession gives us breathing time. We look forward to this week."

Donohoo (2017) identified the following six conditions that support collective efficacy: advanced teacher influence, teacher involvement in goal setting, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, the responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention. This study showed that advanced teacher influence was present because teachers had an opportunity to assume specific leadership roles concerning the intersession weeks, along with the influence to make decisions. Each school had an intersession coordinator, which was a designated teacher who helped with the organization and assignment of students and teachers. Teachers had input into which students would be required to attend remediation. Teachers influenced what their teaching assignments would be during intersession, except for the pre-k teachers who kept their students and regular schedule. The participants owned what they taught during intersession. Participants shared examples of the extended learning activities they had planned and implemented, along with the results of their efforts.

Goal attainment is a significant predictor of collective efficacy (Kurz & Knight, 2004). Several participants shared that they met and planned for the intersession weeks with other teachers. Together the teachers decided how to distribute the students for remediation, and teachers had input into which teachers would teach remediation and which teachers would teach enrichment for their grade-level. Being a part of the planning process allowed the teachers to voice any issues or concerns they may have had beforehand. Samantha said, "Teachers will give

you a heads-up when you have a student that may be a behavioral issue. We try not to schedule students in the same session who would exhibit negative behaviors together."

Teachers had the opportunity to hear about what other teachers were doing during intersession. Teachers sent home brochures describing the sessions that would be offered at their school during the upcoming intersession. The local newspaper published articles that feature some of the activities of intersession week. The schools' websites and social media featured pictures and articles about the happenings during intersession week. According to some of the participants, students talked about the things they did during intersession weeks later. Donohoo (2017) found that teachers' knowledge about other teachers' efforts could create confidence in another teacher's ability to impact student achievement (Donohoo, 2017). A significant correlation between collective teacher efficacy and teachers' knowledge about other teachers' actions exists (Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989). Intersession provided opportunities for teachers to share instructional strategies, observe other teachers, and learn from one another, all of which could increase teachers' knowledge about one another's work (Donohoo, 2017). Lynn said, "As a teacher, I like working with other coworkers and learning from their strengths."

All of the participants said they wanted to continue with the balanced calendar, and they would recommend the balanced calendar to other schools. Donohoo (2017) defined a cohesive staff by the degree to which teachers are in agreement with each other on fundamental issues. Most teachers had input into their teaching assignments during intersession. A characteristic of a cohesive faculty is the consideration of teachers' skills and needs when making team assignments (Ross et al., 2004). The more positive collaborations teachers have with each other, the greater the faculty cohesion will be (Ross et al., 2004).

Participants shared that to keep class sizes down during intersession; the leadership team would appeal to teachers to teach two sessions. All of the participants had previously taught two sessions during intersession. A few of the participants said that in the most recent intersession, they did not teach two sessions because it was too hard. Melissa had taught two sessions before but said during her interview, "I would rather have my planning time in the afternoon." The results of this study had limited data to evaluate the responsiveness of leadership.

Effective systems of intervention are the sixth factor that influences collective efficacy (Donohoo, 2017). Effective systems of intervention provide all students opportunities to achieve. DuFour and DuFour (2010) found that teachers had a higher sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy when their schools had successful remediation and enrichment programs. Teachers in this study believed that their schools had successful remediation and enrichment programs. The intersession had such programs, and all participants said they would recommend the balanced calendar, which contained the intersession, to other schools.

Some of the participants shared specific recommendations for remediation or enrichment, such as targeted small group instruction and using fun and engaging activities. Patricia and Karen provided detailed descriptions of their remediation sessions. Both attributed extended learning activities offered during the intersession weeks to better end-of-grade test results for their students. It is important to note that both teachers emphasized that they did not work on end-of-grade test prep during intersession; they worked on skills where their students had struggled the most. As for enrichment, participants shared that the enrichment sessions required more planning and preparation. Sandra pointed out that working with multiple grade levels of students during enrichment required class management skills. A couple of the participants from the elementary school recommended reducing the class sizes of the enrichment sessions.

Carolyn said she would like to survey the high school students to find out what their interests are to increase the high school students' participation in the enrichment sessions during intersession. The responses of the participants indicated their confidence in knowing what constituted an effective remediation and enrichment program.

Empirical Literature

This study may help advance the body of research regarding issues related to providing students extended learning activities during an intersession week of a balanced calendar in a rural setting. Furthermore, limited studies exist that have used a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the essence of the shared experiences of teachers who teach in a balanced calendar in a rural setting. While some quantitative studies have indicated the success of the balanced calendar on the academic achievement of students in specific subgroups, few studies have examined the teacher's experiences with the balanced calendar in a rural setting (Cooper et al. 2003; Patall et al., 2010). Further discussion related to the empirical literature includes summer slide, educational change, and teachers' perspectives on extended learning activities.

Summer slide. Summer slide is a learning loss experienced by students from summer break. Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson (2001) and Downey, von Hippel, and Broh (2004) found that disadvantaged and minority children were more likely to experience summer slide. When school closes for summer, many resources stop for economically disadvantaged students (Entwisle et al., 1997). When SVCPS adopted the balanced calendar, the summer break was reduced by four weeks. The fact that summer break was reduced could decrease the learning loss for students during summer through remedial and enrichment activities. Lisa said, "We still offered enrichment for students during summer school, but the interest was not as much as it had been."

One of the high school participants said she still taught summer school. Nicole shared that at the high school, students who needed to recover credit could still attend summer school. The students who attend summer school and the weeks of intersession would go beyond the 180-day school calendar. Nicole said for teachers who teach summer school, they can. "get burned out." She said, "We have to go so long into the summer and then immediately the next week you start summer school….You have to teach another four weeks. That's a lot." The results of this study did not provide data to determine if summer slide was reduced for disadvantaged or minority students from SVCPS because of the extended learning activities offered during intersession.

Educational change. Diffusion is the process by which an innovation spreads among participants over time (Rogers, 2002). All participants could be categorized as adopters of the balanced calendar. All participants said they would recommend the balanced calendar to other schools. All participants said they hoped to continue with the balanced calendar in the future. Participants in this study shared varying ideas as to the reason the balanced calendar was implemented. Some of the participants felt the balanced calendar was implemented to close learning gaps for students. The participants from the high school held this view. They mentioned that they believed the balanced calendar was adopted to help their students catch-up early in the school year instead of waiting until summer school to provide remediation. Some of the elementary teachers shared that the balanced calendar was implemented to provide students opportunities that would not be possible during the regular school year. Most of the participants shared that the balanced calendar was implemented to provide students remediation during the school year. Teachers indicated an example of diffusion in providing great opportunities for the

students. Teachers at the elementary and middle school shared that the field trips evolved to include the entire grade-level of students for overnight field trips.

The term innovativeness can be used to describe the degree teachers have adopted an initiative (Rogers, 2002). Teachers adopting an initiative may be categorized as (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, or (e) laggards (Rogers, 2002). Two of the 18 participants shared that they were not early adopters of the balanced calendar. Patricia shared that initially, she was not in favor of the balanced calendar. She said, "I was against it." She said that after the first intersession, she found, "The students who need to be here are here that week. Once they get here, they enjoy it a little more than a regular week. They're excited to come." Annie shared that she was concerned when first implementing the balanced calendar because "The students required to go would feel inferior." She went on to say that she discovered this not to be the case, instead of from her experiences, she said, "The students are ok with it, and I think that sometimes they are able to see their successes more because everyone there was struggling, too." Some of the participants could be described as innovators. Several participants talked about planning for intersession early on in the school year. This acknowledgment indicated their commitment to providing quality extended learning activities for their students. All the participants said they would like to keep the balanced calendar, so they are all adopters of the initiative.

Fullan (2001) noted that there are at least three dimensions in implementing educational change: materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs. All three were present in this calendar initiative. Teachers requested a list of materials they needed for intersession. If approved, the school district purchased these materials. Several participants mentioned the importance that materials for intersession were provided by the school district. These materials allowed teachers

to offer extended learning activities that were fun and interactive. Jennifer requested LEGOs that included an online program that worked with iPads. She said, "The program was very engaging to the students, so I had very little behavior problems."

Participants shared the significance of changing the teaching approach for remediation. Several of the teachers said that small groups with hands-on, engaging activities were the most successful approach for remediation. Lisa said, "We try to plan activities that are hands-on and fun when possible for remediation."

Another dimension of change is beliefs. The participants shared their belief that the balanced calendar was successful and that they would like to keep it. Annie said, "The intersession week is wonderful, and the kids gain from remediation and the enrichment." All participants said they would recommend it to other schools. Samantha stated, "I definitely recommend other schools consider this type of calendar. I think it's good, and I think it's beneficial for the students not just in academics, but in other areas such as socially and in life skills."

Huberman and Miles (1994) identified the three stages of the change process as (a) initiation, or adoption, (b) implementation, and (c) continuation. The calendar initiative is in the third phase of continuation or institutionalization. Sandra said, "Now that we have done this for so many years, the students know what to do. They get their tickets. They know where to go. It's like a 'well-oiled machine.'" Fullan (2009) said, "Persistence and resilience are important because people often start with grand intentions and aspirations, but gradually lower them over time in the face of obstacles" (p. 20). The findings indicate that the participants have continued to have high expectations for the extended learning activities offered during intersession. For example, there were overnight field trips offered during the most recent intersession at all the

schools. According to Karen, in seventh grade, more students were able to participate in the overnight field trips than ever before. These field trips have become an institutionalized part of the intersession.

Fullan (2016) suggested looking at the impact on student learning when evaluating a change initiative. Several participants shared accounts of their students benefiting from extended learning activities. Patricia felt the extended learning activities offered during remediation sessions as one of the factors that increased her students' end-of-grade test scores. Patricia said, "Since we implemented intersession week, my test scores have improved." Samantha shared, "The students learn a lot during the week of intercession."

It is important to understand the idea of the implementation dip (Fullan, 2009). An implementation dip occurs after implementation. Indicators of an implementation dip can be declining interest, losing confidence in the initiative's effectiveness, exhaustion from the participants, to name a few examples. Some of the participants shared some opinions on the balanced calendar that may indicate an implementation dip in the calendar initiative. A few of the participants mentioned that during the previous school year, there were several snow days, and this, along with the weeks off after intersession, made the school year seem especially long. Teresa said,

> Where I have struggled with it, and haven't liked it so much, is when we come to an end, and we have had so many snow days. We go so long that I feel it might lose some of its effects.

One document provided for document analysis was the results of a district-wide survey given from the school system's calendar committee. This calendar committee was not the committee that was formed to explore the various school calendar types. Teachers were asked to

choose one of three drafts of school calendars for the upcoming school year, with varying workdays and designated make-up days. The teachers could provide comments. Several high school teachers commented about different aspects of the balanced calendar. Here are some of their comments:

- Let's make intersession shorter. Each time being only three days.

- If we end up in the same situation that we find ourselves this year with having missed 10 days already, having the option to turn the remediation week into a regular school week and take the week off as a regular school week in order to control the makeup days would solve the issue we have at present.

- I would prefer all break weeks during the summer.

- Just thinking it might help the students in remediation to not have five days in a row. Hopefully, attendance and attitudes might be better.

- I think it would be interesting to survey the students who participate in remediation. My thoughts are that they may like having that remediation week broken into smaller chunks of time. As a teacher, I like the idea of spreading out those remedial opportunities. I feel that it may help me address weaknesses on specific skill sets being taught in a more timely manner; however, I am concerned about how this would affect enrichment activities. I certainly don't want to take those opportunities away from our students. Those enrichment opportunities give our children a different perspective of education and inspire a love of learning (something that the students probably don't even realize has occurred.)

- I think remediation would more effective three days rather than five. The students I have worked with seem to be very engaged and eager to participate. In the first

three days, we have very few discipline issues. In the last two days, we have more students absent, less engagement, and more discipline issues. I would rather have the students saying they have had a great time, and "this went by so fast" than have them saying, "I wish this was over."

The high school participants shared in the interviews that not as many high school students participate in the voluntary sessions compared to the middle and elementary students. The lack of participation of the high students could be an indication of an implementation dip at the high school level. Still, there was not enough data to determine if there was an implementation dip. Another indication of a possible implementation dip was some of the participants' comments about needing to reevaluate the balanced calendar. These comments could indicate that some teachers may question the effectiveness of certain aspects of the balanced calendar. Leslie and Melissa both suggested reestablishing a committee of teachers to determine improvements needed for the balanced calendar. There was not enough evidence from the data to determine if there was an implementation dip.

Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence framework has four components: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. There were some differing opinions among the participants as to the purpose of the balanced calendar. These differing opinions could indicate that there was a lack of focusing direction. Some of the participants shared that providing great opportunities was the main goal of the balanced calendar, while others shared that the purpose of the balanced calendar was to help students catch up and to close the learning gap. These two views do not necessarily contradict one another, in that the purpose of the balanced calendar was to provide remediation and enrichment opportunities for the students. It may be that the individual experiences of

participants with intersession may have shaped their opinions about the purpose of the balanced calendar.

Some of the extended learning activities can be described as deep learning for the students, in that the students experienced genuine engagement in real-world challenges (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018). For example, some of the sessions for high school students were job-shadowing opportunities. At the elementary level, Samantha shared that she tried to incorporate "real-life, 21st-century skills" in her lessons for intersession.

The fourth component of Fullan and Quinn's coherence framework is securing accountability. Fullan and Quinn (2016) found that individual accountability precedes external accountability. Securing accountability was in this study because the participants demonstrated that individually and collectively, they were responsible for each other. Many of the participants said that they would meet to discuss the needs of their students, then decide as a grade level, which teachers would teach remediation and which teachers would teach enrichment. Teresa is a seventh-grade civics teacher. Annie is a seventh-grade science teacher. They both shared that they helped other teachers teach sessions and taught remediation sessions individually based on the needs of their students. Most of the participants hold themselves accountable for the quality of the extended learning activities. The teachers shared with pride some of their most successful activities. Samantha shared one of her least successful sessions. She had planned a cooking enrichment session but realized the younger students were not able to measure the ingredients. She changed the lesson and added more age-appropriate stations for her younger students. Her awareness and reflection demonstrated that she had a sense of individual accountability. At the high school, Nicole mentioned working with other teachers to establish a schedule for the

students who needed remediation in more than one content area. Many participants indicated they had accountability collectively for the group as well as individually.

It is important to consider the cost and benefits of the change when evaluating the impact of a change initiative. Reeves (2016) categorized educational change initiatives into four groups: easy cuts, turkeys, heroes, and investments. Easy cuts have a low cost but also low benefits. Turkeys have high-cost but low-benefits. Heroes have high benefits with low-cost. Investments have high costs and high benefits. The balanced calendar initiative of this study could be described as an investment. The cost was high, but the benefit was high. Teachers shared that they submitted their budget requests when they submitted the description of the session they taught. Karen shared that even for the overnight field trips, the school district covered the cost of transportation, hotels, and admission to attractions. Annie said, "The kids don't have to pay for anything….The intersession money picks up the cost….Everything is paid by the school system, and the kids get to benefit from it."

Teachers' perspectives on extended learning activities. Teachers are one of the most powerful influences in student achievement (Hattie, 2014). The teachers of this study had an influential role in the learning that took place during the intersession sessions they taught. Participants were actively engaged in the process of planning, teaching, and student learning during intersession. Teachers said they spent a lot of time in planning effective extended learning activities. Teachers shared that they became more aware of what their students knew by working in small groups. For example, it was evident that Patricia and Karen knew the learning intentions and the criteria for student success for their lessons, and they knew how well their students attained these criteria. It was evident that the teachers felt safe to try new things during intersession.

Risk-taking and innovation were practiced during the intersession. The participants shared stories where they took such risks as planning overnight trips for an entire grade-level of students. Another example of teachers trying something new was Annie's experience during the previous intersession. Annie shared that during the past intersession, she planned an escape-room themed enrichment, incorporating higher-level thinking skills. She planned a field trip to an escape room, and the students completed different escape-room-like activities. She said she was uncertain what else to add, but when sharing her ideas with a former student, he volunteered to come and help with the session. He researched the topic and shared different methods and strategies for designing an escape room. The students created an escape room activity. Quaglia and Lande (2017) discovered that teachers are more likely to take risks when they do not fear negative ramifications. Intersession provided teachers with opportunities to take chances and teach something that they wanted to try but could not in the regular school year.

Quaglia and Lande (2017) emphasized the importance of purpose. Teachers are more likely to have a sense of purpose when viewed as professionals and when given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Intersession gave participants a chance to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Teachers had input during the planning process. Most teachers had a say to what type of session they taught during intersession, whether enrichment or remediation. Many of the participants met beforehand to determine which students would be required to attend remediation. The intersession coordinator for each school was a classroom teacher. Lisa was the coordinator for the elementary school. The planning process for intersession required input from all the teachers. Lisa said, "The teachers have to find out what materials they need and turn it in a month before intersession." Lisa and a few other teachers scheduled shopping

trips after school to purchase the items. Quaglia and Lande (2017) found that teachers have more of a sense of purpose when they take on roles of leadership.

There are several benefits to teachers of the year-round calendar. Haser and Nasser (2005) studied teachers in an elementary Title I school that operated on a year-round calendar. The participants in this current study on teachers' perspectives on extending learning activities pointed out some similar benefits to the teachers in the Haser & Nasser study. Participants in this study were overall positive about the balanced calendar, especially the great opportunities offered during intersession. All participants said they wanted to continue with the balanced calendar. All participants said they would recommend this type of calendar to other schools. One of the participants mentioned that she liked the opportunity to earn additional pay for teaching two sessions. Samantha shared, "We do get paid extra to teach two sessions, which is nice." Several of the participants shared that they like working with other teachers during intersession. A few of the participants shared that they like having the opportunity to take a vacation during the off-season. Leslie shared that during the week off after the fall intersession, she and her family took a vacation together. Leslie shared, "It's been great to be able to take a vacation in the fall and spring." Several of the participants shared that the week of intersession was a much-needed change of pace and was less stressful for students and teachers. These views were similar to the findings of Haser and Nasser (2005). This study can help reduce the gap in research by sharing the perspectives of teachers regarding the influence of extended learning activities in intersession weeks of a balanced calendar.

Implications

The purpose of this section is to present the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this study based on data received from the 18 participants.

Theoretical Implications

Albert Bandura's (1977) work provided the theoretical framework of this study. Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory helps make sense of behaviors in the educational setting. Teacher's self-efficacy is the belief in their ability to produce specific results within the classroom and school (Bandura, 1997). A teacher's belief that he or she can influence student achievement relates to the teacher's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Collective efficacy is more than "the sum of members' perceived personal efficacies" (Bandura, 1997, p. 478). Collective efficacy is a shared perception that, together, teachers make a positive impact on their students' achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Intersession provided opportunities for teachers and students to learn through observing other students and teachers experiencing success. This observation of others is an example of vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Teachers benefited from observing other teachers. Teachers chose their topics for enrichment sessions. Having a choice allowed teachers to display their interests and strengths. Teachers were proud of the great opportunities provided for their students. Social cognitive theory proposes that one's knowledge base and behavior relate directly to observing others within the context of personal experiences, social interactions, and the environment (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Participants retold the great opportunities their students had during the weeks of intersession. Teachers believed that these experiences positively affected their students.

The results of this research showed that most of the teachers focused more on how the extended learning activities affected their students by taking the time to plan and then implement extended learning activities during intersession. That the extensive planning process needed to provide rich, engaging activities for the students, was mentioned by most of the participants.

The participants shared that although the planning was intense, the results made it worthwhile. This mindset illustrates the evidence of teachers with high self-efficacy. Teachers' self-efficacy relates directly to how the teacher believes he or she can influence student achievement for their students (Bandura, 1994; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). The participants in this study perceived the time spent preparing and teaching during intersession as a worthwhile venture for their students.

Studies show that teachers' self-efficacy influences the adoption of instructional practices and influences the teachers' persistence with the program (Gabriele & Joram, 2007; Prawat & Jennings, 1997; Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, & MacGyvers, 2001). All teachers in this study said they wanted to continue with intersession, which indicated the teachers' belief that they were accomplishing something worthwhile during intersession. All teachers said they would recommend the balanced calendar to other schools.

Donohoo (2017) explained that teachers with a sense of collective efficacy are more likely to take courses of action because they believe that together they have what it takes to achieve positive results. The results of this study indicate that the participants possess collective efficacy regarding the extended learning activities they provided during intersession. When exploring what improvements that the participants would like to see with the balanced calendar, several teachers shared that a committee of teachers could accomplish this goal.

Hattie (2016) ranked collective teacher efficacy as the number one influence on student achievement. Donohoo (2017) found that when teachers share the belief that they can achieve goals together that they can have a positive impact on student achievement. The results of this research showed that this belief exists among the participants. Teachers' expectations, and their approach to instruction, can influence student achievement (Hattie, 2008). Teachers in this study revealed they expected a positive impact on students when the students attended intersession.

Empirical Implications

This section addresses the empirical implications based on the related literature from chapter two. Empirical implications are provided for summer slide, educational change, and teachers' perspectives on extended learning activities.

Summer slide occurs when students experience learning loss due to summer break from school (Cooper et al., 1996). The summer break for students was reduced when the school district implemented the balanced calendar, thus reducing the opportunity for summer slide. Since the adoption of the calendar, students who need additional help receive targeted, small-group instruction during the weeks of intersession, one week in the fall and one week in the spring. Because all teachers participated in intersession, more remediation sessions were offered to more students in comparison to the summer school sessions offered during the previous traditional school calendars.

The balanced calendar was an initiative adopted by SVPSC. This initiative resulted in numerous changes for teachers. The teachers experienced change when planning and implementing extended learning activities during intersession. Intersession weeks are different from the other school weeks. The daily schedule is different during intersession. Many teachers teach concepts and topics different from their standard curriculum. Teachers may teach with different teachers during this week. Teachers teach a different combination of students, some from different classes, or even different grade-levels. Most of the participants demonstrated a sense of moral purpose in planning and teaching extended learning activities during intersession. Teachers believed the students benefited from the extended learning activities in remediation and enrichment. Several participants shared that the planning required for intersession is hard work, but it is worthwhile.

Teachers seemed to have a common shared purpose of planning extended learning activities during intersession. Participants shared that they worked with other teachers and staff in the planning and implementation of the extended learning activities offered during intersession, which cultivates a collaborative culture for the teachers involved. At all three schools, teachers shared that they rely on the input of other teachers in deciding what to teach and who will be required to attend remediation.

Relationships do matter with the balanced calendar initiative. When evaluating teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities offered during intersession, it is important to consider the collective efficacy beliefs of the staff. Donohoo (2017) found it was important to determine the degree of support presence before deciding the next steps needed. Fullan (2009) described this process as capacity building. The relationships within a system affect the outcomes (Donohoo, 2017). The participants expressed a sense of empowerment because they were involved in meaningful decisions of intersession. They had input to which students were required to attend remediation, and to what extended learning activities they offered. Teachers did not influence every aspect of the balanced calendar. A few participants expressed frustration about the balanced calendar in regard to the length of the school year and at the elementary school, the class sizes of some of the enrichment sessions.

The findings of this study indicate that the teachers experienced a sense of accomplishment for their hard work. Quaglia and Lande (2017) said it is important that teachers experience self-worth, engagement, and the purpose of establishing an environment where the teachers can share their perspectives. The participants had high expectations for the extended learning activities offered during intersession. The teachers interviewed in this study believed

the extended learning activities offered during intersession positively affected student achievement.

Practical Implications

It is beneficial to discuss practical implications based on the results of this research. Practical implications are provided for teachers, building administrators, and district administrators.

Practical implications for teachers. SVCPS implemented a balanced calendar in the 2014–2015 school year. The school system has operated on a balanced calendar for several years now. Although the participants indicated they would like to keep the balanced calendar, a system-wide evaluation of the balanced calendar is recommended. Now, after several years of operating on a balanced calendar, the school division should look for any areas in need of improvement. Several participants mentioned establishing a committee of teachers to evaluate the balanced calendar. The committee should include teachers from each school who teach remediation and who teach enrichment. Evaluation of the balanced calendar should include teacher, student, and parent surveys.

The implication for teachers providing extended learning activities for students in remediation sessions includes planning early. Activities should be different from regular classroom activities. Hands-on, fun, and engaging activities are more effective. Small groups work well.

Implications for teachers teaching an enrichment session includes planning early. Classroom management is important. Team building and class building activities work well to help build relationships. Flexibility is important. Preparation for enrichment is key to the

success of the activities. Teachers shared that enrichment sessions are more work, so preparation

is essential.

Practical implications for building administrators. There are several implications for

building administrators in this study. One recommendation is to ensure that teachers can meet to

plan for upcoming intersessions. Teachers need to continue to have input into what they teach

during intersession. Another recommendation for school-level administrators is to support and

encourage teachers to teach with other teachers during intersession. The building administrators

can see all the teachers in action. Intersession is an excellent opportunity to promote

professional learning and build collective efficacy. Teachers can gain professionally from the

opportunity of working with teachers they would not typically have an opportunity to teach with.

Practical implications for district administrators. District administrators need to

include input from community leaders to discover and promote mutual interests of the extended

learning opportunities offered to students during intersession. Part of the evaluation process

should include surveying teachers, parents, and students. Another aspect for consideration is to

focus on maintaining and improving community involvement during intersession. Community

involvement could include working with the city tourism director to stay informed on local

resources for intersession.

Building and maintaining strong community connections should continue to be a priority.

Community partnerships may provide resources for intersession weeks if funding should be

limited in the future. Social media and local media outlets should be used to showcase the great

opportunities for students during intersession.

Delimitations and Limitations

The main delimitation is this study took place in a small school division in the southwestern part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Therefore, the scope and generalization of the research are limited to one school district in a rural setting. Another delimitation of this study was the selection of a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological perspective was an appropriate fit in that it allowed teachers to share their perspectives and experiences. The phenomenological method examines individuals' experiences and considers the experiences of a related group of individuals as a whole (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology seeks to examine the shared experiences with a fresh perspective by deliberately eradicating any bias, assumptions, and prejudgment (Creswell, 2013). This method required the researcher to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon.

The sample size from high school was a limitation of this study. There were 11 participants from the elementary school, five from the middle school, but only two from the high school. It is not clear why there was not more participation or interest from high school teachers in this study. The data did reveal that fewer high school students participate in intersession in comparison to the other schools. The lack of participation from high school teachers weakens the study. It was undetermined if most high school teachers had similar experiences to the two participants of this study. Another limitation of this study was the size of the focus groups. The focus group conducted at the elementary had six participants, and the focus group at the middle school had four participants. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommend seven to ten participants for focus groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was useful in providing data on how teachers viewed the extended learning activities, intersession weeks, and balanced calendar; however, additional research would be

beneficial on other schools that have implemented a balanced calendar, high school teachers'

perspectives of extended learning activities offered during intersession, and a quantitative study

on the impact of extended learning activities on student achievement.

Recommendations for future research include conducting studies at other schools that

have implemented a balanced calendar that offers remediation and enrichment opportunities

during intersession. Several school systems received the same grant to fund the development

and support of a year-round calendar. Additional research from other schools would provide rich

descriptions of the experiences of teachers who provide extended learning activities.

Another recommendation for future research would be to research the perspectives of the

high school teachers who offer extended learning activities during intersession of a balanced

calendar. Only two high school teachers volunteered for this study. A greater number of

participants would provide thick, rich, in-depth description of the phenomenon at the high school

level.

The final recommendation for future research would be to conduct a quantitative study of

the impact of extended learning activities offered during intersession of a balanced calendar on

student achievement. The balanced calendar is noticeably different from most of the year-round

calendars that schools have implemented to address over-crowding. Quantitative research could

help other teachers in designing and implementing effective extended learning activities.

Summary

This study supports the idea that teachers' self-efficacy may influence teachers' approach

to providing extended learning activities in the balanced calendar. Teachers believe that the

extended learning activities affect student achievement in numerous ways. Extended learning

activities can help students get caught-up and close learning gaps. An indirect influence for

some students was in motivating them to work hard during the regular school year so they would not be required to attend remediation during the intersession week. Many of the participants shared that planning quality, effective extended learning activities for an entire week of intersession was challenging but worth the effort. Collective efficacy is one of the most significant influences on student achievement (Hattie, 2016). The teachers in this study said they wanted to continue with the balanced calendar and would recommend it to other schools. These teachers believe that together, they have positively influenced their students' learning during intersession. The participants shared that many of these great opportunities would not have been possible during a regular school calendar. Teachers in this study have persisted and demonstrated resilience in planning effective extended learning activities for their students.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Script prior to the interview:
I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in this study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to examine teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar influence student achievement.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]
If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.
Let's review the informed consent form together. The form has an outline of the purpose of the study, your role in the study, and your rights as a participant. (The consent form follows.)
Once consent is given, continue by saying the following:

If the participant gives permission to be recorded, say the following:

Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If the participant does not agree to be recorded, say the following:

I will only take notes of our conversation.

Let's begin, please:

1. Tell me about the setting and topic of your teaching assignment during the week of intersession.

Possible follow-up questions:

- How many times have you participated in intersessions?

- Did you teach more than one session for intersession?

- Was your session(s) remedial or enrichment in design?

- Why did you participate in intersessions?

- Why do you think the intersessions were created?

2. Tell me about your preparation for the week of intersession, when did you start planning?

3. Tell me about your students for the week of intersession. Possible follow-up questions: (a) How many students did you have? (b) What was the grade(s) were your students? (c) Had you taught all your students before?

4. Tell me about your experience with intersessions? Possible follow-up questions: Think about one intersession in which you participated, take me through a typical day during that intersession. What the students did, and what you think the outcomes were?

5. Name some extended-learning experiences you used during intersessions in which you participated. For each, tell me how you used the experience. For each, tell me why you used the experience. For each, tell me how well you think it worked.

6. How do you think these experiences affected the students who participated in them? I am particularly interested in how the experiences affected them academically.

7. How do you think the balanced calendar affects students? Academically? In other ways, if any? How does it affect teachers?

8. I want to focus on the outcomes of the intersession. What do you think the outcomes are or have been for students? Follow up, depending on the response. If enrichment, then ask how the students' lives have been enriched. If remediation, ask how students have been remediated. Can you give me some examples of each?

9. If you participate in another intersession, what do you think might be done to make it more effective for students? Teachers?

10. What would you recommend to other schools considering a balanced calendar using intersessions?

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how your students experienced the intersessions in which you participated?

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how you experienced the intersessions?

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how intersessions in the balanced calendar have affected students?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how intersessions in the balanced calendar have affected teachers?

Thank you again for your participation in this study.

(Assure him/her that responses are confidential, and pseudonyms will be used.)

Appendix B: Interview Question & Focus Group Prompt Matrix

Interview Question Matrix

	Background Information	**Research Question One**	**Research Question Two**	**Research Question Three**
Q1	X			
Q2	X			
Q3	X			
Q4		X	X	
Q5		X	X	
Q6		X	X	
Q7		X		
Q8			X	
Q9				X
Q10				X
Q11	X	X	X	X

Focus Group Prompt Matrix

	Research Question One	Research Question Two	Research Question Three
P1	X	X	X
P2	X	X	X
P3	X		
P4	X		
P5		X	
P6			X
P7			
P8			

Appendix C: Domains and Definitions of Domains

Possible Domains	Definition of Domains
Opinion/Values	The attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of teachers about the extended learning activities during the weeks of intersession as they experience it
Behaviors	What the teacher has done to prepare, execute, and evaluate the extended learning activities.
Relationships	Relationships with students, peers, and administrators
Time	The amount of time involved in preparation for any steps involved in preparing extended learning activities
Outcomes	What comes as a result of the extended learning activities
Change	What change has the teacher experienced
Student learning	How has the extended learning activities influenced student learning
Other	Any domain not included in those listed above that surfaces as a result of the interview process

Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Script prior to interview:
I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in this study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to examine teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar influence student achievement.

I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences teaching in a balanced calendar. I hope that these questions will generate discussion amongst you. My purpose here is to moderate the session and keep track of time. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

This session will be recorded. We will be on a first-name basis tonight, but I want to remind you that won't use anyone's name in the reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

Before we begin the discussion, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]
If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Opening Question (round robin)
Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table. Tell us your name and what you taught during the week of intersession.

Introductory Prompts

1. What do you like most about teaching in the balanced calendar?

2. What do you like the least about teaching in the balanced calendar?

Transition Prompts
3. How does the balanced calendar influence your students' learning?

Key Prompts
4. How would you evaluate the balanced calendar for improving student achievement?

5. How would you evaluate the balanced calendar providing enrichment activities?

Summary Prompt - After the brief oral summary, ask the following question:
6. Is this an adequate summary?

Final Prompt -   Remind participants the purpose of the study is to examine teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar influence student achievement. Then ask:
7. Have we missed anything?

Thank you again for your participation in this study.

(Assure him/her that responses are confidential, and pseudonyms will be used.)

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
Teachers' Perspectives on Extended Learning Activities in a Rural Setting
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement. This study will investigate teachers' perspectives on the influence of the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of the balanced school calendar. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a teacher with experience teaching during the week of intersession of a balanced calendar. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Charlene Isom, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student achievement.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a face-to-face audio-recorded interview or a focus group interview. The interview will be transcribed, and participants will be asked to review the transcribed transcript for accuracy and suggest comments on revisions. Interviews will take no longer than one hour.
2. Submit any documents that you feel demonstrates the influence of the extended learning activities during the weeks of intersession.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits:
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include that the findings of the study could provide schools and teachers valuable discoveries regarding best practices and procedures for developing and implementing extended learning activities during the weeks of intersession.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will be entered into a drawing to win one of five $20 gift cards.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any type of report that I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. I will protect your confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, both for your name and the location of the study. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The digital recordings, any notes taken during the individual interviews and focus groups, the transcripts of the individual interviews and focus groups, and

notes made on the transcripts will all be kept in a locked cabinet. I will be the only one who has access to the cabinet. I will maintain the data for three years following the completion of the study. At that time, all data, notes, and recordings will be destroyed. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data. I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Charlene Isom. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (276) 233-8072, clisom@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair [Dr. Andrea Beam, at abeam@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix F: Letter to Superintendent

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. My doctoral study is on teachers'

perspectives on the extended learning activities offered during the weeks of intersession of the

balanced calendar. I am writing to ask for permission to conduct this study.

I am interested in interviewing teachers with varied years of teaching experience and

from different teaching and school assignments, which have previously taught during the weeks

of intersession of a balanced calendar. A written report of my work will be provided to you at

the conclusion of the study.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, I would appreciate the opportunity to

speak to you personally to answer those questions for you. Otherwise, I am asking for your

permission to conduct the study. Please let me know of your decision as soon as possible at

clisom@liberty.edu. I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Charlene Isom

Appendix G: Email to the Principal

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. My doctoral study is on teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities offered during the weeks of intersession of the balanced calendar. I am writing to ask for permission to conduct this study at your school.

I am interested in interviewing teachers with varied years of teaching experience and from different teaching and school assignments, which have previously taught during the weeks of intersession of a balanced calendar. A written report of my work will be provided to you at the conclusion of the study.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak to you personally to further describe the research proposal, to ask for your permission to conduct the study in your, to contact your teachers to participate and to answer any questions you might have. Please let me know of a meeting time that will be convenient for you by emailing me at clisom@liberty.edu. I look forward to speaking with you about this study and appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Charlene Isom

Appendix H: Email to Teachers

[Insert Date]

Dear Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of the extended learning activities on student learning, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a teacher who has taught during the week of intersession in a balanced calendar and are willing to participate, I ask that you participate in an individual interview or focus group, and to submit relevant documents, which could include lesson plans, students' work (with student's name removed), program proposals, and survey data. It should take approximately 1 hour for you to complete the procedures listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate in this study, please click the link at the bottom of the page. A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. This letter will be given to you for you to sign at the time of the interview or focus group. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please click on the questionnaire link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

If you choose to participate, you will be entered in a drawing to win one of five $20 gift cards.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Charlene Isom
Doctoral Candidate/Principal Researcher

       Teacher Questionnaire

       What is your name?

       What school do you teach at?

       What is your teaching assignment?

       Have you taught during the week of intersession of a balanced calendar?

If yes, how many times?

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Appendix I: Email to Support Staff

Dear_____,

I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. My doctoral study is on teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities offered during the weeks of intersession of the balanced calendar. I am writing to ask you to be a participant in the study. I am interested in your experiences with the extended learning activities offered during the weeks of intersession of the balanced calendar.

If you would like to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

(a) electronically sign and submit the informed consent form included below

(b) participate in the questionnaire below by responding to questions that will aid me in selecting participants for the study

(c) respond by either agreeing or disagreeing to participate within 5 days of receiving the invitation

(d) if you agree, please respond to the questionnaire within 7 days.

If you are selected, I will ask you to participate in an individual test interview conducted by me. Throughout the duration of the study, I will hold all interview responses in confidence. You will not be identified in the transcripts or in the report of the study.

I hope that you will consider giving an hour of your time to assist with the study. I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Charlene Isom

Questionnaire

What is your name?

What school do you teach at?

What is your teaching assignment?

Have you taught during the week of intersession of a balanced calendar?

If yes, how many times?

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Appendix J: Themes

Benefits	Challenges	Recommendations
Positive impact	Hard work	Want to keep it
Student-motivation	Students' perceptions of being required to attend	Different approaches in remediation
Builds confidence		Planning is key
Great opportunities		
Change of pace		
Builds relationships		
Fun		

Appendix K: Significant Statements & Research Questions

Research Questions	Benefits	Challenges	Recommendations
RQ1. What are teachers' perspectives about how the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting influence student achievement?	Catchup and learn new skills Student motivation Builds confidence Targeted instruction More relaxed	Students' negative response to being required to attend remediation sessions	Use different approach Small groups Work with your own students Make it fun.
RQ2. What are teachers' perspectives on the extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar in a rural setting as enrichment efforts?	Great opportunities for students Builds relationships Community involvement Teamwork Fun Work with other teachers Teacher choice Change of pace	Hard work Lots of planning Younger students tired by the end of the week	Use community resources Plan early Smaller class sizes
RQ3.What are teachers' recommendations for future extended learning activities during the intersession weeks of a balanced calendar?			Try it, it's worth it Planning is key