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Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities

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Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify a delivery model for reading intervention services that can provide successful support for Students with Disabilities in reading. The participants in this study, general education and exceptional education teachers who teach reading content in grades K-5, answered survey and interview questions related to the current delivery of intervention services at ABC Elementary (pseudonym). The results of this evaluation revealed that addressing additional time for reading intervention and using materials that provide a multi-component of reading elements can improve the delivery of reading intervention services for Students with Disabilities. Based on these findings, I proposed that additional time be structured in the master schedule for reading intervention for students showing deficits in the fourth and fifth grades. The additional time can provide a framework in which targeted intervention is provided to ensure increased gains in reading for all students.

PREFACE

The achievement gap between Students with Disabilities (SWD) and their general education peers in reading has been a problem in our state and district for the past five years. The intervention block is the designated time in the master schedule to provide targeted support to address deficits and close the achievement gap. My program evaluation is focused on evaluating the intervention support services provided to all students as part of this mandated intervention block. As a school building administrator, I have observed general education teachers struggle with differentiating instruction during the reading intervention block to meet the needs of their SWD. Identifying a delivery model that can provide successful intervention support in reading for SWD can be valuable to assist school districts and schools close the achievement gap.

My program evaluation is relevant to all stakeholders including teachers, parents, students and school leaders because it provides insights on how to effectively provide targeted support for struggling readers. Parents trust that the school system will provide the services and supports their child needs to be successful. Reading deficits can pose challenges for students all through their educational careers. An effective intervention model in reading can assist teachers and school leaders help SWD become fluent readers. School districts have a commitment to prepare students to be productive citizens and literacy is an essential skill needed for this endeavor.

One important leadership lesson I gained from my evaluation of reading intervention is that reading is a complex skill that requires targeted, small group instruction to support all learners. I learned that as a building administrator I play a crucial role in ensuring that teachers are provided with professional development on

foundational reading skills to gain the expertise needed to effectively provide reading instruction. I also learned the importance of gaining teacher input on barriers and challenges in the delivery of instruction during the intervention block. The evaluation process showed me the value of this input and how to use it to make recommendations to improve the delivery model.

As a result of this program evaluation I have grown as an instructional leader. This experience has shown me how conducting research, analyzing and collecting data can be a powerful tool to enact change. The process of developing a Change Leadership Plan showed me the value of looking at a problem and envisioning the change that is possible in terms of the context, conditions, culture and competencies. As a leader I believe that I can positively affect the structure of reading intervention services to ensure that SWD experience success in reading.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Brett, thank you for your unconditional love and support through this process. I appreciate all the weekends you allowed me to work on my dissertation, ensuring a quiet home to encourage me to write.

To my sons Philip and Matthew, my motivation in all that I do. You make me proud every day, and I know you share my love for learning and personal growth. Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement during this journey.

To my parents Martha and Pedro Valdivia, my biggest supporters in life. As Cuban immigrants, you showed me the real value of hard work and the importance of an Education. Thank you for your love and for always believing I can accomplish anything.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

ABC Elementary School (pseudonym) serves 740 students and is part of 123 Public School District (pseudonym), a large urban school district located in the southern United States. It has received an “A” rating by the state’s department of education for over ten years. The past three years, it has been designated as a “School of Excellence” by the state’s department of education. This designation provides flexibility in the schedules for the English Language Arts block. Of the school’s subgroup categories, Students with Disabilities (SWD) comprise approximately 20% of the school population. The context of my study is that our SWD are underperforming in the area of reading when compared to their regular education peers. Results of the state’s standardized assessment in 2017 in English Language Arts showed that only 30% of the exceptional education students at ABC Elementary School scored proficient compared to the school proficiency of 80%. Within the context of the broader educational community, SWD in 123 Public School District are underperforming in English Language Arts when compared to their regular education peers. The district’s SWD scored at 15% proficiency compared to the district’s 55% overall proficiency.

The problem context shows a noticeable achievement gap or disparity in academic performance between our Students with Disabilities (SWD) and our regular education students. Our 2017 state assessment results in English Language Arts reported that only 5% of our SWD in fourth grade scored proficient compared to the school proficiency of 80%, and only 10% made learning gains compared to the school's learning

gains of 50%. The general education teacher provides intervention services to SWD when they are in the classroom with their general education peers.

The problem statement is the current delivery of intervention support for SWD in the fourth and fifth-grade classrooms is not yielding results. There is a need to provide a delivery model for SWD with reliable and specialized interventions. In the current delivery model, students receive 30 minutes of tiered intervention by the classroom teacher twice a week in English Language Arts. During the intervention block SWD receive weekly push-in academic support four times a week for thirty minutes from the exceptional education teacher or paraprofessional. The current delivery of intervention support in fourth and fifth-grade classrooms is not producing learning gains for SWD in reading based on the performance data on state assessments. Currently, the resources and strategies used by the general education teachers for intervention do not meet the needs of SWD. In the classroom observations I have conducted, I noted general education teachers struggle with differentiating instruction during the intervention block for students with disabilities. My observations also indicate general education teachers do not have adequate training in support strategies for exceptional education students. There is a need for a delivery model in which reliable interventions are provided to our students with disabilities with fidelity. Effective specialized intervention support is essential for the success of students with disabilities: “Increasing the intensity of effective instruction (e.g., use of smaller groups, more time spent in intervention) may have positive effects on student outcomes” (Wanzek & Cavanaugh, 2010, p.194). Providing an effective intervention delivery model that includes specific targeted skills and differentiation in a

small group setting to SWD can make a positive impact on the reading achievement and learning gains of SWD.

Purpose of the Evaluation

All students in 123 Public School District receive thirty minutes of intervention outside of the English Language Arts block. This is part of the mandated Multi-Tiered-System of Support state requirement for all elementary students. The program I am evaluating is the intervention support services provided to all students. Students receive thirty minutes of reading intervention instruction twice a week as part of the multi-tier system of support in the general education classroom. The general education teacher delivers the intervention support in her classroom using state-adopted materials and resources. The ESE teacher supports the classroom teachers with strategies and monitoring of SWD weekly. The ESE teacher provides pull out resource time to SWD during the ELA block to help meet the Individual Education Program (IEP) goals of the students. The individual classroom teacher can use a variety of strategies or elements to engage students in the content. Currently, there is not a standard delivery model for intervention support services at ABC Elementary School.

I became aware of the intervention support model and its deficits as part of my work in creating the master schedule for my school as the building administrator. Additionally, analyzing ABC Elementary School's reading data for the past three years, I found a consistent gap between the reading gains of students with disabilities (SWD) compared to their general education peers. The data not only showed a gap in proficiency, but a gap in the learning gains made each year by SWD. During classroom observations, I also noted that there was not a consistent structure in the delivery of

intervention support for SWD within the school building. Periodic monitoring of teacher lesson plans and discussions during data meetings also showed there are limited resources approved by the district for use during reading intervention, and all teachers are not using the materials with fidelity. The currently approved materials by the district have to be purchased by the school. ABC Elementary currently uses the i-Ready computer-adaptive program and the Curriculum Associates Language Arts Standards workbooks for reading intervention. The i-Ready program must be used by students for 45 minutes a week for students to make gains in their instructional path. Teacher monitoring and adjustment of lessons are vital to growth. Not all teachers not providing students enough time on the program weekly and are not monitoring the lessons and providing re-teaching of failed concepts.

The program evaluation of intervention support is related to student learning in the critical role it plays in closing the achievement gap in reading. Students who struggle with foundational reading skills will have difficulty comprehending text and cannot read for understanding and knowledge. Evaluating the intervention support provided in reading to SWD could identify effective strategies and models for the delivery of instruction that are yielding success and can potentially help struggling readers become fluent. Intervention support services help close the achievement gap for students not performing on grade level. Deficits in reading can pose challenges to the reading of subject-specific content for all students. These reading deficits are especially significant in upper elementary grades when reading instruction transitions from the foundational reading domains such as phonics and phonemic awareness to areas related to comprehension, as indicated in the research:

For students with learning disabilities (LD) in reading who are often still learning to read, this transition away from beginning reading instruction places increased emphasis on the importance of their special education services for providing effective interventions to assist them in acquiring necessary reading skills.

(Wazneck & Kent, 2012, p. 5)

This is also impacted by the greater focus on non-fiction, informational text in the intermediate grades instead of fiction typically focused on the primary grades.

Evaluating intervention support services for SWD at the elementary level, there must be a focus on foundational reading components: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. This will ensure that students in fourth and fifth grades can gain the fluency and close reading strategies required to read and comprehend text in other content areas such as math word problems, social studies and science curriculum.

The purpose of my evaluation of intervention support services is to identify a delivery model that can provide reliable and successful specialized intervention support to our SWD students in reading. The purpose of finding effective skilled intervention academic support for SWD may lead districts to choose to adopt a set of interventions and resources that would be used to provide targeted specialized intervention for all SWD. Monitoring would require implementation with fidelity at all schools.

Teachers would need to be trained in the intervention strategies and receive professional development using the materials to provide specialized intervention to SWD. From the training, teachers could make connections to student gains as a result of implementing specialized strategies. There would need to be an increased understanding

by teachers of the specific reading intervention needs of the SWD in their classroom: “Effectiveness comes to be defined in terms of what works with the children one is teaching” (Murphy, 2016, p. 70). The teacher’s understanding that specific targeted strategies and differentiation will be required to meet the needs of their students is key to the success of the delivery of the intervention model. Professional development with embedded training and coaching cycles in the implementation of the intervention strategies and model would be provided to ensure teachers can differentiate reading instruction for SWD.

Rationale

My rationale for choosing to study effective specialized intervention support for students with disabilities (SWD) in reading is due to the achievement gap in learning gains between my SWD and their general education peers. Only having 10% of my SWD making learning gains in reading last year on the state assessment is unacceptable. I would expect my SWD to make learning gains comparable to that of their general education peers, which were at over 50% learning gains last year on state assessments. Every child, regardless of their reading level, should show growth from the academic supports and learning they receive every day in my school.

Historically, the challenge of methods available to measure gains for students with disabilities (SWD). All SWD students have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) of services with goals to meet their individual needs. The discrepancy comes with meeting each child’s individual needs while exposing them to grade-level reading content that is potentially above their instructional level, the level that a student can read and comprehend text independently. To access grade-level content, these students require

“support (scaffolding) as they are learning new knowledge and skills, gradually reducing the level of support as students move toward independence” (Wanzek & Cavanaugh, 2010, p. 200). 123 Public School’s vision is to be the “top producer of successful students in the nation.” In this statement, the district and school board are clear they have a vision and commitment to ensure all students are successful. Reading is a skill all students will need to be productive and successful members of society. Teachers, parents, and community members have a responsibility to ensure the reading success of all students, not just general education students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines how all SWD would receive free and appropriate education, which includes full participation and related services designed to meet their unique needs (U. S. Department of Education, USDOE, 2015). “And yet, under various curriculum programs and assessments, accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities continue to be perceived as not having been adequately addressed” (Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, & Boschee, 2016, p. 531). To ensure that a SWD receives an appropriate education that meets his/her individual needs, intervention support in reading must offer appropriate modifications and specialized instruction.

One critical issue related to the delivery of intervention services in reading for students with disabilities (SWD) is that the school system does not have a consistent delivery model for reading intervention provided to SWD. There is a need for a review of current resources to develop a consistent delivery model for reading intervention. In addition to these resources, high yield strategies, a collection of strategies shown by research to improve instruction, implemented in the intervention structure would be essential in the identification of teacher actions during the intervention block. Merely

providing a small block of time in the student's schedule for additional reading support has not yielded effective results at the school or district level. Waneck and Kent underscore this: "Decisions - such as the amount of intervention (dosage), instructional group size, and intervention implementer - provide context for the intervention and the resulting outcomes" (2012, p.10). The instructional group size or the number of students in a group receiving small group instruction is a critical component of effective intervention. The time and frequency of the intervention or the dosage is another factor that impacts how the student will respond to the intervention. I agree with Waneck and Kent's position that there are many decisions involved in the effective implementation and analysis of intervention services. Consideration of these many factors is necessary to ensure consistency in an intervention model.

Another critical issue related to the delivery of intervention services in reading for students with disabilities (SWD) is the lack of teacher training and expertise in differentiating instruction in reading to meet the needs of struggling students. Since general education teachers the reading intervention block and not the exceptional education teacher, the expertise and background knowledge of these teachers are primarily in reading. Teachers have general professional development training in reading and strategies to support reading development, but not the background of how to address deficits in the reading of the exceptional education student. As Vaughn, Hughes, Moody, and Elbaum have stated: "Many teachers reveal they have received little or no professional development in how to develop and implement successful instructional groups" (2001, p. 134). To effectively provide differentiated instruction during the reading intervention to meet the needs of SWD, teachers have to receive professional

development on how to organize students in groups to differentiate instruction.

Professional development in differentiated instruction will help teachers effectively provide small targeted group instruction to exceptional education learners.

Effective intervention support for students with disabilities (SWD) is essential to ensure all students achieve success in reading. Reading is a life skill and necessary for all students to be able to access information and content in other disciplines. The district and the school have a commitment to all stakeholders to ensure they prepare students to be productive members of the community. The district also commits as part of its vision to ensure that all students are college and career ready when they leave high school. Literacy will be an essential skill needed by all students for post-secondary success.

The school community has a responsibility to afford a fair and equal education to all students, including exceptional education students. They have an obligation to provide equitable opportunities for all students, including accommodations and modifications, if necessary, to ensure all students experience reading success. The reading performance of all students is tied to the school's accountability. This provides an added reason for schools to focus on success in reading for all students.

Parents, as constituents and taxpayers expect the public-school system to deliver on its promise to educate their child. Parents have trust that the system will provide the services and supports their child needs to be successful. This trust is especially significant for parents of exceptional education students. They know their child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines goals and accommodations that must be provided by law to meet the needs of their child. Attending IEP meetings, I have seen the importance of gaining parents' trust during these meetings personally and carefully

reviewing with the classroom teacher the accommodations and supports implemented to meet the students' needs in a general education classroom setting.

The business and community at large have an interest in ensuring SWD develop the necessary reading skills that they need to be productive members of society. In addition, the fact that “Nationally, the number of students identified with LD increases by approximately 37% in the upper elementary grades, and students with reading disabilities make up the largest percentage of students in the LD category” (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). National Center for Education Statistics reports that between 2011-12 and 2018-19, the number of students served in programs for SWD increased from 13% to 14% of the total public school enrollment. There will be a significant impact on society if we don't meet the learning needs of our SWD, considering the increase of identified students in the general population. Ensuring the SWD become literate and contributing members of society should be a priority for all. Economically, the business community, as well as the greater community as a whole, has an interest in the ability of these students to sustain themselves financially while making valuable contributions to society.

Goals of the Program Evaluation

An intended goal for this evaluation of reading intervention services for students with disabilities (SWD) is to determine an effective delivery model that can be implemented by general education teachers during a block of time designated for interventions. An inquiry into the delivery model would include looking at the characteristics of the intervention time blocks such as student grouping and other factors associated with intervention services delivery. The evaluation purpose is to determine

the effectiveness of delivery characteristics such as student grouping, time block, and strategies used. When presented in a setting characterized by small targeted groups, SWD are more successful.

Another goal for this evaluation of SWD reading intervention services is to identify highly effective intervention strategies and resources that yield high gains in student achievement. Within ABC elementary and 123 school district, the intervention services provided to all are not implemented with consistency in terms of materials and strategies at this time. To ensure effective interventions that demonstrate student performance gains, there is a need for identifying research-tested best practices that are conducive to sustained school-wide and district-wide fidelity of implementation. Such constancy of practice requires the calibration of delivery, instructional materials, resources, and strategies within the school and district at large. An example of a reading strategy used across all intervention sessions would be the identification of a struggling reader's processes as they approach a text. "The nature of struggling comprehenders' difficulties may be revealed through the processes in which they engage during reading" (McMaster, Espin, & van den Broek, 2014, p. 22). Through the process of providing intervention to struggling readers teachers can identify basic skills such as decoding and vocabulary knowledge that impact comprehension. This approach pairs effective intervention with informal observations to make assessments about students' reading deficits.

My goals in evaluating the effectiveness of reading intervention services for students with disabilities (SWD) is related to student learning to ensure that all students become proficient readers and that we close the achievement gap for struggling readers.

“Many students are not receiving the level of academic support needed to meet grade-level expectations in the area of reading” (Austin, Vaughn, & McClelland, 2017, p. 191). Student achievement data should show an increase in learning gains in reading for SWD. Teachers would be able to deliver specialized targeted intervention to their SWD to improve instruction and deepen understanding.

Definition of Terms

The following educational and content-specific vocabulary terms were used throughout this dissertation. The knowledge of these terms will be relevant to the reader in terms of specific content knowledge and understanding throughout my dissertation.

- *Academic Supports*. Programs and strategies used by a school to increase academic achievement of students. (Peterson et al., 2014).
- *Achievement Gap*. Refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. (Ansell, 2011).
- *Close Reading*. A strategy in which a piece of text, fiction, or non-fiction is analyzed closely by students to increase higher-level thinking skills and comprehension.
- *Differentiated Instruction*. Tailoring instruction to meet the needs of individual students.
- *Direct Instruction*. Refers to the explicit teaching of a skill or concept by a teacher to a student using speech and demonstration.
- *District Professional Learning Communities (DPLC)*. This uses the structure of Professional Learning Communities, which is a group of educators with a shared mission, vision, and values; collective inquiry; collaborative teams; an

orientation toward action; commitment to continuous improvement; and a focus on results but expanding it to groups within a school district. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 45).

- *Document-Based Questions (DBQ)*. Resources that allow students to practice answering engaging historical questions and learn to use evidence to support arguments. (DBQ Project).
- *Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)*. A formative reading assessment system that allows teachers to assess student reading level and observe, record, and evaluate changes in performance. (pearsonassessments.com).
- *English Language Learners (ELL)*. A student who is learning English in addition to their native language.
- *Exceptional Education*. Often referred to as special education, it refers to alternative instruction, support, and services provided for students who have academic, behavioral, health, physical, or other unique needs beyond those met by traditional educational techniques. (Seder, 2014).
- *Foundational Reading Skills*. A set of skills that students must master to become fluent readers and essential components of effective reading instruction. These are: print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition, and fluency. (Mesmer, H. A., 2020, p.23).
- *High Yield Strategies*. Instructional strategies that have a high probability of enhancing student achievement for all students. (Marzano et al., 2001, p. 7).

- **Independent Functioning Skills.** The ability of an individual to have skills such as self-care, self-direction, and communication to be able to function in a real-world setting.
- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).* Enacted in 1975, this law mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public education for eligible students identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and as needing special education and related services. (United States Department of Education, 2015).
- *Individualized Education Plan (IEP).* Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have this plan. It is designed for one student and is an individualized document for all school personnel and parents to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.
- **Instructional Reading Level.** A text that provides the right level of support and challenge for the child's current processing abilities to be able to practice reading (Ransford-Kaldon, Flynt, Ross, Franceschini, Zoblotsky, Huang, and Gallager, 2010).
- *i-Ready.* This is adaptive computer software that uses diagnostic assessment data to identify students' strengths and learning gaps at the reading subskill level. It delivers individualized learning paths in the digital platform. Offers support in grouping students for differentiation.
- *Learning Gains.* This term is used when a student demonstrates growth from one year to the next year sufficient to meet the criteria outlined for the Florida

Standard Assessment Performance Task. (Florida Department of Education, 2020).

- *Leveled Readers*. A set of books organized by levels of complexity and difficulty from easy to more complex. The teacher selects these texts to work with a small group who have similar reading processes (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2010).
- *Lexile*. A measure used by schools to assess a student's reading ability and independent reading level to properly select books.
- *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)*. This involves the systematic use of multi-source assessment data to most efficiently allocate resources to improve learning for all students, through integrated academic and behavior supports. (citation withheld to preserve confidentiality).
- *Professional Learning Community*. A group of educators with a shared mission, vision, and values; collective inquiry; collaborative teams; an orientation toward action; commitment to continuous improvement; and a focus on results. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 45).
- *Pull Out Support*. This refers to academic instruction and services provided to students by the exceptional education teacher or a resource teacher outside of the general classroom setting, usually in a resource room.
- *Push-In Support*. This refers to academic instruction and services provided to students by a paraprofessional, exceptional education teacher or resource teacher by going into the students' classroom setting.

- *Scaffolding*. Instructional strategies used to break or chunk new concepts to help students move toward understanding and greater independence in learning.
- *School Improvement Plan (SIP)*. A school's use of data for purposeful planning and problem solving focused on improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap.
- *Self-Awareness*. The ability to be conscious of yourself, your thoughts and feelings, as well as how others perceive you.
- *Self-Contained Classroom*. A classroom composed of students requiring special services that benefit from being in a structured environment composed of students with similar academic needs.
- *Special Education*. Often referred to as exceptional education, it refers to alternative instruction, support, and services provided for students who have academic, behavioral, health, physical, or other unique needs beyond those met by traditional educational techniques. (Seder, 2014).
- *Students with Disabilities (SWD)*. Refers to students with some physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Learning is considered a major life activity.
- *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*. A framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning all students based on insights on how humans learn. (UDL center).

Research Questions

I will need to collect data on how the current delivery of intervention support services are provided in reading to evaluate the program effectively. As part of my evaluation, I plan to use the following primary research questions:

1. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is working well in the intervention services program for SWD?
2. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is not working well in the intervention services program for SWD?
3. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as the greatest challenges in the intervention services program for SWD?
4. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as ways to address these challenges (if any), or improve in the intervention services program for SWD?

The data collected from my primary research questions will provide me with specific problems identified by the teachers working with our SWD in the current delivery model of intervention services.

As part of my evaluation of the intervention program, I will need to collect data from teachers related to their professional development and training needs, as well as their needs for instructional resources. As part of my evaluation, I plan to use the following secondary research questions:

1. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as their needs for professional development to support SWD?
2. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers

report as their needs for instructional materials to support SWD?

The information collected by these related research questions will allow me to collect qualitative data and insight on what the teachers providing the intervention support services note are their needs for professional development training and materials to support our SWD effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a noticeable achievement gap in reading between my students with disabilities (SWD) and my general education students. To close the achievement gap, SWD must receive specialized intervention support in reading: “In general, most students with reading difficulties make progress when provided with (a) more instruction, (b) more intensive and efficient instruction, and (c) extended opportunities to practice with and without teacher support” (Vaughn, Denton, & Fletcher, 2010, pp. 433-434). This specialized intervention plan must include extended time to conduct the intervention as well as the structure and personnel support to improve the delivery model. As I continue my studies, I plan to research and review the literature on effective intervention models for SWD and specialized interventions in reading.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Research shows most students with disabilities (SWD) experience significant difficulties in reading (Austin, Vaughn, & McClelland, 2017). These difficulties affect their performance in all other academic areas. SWD are not making progress in reading at the same rate as their general education peers. Effective specialized intervention support in reading is essential for the success of SWD. The current delivery of intervention support provided at ABC Elementary is not yielding results for SWD. The current delivery model includes a thirty-minute block provided by the general education teacher. The purpose of my evaluation of intervention support services is to identify a delivery model in which reliable and successful specialized intervention support is to SWD in reading. I believe there is a need for a delivery model in which reliable and successful specialized intervention support is provided to our SWD to ensure academic gains. My evaluation research examined elements of reading interventions for SWD, described multicomponent reading interventions, which combine more than one element of reading instruction such as sight words and phonics, defined components of effective implementation of reading interventions, outlined challenges of providing reading intervention to SWD, and connected conceptual and theoretical frameworks from research related to reading intervention.

Elements of Reading Interventions for Students with Disabilities

Repeated reading is a common element used in the structure of reading intervention. Many of the intervention strategies address repeated reading tied to building reading fluency: “Fluency is one of the most difficult components to remediate

for children with learning disabilities” (O’Connor, White, & Swanson, 2007). Ransford-Kaldon, Flynt, Ross, Franceschini, Zoblotsky, Huang, and Gallager (2010) conducted an empirical study on the effectiveness of Fountas and Pinnell’s Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). This study showed significant overall gains in students in kindergarten through second-grade students who received LLI, specifically noting a definite increase in reading fluency for ESE students. The LLI system primarily consisted of using leveled readers; readers leveled to correspond with the individual reader’s reading level by Lexile, to build students’ fluency through repeated readings. The findings noted significant differences for first-grade students who participated in LLI and exceeded those who were not participating in LLI on the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) subtests of Oral Reading Fluency as well as Letter Naming Fluency. In this study, research findings noted an average gain of 4.64 on benchmark levels compared to only an average gain of 2.99 for students in second grade participating in the LLI intervention. I believe the repeated reading through the use of appropriately leveled text, as provided by the LLI intervention can improve students’ oral fluency while building opportunities to interact with authentic text.

Reviews completed by W. L. Castillo (2011) on repeated reading to improve oral fluency for SWD also show positive results. Castillo affirms that SWD, who struggle in reading, tend to read slowly and labor over unfamiliar text. This lack of fluency compromises the comprehension for these students, who then do not spend sufficient time reading. She notes that the design of interventions should first, to meet the needs of the student. The studies she examined all showed the improvement in overall reading when the intervention used the practice of repeated reading of entire passages to improve

reading fluency. This study does not focus on authentic leveled text as part of the intervention, but rather appropriate leveled passages. Appropriate leveled passages provide a flexible option when leveled reading books are not available for teachers planning for intervention by accessing a bank of passages.

Tied to overall improvements to reading comprehension, studies conducted by Stevens, Walker, and Vaughn (2017) synthesized over 70 articles. They found 19 studies that met their criteria for reading intervention of students in kindergarten through fifth grade targeting reading fluency. The authors focused on reading fluency interventions that incorporated the strategy of repeated readings (the practice of having a student read a text over and over until fluent) with a model and without a model. The results showed positive outcomes in reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension of students who received reading intervention in fluency tied to repeated reading.

Likewise, a synthesis conducted by Kim, Bryant, Bryant, & Park (2017) of twelve studies of interventions used to improve oral reading fluency with students with disabilities found that the most effective practices used repeated reading with a model. There were a variety of models used throughout the studies. These models included self-modeling introduced through video recording, modeling by the teacher using repeated text, modeling by the teacher with error correction, and pre-teach modeling to preview essential vocabulary before reading the text. The synthesis concluded that teachers should provide students with disabilities repeated and sufficient opportunities to read text and should implement the use of repeated text as well as instructional features related to modeling by the teacher during the reading intervention to yield positive results. I have seen effective modeling by teachers during small group guided intervention at the

primary level. I know the value of students' exposure to correct literacy models when reading text. I have not seen as many examples in the intermediate grades and can see how this could be valuable to our students with disabilities who are not fluent, have self-awareness, and might be embarrassed to read aloud in class.

Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, and Apichatabutra (2009), have researched whether to consider repeated reading as an “evidence-based” practice. They concluded that repeated reading has not been evaluated with quality and rigorous standards to support this practice. They evaluated eleven research studies to establish the effectiveness of repeated reading as related to rigorous and quality standards. The authors found that none of the 11 research studies, which they reviewed and evaluated, met the conditions for rigorous and quality research as outlined in the categories of the rubric developed by them for the study. These findings indicate that repeated reading does not meet the conditions for consideration as an evidence-based strategy for SWD. This evidence can also imply that single-subject research completed on the practice of repeated reading may need to increase in rigor in future research since the authors found that none of the 11 studies they reviewed met their criteria in the rubric to qualify as rigorous standards. I found that the review of the research by these authors had weaknesses about repeated reading studies due to the lack of information about the specific interventions, as well as lack of information about the teachers providing the intervention across all the experimental and quasi-experimental studies examined. The lack of information about the specific interventions makes it difficult to evaluate the research and note if the results are due to the effects of the intervention concerning repeated reading itself, or the delivery by the teacher.

Sight word recognition is another common element implemented during reading intervention for SWD. SWD exhibit difficulty with rapidly decoding words, phrases, and sight words quickly. Difficulty in decoding affects the area of reading fluency, which is an essential skill for reading proficiency. Research by Vaughn and Wanzek (2014) on meaningful impacts of intensive reading interventions for SWD, note that word recognition typically focuses on phonics and decoding skills and sight word recognition. In their study, they found that this included spelling and reading of individual word lists and then applying words to decodable text. They found that when provided explicit instruction in these areas, SWD made substantial gains in decoding words, fluency, and comprehension skills. This research shows that SWD benefit from reading interventions that focus on word decoding and sight word instruction. In their study related to elements of sight word intervention with SWD authors Haegele and Burns (2015) found in their research that the effects of modifying intervention set size concerning the acquisition rate (AR) had a significant impact on the implementation of sight word interventions. AR is the amount of information that a student can recall at least one day after the intervention session. Three SWD who were studied received sight word intervention. The results showed that in terms of retention, all three participants had higher retention of unknown words when taught in the rate of their AR condition for each of the sets. The average numbers for words recalled per minute were the highest level of retention and recall for all three students when AR conditions were met. The authors note limitations in their research to consider in terms of the measuring of variables in the study. They report that the stimuli used during the sessions for instruction were words categorized as unknown and taken from an appropriate list for the students' grade level. They contend that though

the grade level list made the data applicable to the instructional setting, it also limited the validity internally. I believe this study provided enormous implications for the importance of knowing the characteristics and needs of all students before beginning an intervention. Taking time to assess each student's AR through informal small group assessment of sight word recognition during a small amount of time would provide valuable insight in preparing the amount of content delivered during a single intervention session.

Multicomponent Reading Interventions

A significant number of studies on reading intervention for SWD involved programs that did not focus on a single reading skill but incorporated several foundational reading skills to provide a multi-component approach to intervention. Afacan, Wilkerson, and Ruppert (2018) conducted a review to examine the quality and characteristics of published research on multicomponent reading intervention for SWD. They found that seven empirical studies fit their inclusionary criteria. They defined multi-component interventions as interventions that provide instruction in at least two to five components of reading. Components in the studies examined included phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Effective strategies incorporated in the multi-component approach included direct instruction, time delay, repeated trials, and read aloud. Overall, the review noted that integrated reading instruction that consists of a multi-component approach has shown to be effective with students with disabilities.

The examination of literature conducted by Kang, McKenna, Arden, and Ciullo (2015) included studies of integrated reading and writing interventions for students with

disabilities. Of the ten studies reviewed, they found four studies met the inclusion criteria according to the What Works Clearing House (WWC) design standards. The findings show the relevance of incorporating reading and writing multi-component intervention in line with the practice of tying together reading and writing skills during an instructional period. Their research notes that students with disabilities who struggle in reading typically have difficulty in writing, so on many levels integrating the intervention components for reading and writing makes sense. Effective strategies incorporated in the reading and writing multi-component intervention approach for SWD included the use of graphic organizers as a planning tool and a way to organize the students' thinking. I have seen the graphic organizers, such as thinking maps, help support young learners in reading and writing. The ability to have students organize their thinking and frame their knowledge can lead to connections that can transfer to their writing.

A research synthesis by Ciullo, Lo, Wanzek, and Reed (2016), focused on the effectiveness of multi-component reading interventions for SWD designed to improve comprehension through complex informational text. The authors point out the challenges SWD experience when reading informational texts due to their inability to decode fluently and, therefore, an inability to build understanding as they read and link as well as recall key facts. They analyzed 12 studies related to SWD in kindergarten through fifth grade. It was noted that students acquired more science and social studies content while reading informational text when using tools such as graphic organizers. Limitations of the studies that authors noted included the brief duration of sessions in the studies reviewed, the lack of fidelity measurement for the instructional delivery as well as limited use of standardized measures.

Guzel-Ozmen (2011) conducted a study on the effectiveness of multi-component interventions for SWD, specifically for improving the oral reading fluency of Turkish students. The methods used combined listening to a passage through modeling, repeated reading of the passage, and repeated reading with performance feedback. The study concluded that effective intervention packages that included components of repeated reading, modeling, and performance feedback proved effective in increasing oral fluency for students. I find that to improve the reading performance of SWD effectively; we must look at all the components of literacy development, not just decoding to build sight word fluency. The multi-component intervention approach specifically targets several key foundational reading domains. Providing intervention that integrates these domains with writing can provide a connection in learning for SWD that can lead to positive gains in reading proficiency.

The i-Ready computer-adaptive program provides individualized instructional paths for students based on their needs. This program uses a diagnostic assessment to identify individual students' strengths and deficits in foundational reading skills. Students access their personalized lessons on their dashboards when they log into the program to address their reading needs. In my analysis of this program, I noted that student lessons incorporate multi-component reading skills such as phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The program can differentiate instruction in a classroom setting based on students log on. This log on feature provides autonomy for a struggling reader who may be working below grade level but accesses the program like every student. The i-Ready program also offers resources and strategies on how to create instructional groups for academic support

and intervention based on data. Using the i-Ready computer-adaptive program during the intervention block can provide a structure for some students to work on deficit reading skills independently. This structure allows the teacher to work in small groups with students and can be beneficial for teachers who struggle with differentiation of learning for SWD.

Components of Effective Reading Intervention Implementation

The implementation of the reading interventions for SWD impacted the results in most of the studies I evaluated. Studies that yielded positive results noted useful components in the implementation of the intervention. In their research on the implementation of intensive intervention, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII, 2013) found seven main findings across the five districts analyzed. The first main finding was that all sites had an intensive intervention classified as a component of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). The second finding was that all sites used data to drive instruction. The third finding was that all sites encouraged capacity-building practices related to the intervention. The fourth finding was the impact that engaging families in decisions about programs had in supporting the implementation. The fifth finding detailed how the delivery of special education services occurred separately from intensive intervention support. The sixth finding identified the process of adapting secondary interventions considered in Tier 2 that encompass components of Data-Based Individualization. The last main finding was the fidelity of implementation of secondary intervention programs. These seven main findings in the study described factors that assisted in the implementation of intensive intervention in all five district sites selected. This study had limitations in the selection of the school districts chosen for participation

in the study. The five school districts chosen for the study met the criteria for NCII, suggesting success with SWD but had limited data within their districts on SWD's achievement results.

The use of reciprocal teaching and self-regulation strategies were components that yielded results in my reviews of reading intervention for SWD. Gomaa's (2015) study on the effect of reciprocal teaching on fifth graders with reading disabilities noted the reciprocal approach, which uses discussions to improve students' reading comprehension, showed improvements in overall motivation and reading skills. The study included sixty-six students as participants with a focus on reciprocal teaching strategies that focused on questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. The results showed students in the control group receiving reading intervention with reciprocal teaching strategies improved their reading comprehension compared to students in the control group taught in traditional ways. Self-regulated teaching routines, when teaching reading intervention strategies, had promising results in a study conducted by Antoniou and Souvignier (2007). They noted students with reading disabilities face challenges comprehending text as they read due to their gaps in other reading skills such as recall and decoding.

The size of the intervention group and the time allotted for intervention was another component that affected the positive results of the implementation in my reviews. Authors Wanzek and Kent (2012) focused on reading interventions for SWD in the upper elementary grades. They conclude that group size and time on intervention strategies affect the effective implementation of the intervention. Small groups provide opportunities for small group intense intervention. Increased time to provide intervention strategies offers more opportunities to address deficits. These authors also share that

group size and dosage have significant implications in the context of reading intervention for SWD. They note that increasing the number of hours provided a week increases opportunities for student learning. Wanzek and Kent discuss small groups of two to four, and one to one ratios between students and teachers noted higher effects for improving student reading than groups of six to ten in the study. They noted the lack of research on group sizes larger than six; therefore, it is undetermined whether these larger group sizes have as high effects as the smaller groups. Group size is also noted in the study of the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program by Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010). The LLI program builds on reading fluency for students in kindergarten through second grade. The intervention applied in small groups of four to six students provided 30-minute intervention five times a week for 14 weeks, resulted in significant gains for SWD. I have seen positive results in students' achievement and engagement when the delivery of intervention occurs in small groups within the classroom structure.

In addition to group size and time, the delivery of the intervention or modeling by teachers with fidelity proved an effective factor in implementation. In their synthesis of research on effective reading interventions for SWD, authors Chard, Vaughn, and Tyler (2002), note that effective models for improving fluency include opportunities to re-read familiar text independently. Modeling by an adult or modeling by a proficient peer can be incorporated in these intervention sessions. They note that other elements of intervention can affect reading fluency. Elements include the amount of text presented to students at one time and the complexity or difficulty of the text. The number of repetitions is critical as well, with higher performance coming from repeated readings from three to seven times in comparison to a single reading of a text. The research in the

review presents strong support for including the use of modeling and fluency activities as a component of effective reading interventions with SWD. I believe modeling by the teacher provides students with a fluent and proficient reader as a role model, which is critical. A common practice I observe during reading lessons is the “round-robin” practice of students taking turns reading aloud. Though this might provide limited practice in oral reading for students, for struggling readers, it reinforces non-fluent reading that might be provided by peers as they read. The teacher should be modeling and reading aloud to students to model correct strategies and inflection of tone and voice while reading.

Challenges of Providing Reading Intervention to Students with Disabilities

A reoccurring theme across the research I reviewed that highlighted the challenge of providing reading intervention to SWD was the lack of time in the master schedule to implement the intervention program consistently. In the case of the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) study conducted by Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010), teachers interviewed noted concerns about effectively implementing the full lesson in the thirty-minute time frame. Providing the intervention five times a week was concerning when the master schedule did not include sufficient intervention time tied to the English Language Arts block. In contrast, in their study of intensive reading interventions for SWD, authors Vaughn and Wanzek (2014) found that when in the general education setting, SWD were not spending a significant amount of time participating in reading. This lack of practice was not due to lack of scheduled time but attributed to off-task behavior, waiting for support, or engaging in nonliterary activities such as coloring and playing games. This off-task behavior resulted in 50 percent of the instructional reading

block used for activities other than reading for SWD. The findings by authors Vaughn and Wanzek resonate with some of the observations I have made in my school building. My general education teachers lack the strategies to provide accommodations and support to SWD. They often choose to offer other activities that are not standards-aligned for these students, so they can work independently or provide time on the computer to avoid “off-task” misbehavior. Training in implementing differentiated instruction strategies and the use of effective resources would ensure that SWD would be engaged in meaningful literacy activities when in the general education setting.

In the case study by Legere & Conca (2010), the authors show how the effective implementation of the Response to Intervention Model (RTI), now known as the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) can be a model to identify students with reading difficulties. This system can revitalize reading services for SWD. The study summarized how a flexible schedule and various levels of support in the general education classroom and with the academic support of the exceptional education teacher could result in positive reading gains. In this case study of a fourth-grade student with a learning disability, the exceptional education teacher, general education teacher, and paraprofessional provided the multi-tiered academic support. The academic support occurred during the student’s English Language Arts block. In this block where small group ratios, as well as thirty-minute increments with instructional staff and fifteen-minute increments with a paraprofessional. Tiered support resulted in the student moving from a DRA 2 (below kindergarten level) to a DRA 28 (late second-grade level). I have seen the effective integration of the MTSS support system on my campus. Using the MTSS system of support has successfully identified students needing additional tiered

academic support and specific areas to target. The challenge has been in ensuring the consistent tiered support throughout the day and the additional personnel to support the classroom teacher with the MTSS interventions.

Throughout my review of the research, teachers' perceptions of their ability to successfully implement intervention strategies varied. At the center of this was the amount of professional development or lack of training received by the teachers. In the study conducted by the National Center on Intensive Intervention (year) of the many lessons learned from the field was the importance of using professional development opportunities. Teacher surveys and interviews were collected from the five districts highlighted in this study. My analysis of survey and interview data showed that professional development and train-the-trainer models of professional development were crucial in building capacity in differentiating instruction. The collaboration between the special education teacher and regular education teacher increased due to the support and focused on building capacity at each school site.

In Vaughn and Waneck's (2014) evaluation of intensive intervention, they noted that SWD received very little differentiation during the instructional block and minimal intervention in comprehension strategies. They also noted that large amounts of time doing independent seatwork and worksheets. In examining the approaches that the teachers used while providing reading instruction to SWD, they stated the interventions lacked intensity and specialization. This lack of intensity and specialization is attributed to the general education teachers not being trained in a specific intervention strategy to use with their SWD. Authors Waneck and Kent (2012) did research on reading interventions for SWD in the upper elementary grades and concluded that the

implementation of the intervention was affected by teacher training. They noted that the implementation results were higher when it was implemented by the researchers conducting the study than the classroom teacher. They attributed these results in research due to the lack of additional training on the intervention by the teacher and the time constraints. Overall the study resulted in positive gains in reading for students who received the word recognition fluency intervention.

In his meta-analysis of intervention outcomes in reading for SWD, Swanson (1999), examines results in the domains of word recognition and comprehension. Criteria used to select the studies included the measure of word recognition, effect size, and treatment group. Ninety-two studies included in the research and Swanson (1999) found that the studies varied in the explicitness of the instruction and whether the intervention focused on general reading strategies or specific reading skills such as word recognition. Swanson also notes that the challenges of implementation of effective interventions include the lack of focus on explicitly targeted reading skills and the time allotted to provide teacher training in its delivery.

A systematic review by Hill (2016) on phonics-based reading intervention for SWD finds that students positively respond to direct phonics-based instruction. He notes that teachers need interventions that are simple and can be easily in the general classroom setting. The challenge is implementing it within the general education setting to SWD within a large group environment. Of the eleven studies included in his review, five occurred with students in a self-contained setting. I believe that for general education, teachers will need to learn successful strategies to be able to provide specialized academic support during intervention for SWD. They will need to be provided with

professional development on successful strategies to differentiate instruction appropriately.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

I found several theoretical frameworks to support elements of specific reading intervention for SWD. In their review of repeated reading, authors Chard et al. (2009) note two theoretical frameworks to support the correlation between reading fluency and increased proficiency in reading. The first framework discussed is Perfetti's verbal efficacy theory which explains that the reader must develop a lower level of processes, such as word identification, before being able to perform higher-level processes such as comprehension (2009). The second framework discussed is Logan's instance theory of automatization that suggests that memory retrieval plays a part in the ability to have automaticity and fluency when reading (2009). Memory retrieval will increase and strengthen with the repeated performance of a task. Both of these theoretical frameworks are the basis for the intervention practice of repeated reading used with SWD. Opportunities to develop fluency through repeated reading can result in positive gains in reading comprehension for SWD struggling to read fluently.

The Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) uses the theoretical framework analyzed by Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010) of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI). The framework uses leveled readers as the basis for reading intervention. The framework is based on the research findings that young children with deficits in their early literacy skills will continue to struggle with literacy skills later in their educational career if not addressed (2010). According to Ransford-Kaldon et al., the LLI system early intervention programs can be effective in preventing lasting reading

deficiencies in children (2010). The expectation and findings support that providing early intervention for SWD can help close the achievement gap before the intermediate grades, where reading for knowledge in subject content areas will be required (2010).

Finally, authors Haegele and Burns (2015) related the theoretical framework by John Ceraso (Ceraso, 1967) in their study of Acquisition Rate (AR) related to information processed during an intervention session. Ceraso (Ceraso, 1967) developed the Inference Theory. Haegele and Burn's (2015) research on the effectiveness of set size on AR, they refer to how critical the right amount of material a learner can practice and retain after an intervention session is on the effectiveness of the intervention. In Ceraso's Inference Theory, he states that when there is an attempt to cover too much material at one time, it can lead to difficulties in learning the new information and can reduce the ability to recall the previously taught material. Haegele and Burns (2015) confirm this theory in the results of their study on AR during reading intervention provided to SWD. I believe in carefully monitoring the amount of information presented during an intervention session to ensure recall over time.

Conclusion

Students with Disabilities (SWD) struggling in reading need to participate in specialized intervention services to make academic gains. Currently, the models used in elementary schools to support intervention in reading are not resulting in improved academic gains for SWD. My review of the research indicates that schools need to change their practices and delivery models to meet the needs of these students. I found several elements present in the research of reading intervention provided to SWD that yielded positive results. These elements included repeated reading experiences to build

fluency and sight word recognition. Studies also showed positive results for SWD when the intervention combined a multi-component approach. This approach combined intervention in several reading domains such as word recognition and oral fluency with embedded writing practice to increase literacy skills as a whole.

Additionally, studies that had positive outcomes for SWD, in terms of reading achievement, had common components in their implementation. These components included a systematic implementation of the-MTSS to guide data-driven instruction. The use of modeling during the intervention block by the classroom teacher and the number of students receiving the intervention were all common components of effective implementation. I also noted several challenges in meeting the needs of SWD struggling with reading skills. These challenges included lack of time allotted in the master schedule for the intervention block, inflexible scheduling to provide multi-tiered support, and a need for professional development for teachers on specialized interventions and differentiated instruction. Throughout my review of research, there were several theoretical frameworks related to reading intervention with SWD. These included Perfetti's verbal efficacy theory (Perfetti, 1988), Logan's instance theory of automatization (Logan, 1988), Fountas and Pinnell's framework (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2019) and Ceraso's Inference Theory (Ceraso, 1967). All of these theories related to reading intervention support and correlated with students' retrieval of information, their ability to process oral language, and their development of foundational and early literacy skills as critical in the effective reading support of SWD. Implementation of effective elements of reading intervention in a systematic manner for SWD would result in academic learning gains for these students.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design Overview

The purpose of my Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities (SWD) was to identify a delivery model that provides reliable and successful specialized intervention to our SWD students in reading. “Program evaluation is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries” (Patton, p. 40). The purpose of finding effective specialized intervention support for SWD would hopefully lead districts to choose to adopt a set of interventions and resources that would be used to provide targeted specialized intervention for all SWD. Monitoring would require implementation with fidelity at all schools. With an effective model in place, district administrators can ensure that SWD achieve success.

To gain insight into the evaluation of this program, I had to collect data. In line with recommendations by Carroll and Carroll (Carroll & Carroll, 2002), I collected “qualitative data that is descriptive” as well as “quantitative data that is numeric” (p. 5). I used the following methodology to collect my data.

Surveys. I distributed surveys to 45 instructional staff. Teachers were provided with an invitation to participate in the survey (Appendix A), the survey (Appendix B), two consent forms, and two manila envelopes in their mailbox. They were provided with the purpose of the survey that indicated that participation was optional. The directions stated that if they chose to participate, they could complete the survey and place it in one envelope and sign one of the consent forms and place it in the other envelopes. Both envelopes could be returned to a labeled box located in the front office workroom,

assuring that anonymity was protected for the participants. Participants were to keep one of the consent forms for their records. The directions also noted that participants should throw the envelopes away if they chose not to participate.

Interviews. I invited six fourth, six fifth, and two exceptional education teachers to participate in the interview. Teachers were invited to participate in the interview through invitation (Appendix C), and they were provided with two consent forms in their mailbox along with two manila envelopes. Fourth, Fifth and ESE teachers were invited to participate because teachers in these grades would have students with scores on the state's reading assessment from the previous school year. The purpose of the interview with time choices on the invitation and two consent forms were provided with the envelopes in the teachers' mailboxes. The teachers were instructed that by signing the consent form indicating that they understood the purpose of the interview and agreed to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to five email follow-up exchanges to clarify any questions, I may have had regarding the interview data from the interview questions (Appendix D). I informed participants that I would audiotape and transcribe the interviews. All information collected in the interviews reflected the participant's experience and opinion as a teacher providing intervention instruction in reading to SWD.

If teachers chose to participate in the interview, they signed the consent form, selected at least three interview time choices from the invitation, and placed the consent form and choices in the envelope and returned it to a labeled box located in the front office workroom. They kept one of the consent forms for their records. If they chose not to participate, they threw the envelope and forms away without penalty.

Student Data. I collected the following student data: I-Ready End of the Year Reading Diagnostic data from SY 2018 and SY 2019 for all SWD in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades for a total of sixty students' records from ABC Elementary. State Assessment English Language Arts (ELA) results for proficiency for SY 2018 and State Assessment ELA results for proficiency for SY 2019 for all SWD in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades for a total of sixty students' scores. State Assessment ELA results for learning gains for SY 2018 and State Assessment ELA results for learning gains for SY 2019 for all SWD in 4th and 5th grades for a total of sixty student scores.

I used the following primary and secondary research questions to evaluate reading intervention programs for SWD.

My primary exploratory questions included:

1. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is working well in the intervention services program for SWD?
2. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is not working well in the intervention services program for SWD?
3. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as the greatest challenges in the intervention services program for SWD?
4. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as ways to address these challenges (if any), or improve in the intervention services program for SWD?

My secondary exploratory questions included:

1. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as their needs for professional development to support SWD?

2. What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as their needs for instructional materials to support SWD?

I have completed a cross-analysis of my research questions and my survey statements and interview questions. The data collected from the teacher surveys and teacher interviews will specifically provide quantitative and qualitative data connected to my research questions.

Participants

The survey was provided to all instructional staff at ABC Elementary School. The instructional staff consisted of ~~up to~~ 45 general education teachers and four exceptional education teachers who taught reading content in grades K-5. The ages of these teachers ranged from 25-62 years of age. Of these teachers, 90% were females, and 10% were males.

The interview invitation was provided to eighteen teachers from ABC Elementary School. The interviews included the fourth, fifth, and exceptional education teachers. The ages of these teachers ranged from 25-62 years of age. Of these teachers, 90% were females, and 10% were male.

All teachers were provided with an invitation to participate in the survey (Appendix A), a paper survey (Appendix B), two consent forms, and two manila envelopes in their mailbox. One manila envelope was labeled “informed consent,” and the other envelope was labeled “survey.” Teachers were provided with the purpose of the survey, directions of information about the option nature of participation in the survey. The directions stated that if they chose to participate, they could complete the survey and place it in the envelope labeled survey and sign one of the consent forms and place it in

the envelope labeled informed consent. Both envelopes could be returned to a labeled box located in the front office workroom, assuring that anonymity was protected for the participants. Participants retained one of the consent forms for their records. The directions noted that participants throw the envelopes away if they chose not to participate. The directions also clearly stated that participation was strictly voluntary, and they should not feel obligated to participate.

All fourth grade, fifth grade, and ESE teachers were provided an invitation to participate in the interview (Appendix C), two consent forms, and two manila envelopes in their mailboxes. The purpose of the interview, two consent forms, and appointment time choices were provided with labeled envelopes. The directions stated that if they chose to participate in the interview, they could sign the informed consent form and place it in the envelope labeled informed consent. The directions also indicated to the participants that they understood the purpose of the interviews and agreed to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to five email exchanges to clarify any questions I may have had regarding the interview data from the interview questions (Appendix D). I made participants aware that I would audiotape and transcribe the interviews. All information collected in the interviews reflects the participant's experience and opinion as a teacher providing intervention instruction in reading to students with disabilities.

If teachers chose to participate in the interview, they signed the consent form and placed the form in the envelope labeled informed consent. They then used the bottom of the invitation to select at least three interview time choices and placed the interview choices in the envelope labeled interview times. Both envelopes were returned to a

labeled box located in the front office workroom, assuring that anonymity was protected for the participants. Participants kept one of the consent forms for their records. The directions clearly stated that if they chose not to participate, they could throw away the envelopes and forms. They were assured that participation was strictly voluntary, and they had no obligation to participate in the study and could discontinue at any time without penalty.

Data Gathering Techniques

To gain insight into the Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities, I gathered data from surveys, interviews, and student test scores. Surveys gave me anonymous quantitative data about the current delivery model of intervention services at ABC Elementary school. Individual teacher interviews provided more qualitative data about the specific components that were going well and the needs for improvement. Student data scores from i-Ready diagnostic testing and State Standards Assessment results in English Language Arts (ELA) provided quantitative comparison data for ESE students in reading over two years.

Surveys. I distributed surveys to all instructional staff at ABC elementary school. All teachers were provided with an invitation to participate in the survey (Appendix A), the survey (Appendix B), two consent forms, and two manila envelopes in their mailboxes. They were provided with the purpose of the survey and the directions explaining that participation was optional. The directions stated that if they chose to participate, they could complete the survey and place it in one envelope and sign one of the consent forms and place it in the other envelopes. Both envelopes were returned to a labeled box located in the front office workroom, assuring that anonymity was protected

for the participants. Participants kept one of the consent forms for their records. The directions also noted that participants could throw the envelopes away if they chose not to participate.

Individual interviews. I extended an invitation to participate in interviews to all fourth, fifth, and exceptional education teachers from ABC elementary school. Teachers were invited to participate in the interview through invitation (Appendix D) and were provided with two consent forms in their mailbox along with two manila envelopes. The purpose of the interview with time choices on the invitation and two consent forms were provided with the envelopes in the teachers' mailbox. The teachers were instructed that by signing the consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to 5 email exchanges to clarify any questions I may have regarding the interview data from the interview questions (Appendix D). I made participants aware that I would audiotape and transcribe the interviews. All information collected in the interviews reflected the participants' experiences and opinions as teachers providing reading intervention instruction to SWD.

If teachers chose to participate in the interview, they signed the consent form, selected at least three interview time choices from the invitation, and placed the consent form and choices in the envelope and returned to a labeled box located in the front office workroom. Participants kept one of the consent forms for their records. If they chose not to participate, they could throw the envelope and forms away without penalty.

Student data. I collected the following student data: I-Ready End of the Year Reading Diagnostic data from SY 2018 and SY 2019 for all SWD in 3rd, 4th, and 5th

grades for a total of 60 student records from ABC elementary. State Standards Assessment English Language Arts (ELA) results for proficiency for SY 2018 and State Standards ELA results for proficiency for SY 2019 for all SWD in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades for a total of 60 student scores from ABC elementary. State Standards Assessment ELA results for learning gains for SY 2018 and State Standards Assessments ELA results for learning gains for SY 2019 for all SWD in 4th and 5th grades for a total of 60 student scores for ABC elementary.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study did not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While participants were not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study, their taking part in this study could contribute to our better understanding of the implementation of reading intervention services for SWD.

I assured participants that participation was voluntary, and they could discontinue participation at any time without penalty. The directions provided in the teacher mailboxes with the purpose of the study also directed participants to throw away the envelopes if they chose not to participate. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data, and I used pseudonyms for all participants. I assured participants that only I would have access to all of the interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password-protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all interview transcripts, tapes, and notes. I will communicate to participants that while the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, their identities will in no way be revealed.

Data Analysis Techniques

I collected quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate reading intervention programs for Students with Disabilities (SWD). I measured the variables in my data by using ordinal measurement scales for my surveys and a coding system for my interviews. These scales provided me an opportunity to quantify my data and summarize it logically.

Surveys. The teacher survey (Appendix B) consisted of eleven questions organized as agreement statements. I analyzed the survey data through the use of ordinal scaling. An ordinal scale was used with the following ordinal values assigned: 4-strongly agree, 3-agree, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree. A value of 0 was assigned to responses of neither agree nor disagree. The remaining eight questions were structured as short responses. A coding system analyzed these questions. The coding system was set up to identify themes and patterns in the responses. The following coding was applied to analyze the questions with short responses: 1-scheduling, 2-time, 3-professional development, 4-resources, and 5-support. The use of the ordinal scaling and coding in my surveys helped me interpret the responses in a quantifying manner.

Individual interviews. The individual teacher interviews (Appendix D) consisted of twelve questions. To analyze the data collected from the interviews, I used a coding system to code the interview responses. The coding system was set up to identify themes and patterns in the responses. The following coding was applied to analyze the questions with short responses: 1-scheduling, 2-time, 3-professional development, 4-resources, and 5-support. The coding system and research notes as I conducted the interviews allowed me to compare the interview data with that of my survey analysis.

Conclusion

SWD exhibit difficulty with decoding words and phrases and sight words rapidly. Decoding difficulty affects the area of reading fluency, which is an essential skill for reading proficiency, and for the application in the real-world as needed for independent functioning skills, these include the ability to self-care, self-direct, and communicate effectively to function. Research by Vaughn & Wanzek (2014) on meaningful impacts of intensive reading interventions for SWD note that word recognition interventions typically focus on phonics and decoding skills and sight word recognition. My reason for conducting an evaluation of reading intervention programs for SWD was to identify a delivery model in which reliable and successful intervention support is provided to SWD in reading. As I analyzed data collected from student data from the i-Ready diagnostic assessment and State Standards Assessment, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews during my evaluation, I was able to identify current trends in the current reading intervention delivery model for SWD. For our SWD to be college and career ready, it will be essential that they can read fluently to comprehend text and be able to be productive and successful adults.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The findings from my evaluation of reading intervention programs for students with disabilities (SWD) provided answers to my research questions to identify a delivery model that was reliable and produced effective outcomes. My research was conducted at ABC Elementary School. It included surveys, interviews, and student data from the State Standards Assessment for English Language Arts and the i-Ready End of the Year Diagnostic Assessment, which tracked SWD data for two years. Teacher surveys and interviews were collected from teachers who delivered reading intervention to SWD. The data results provided insight into the programs being used and their effectiveness.

Findings

Survey. The Teacher Survey on Intervention Instruction in Reading for Students with Disabilities (Appendix B) was placed in the mailbox of 45 teachers at ABC Elementary School who provided reading intervention to students. The teachers were provided within their mailbox with an invitation, two consent forms, a survey, and two separate envelopes to participate. A reminder was provided two weeks after the initial survey was placed in teacher mailboxes. Of the 45 teacher invitations sent, I received 19 completed surveys and consent forms, creating a survey response rate of 42.2%.

The survey was designed to collect quantitative data about the intervention instruction provided to Students with Disabilities (SWD) in reading. I used an ordinal measurement scale to quantify the responses from the survey in line with recommendations of Carroll and Carroll: “Ordinal scaling is used often in education applied to agreement statements to interpret the data” (2002). The following values were

assigned on the rating scale: 0= neither agree nor disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4= strongly agree. The survey included 11 statements that were quantified using this scale.

The first two statements on the survey were designed to collect feedback on the respondents' overall view of intervention support for SWD and the current computer-adaptive program in place at the school. In statement 1, I asked the respondents to agree or disagree with the following: Intervention support for SWD in reading yields positive results. All nineteen participants (100%) either selected agree or strongly agree. In statement 2, I asked the respondents to agree or disagree with the following: The i-Ready computer-adaptive program provides beneficial support and practice in reading skills for SWD. Fourteen participants (73%) agreed that it did. I believe this data reflects that most teachers believe that additional support in reading for SWD, whether through direct instruction or an adaptive computer program, yields positive results. As a teacher, when I provided intervention support to my SWD through computer adaptive programs, I felt it was an option to support students when I wasn't physically available to provide direct instruction.

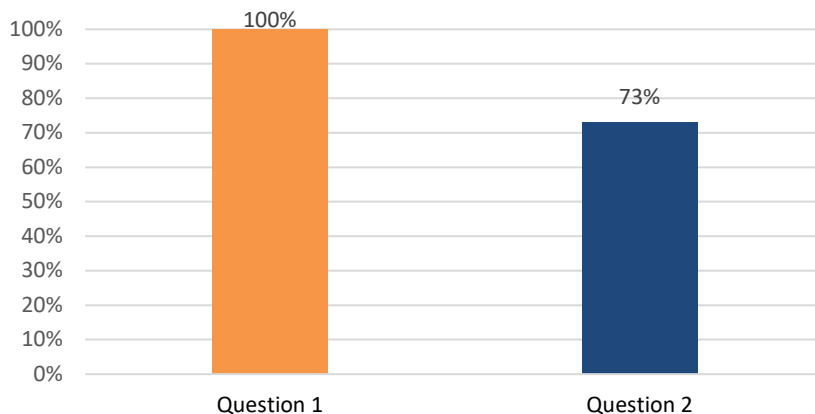


Figure 1. Statements 1 and 2: Statement 1 teachers' responses to intervention support for SWD yielding positive results; Statement 2 i-Ready program providing beneficial intervention for SWD (n=19)

Statements 3 and 4 were designed to collect information from respondents on the time, schedule, and structure of the reading intervention provided to SWD. In statement 3, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following: There is adequate time in the schedule to provide academic intervention support in reading for SWD. The respondents were split on this statement with eleven of participants (58%) agreeing that there is adequate time in the schedule to provide academic intervention support in reading for SWD and eight of participants (42%) disagreeing that there is sufficient time in the schedule to provide academic intervention support in reading for SWD.

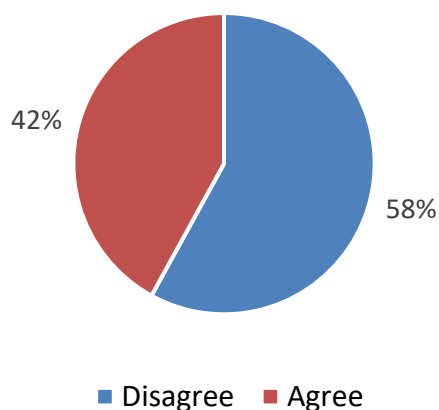


Figure 2. 5: teachers' responses to adequate time in the schedule to provide reading intervention for SWD (n=19)

In statement 4, I asked participants to agree or disagree with the following:
Reading intervention in reading is provided in small groups of six to eight students. Seventeen (90%) of respondents agreed that the intervention was delivered in small groups. This data shows that intervention services are provided in small groups for the majority of classes. My analysis of the data shows that 2 (10%) of respondents don't agree with this statement. This response can be based on many factors, such as the teacher's comfort in providing small group instruction or the number of students in a class needing the same tiered intervention, leading to larger group sizes. Time in the intervention schedule is a concern, as noted by 11(58%) of respondents.

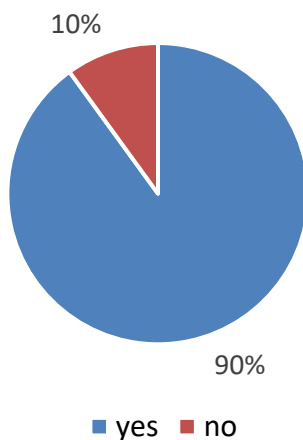


Figure 3. Statement 4: teachers' responses to reading intervention is provided in small groups of six to eight students (n=19)

In statements 5 and 6, I focused on collecting data about the resources and materials for providing reading intervention for SWD. Statement 5 asked respondents to agree or disagree to the following: I have the resources I need to provide effective reading intervention to SWD. Seventeen (89%) of respondents noted they had effective resources. Statement 6 asked respondents to agree or disagree to the following: Resource materials from Curriculum Associates are effective in providing intervention to SWD. Only eleven (58%) of respondents responded that these resources were effective in providing reading intervention for SWD. This data leads to questions about what specific resources are being used by respondents that they feel are effective in providing intervention services for SWD since the purchased Curriculum Associates materials, workbooks based on standards for English Language Arts, are not viewed as effective.

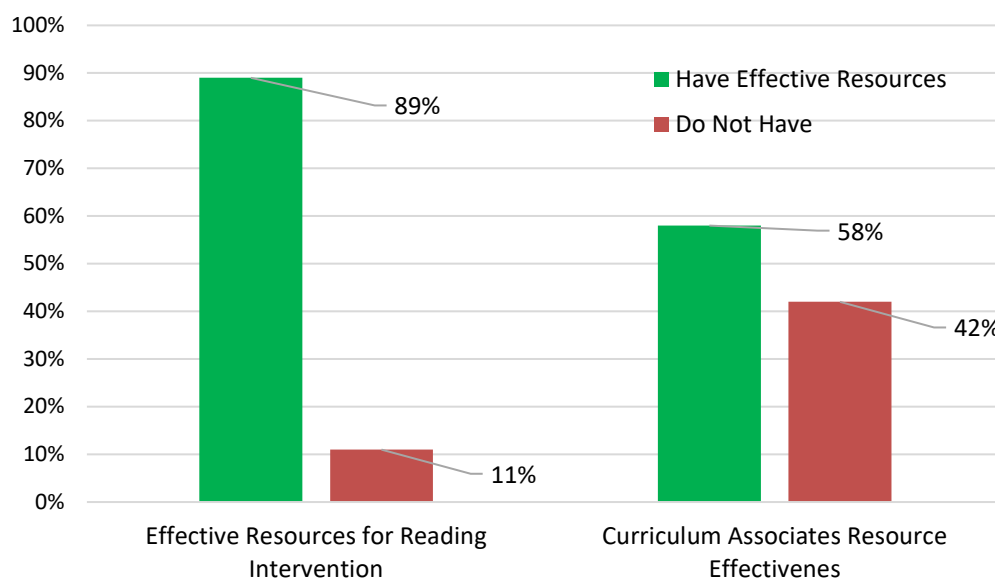


Figure 4. Survey Statements 5 and 6: teachers' responses to their perception of having adequate resources for reading intervention and their perception of the effectiveness of Curriculum Associates resource materials for reading intervention for SWD (n=19)

Statements 7, 8, and 11 were designed for me to collect information about the teachers' past professional development experiences and current needs. In statement 7, I asked respondents to agree or disagree to the following statement: I have received adequate professional development on how to provide reading intervention to SWD. Fifteen (79%) of respondents agreed with this statement. In statement 8, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following: I have participated in professional development on how to provide differentiated instruction for SWD. Seventeen (89%) of respondents agreed that they had participated in professional development on differentiation. In statement 11, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following: I would like additional professional development on specific strategies in reading to support my SWD. There were twelve (63%) who responded as wanting additional professional development for specific strategies in reading to support SWD. This response reflects a significant number of teachers wanting additional professional

development to support their SWD may be an indication that they need further development on how to differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of SWD.

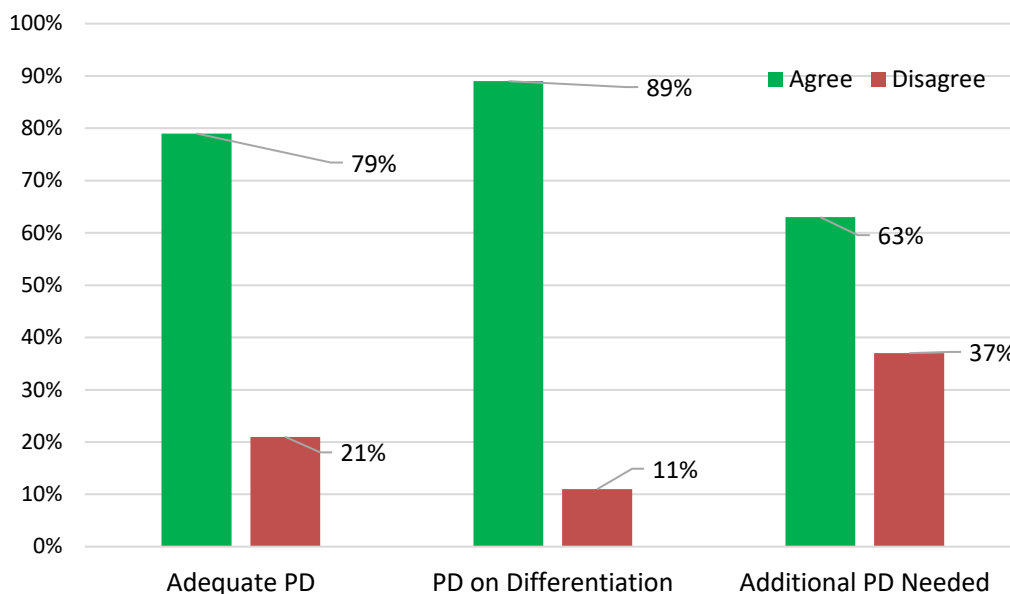


Figure 5. Survey Statements 7, 8 & 11: teachers responses to receiving adequate professional development on how to provide reading intervention, participation in professional development on how to differentiate instruction, and if they would like additional professional development on specific strategies to support SWD in reading (n=19)

Statement 9 specifically addressed the differentiation of instruction for SWD. In statement 9, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following: There are challenges in differentiating instruction for SWD in reading. Eighteen (99%) of respondents agreed that there are challenges in differentiating instruction in reading for SWD. This data shows that teachers may have knowledge of differentiation strategies but are finding it challenging to implement these strategies in their instructional day. This statement supports the notion that though teachers note they have had professional development on differentiating instruction, they want specific training on how to differentiate instruction in reading to support SWD.

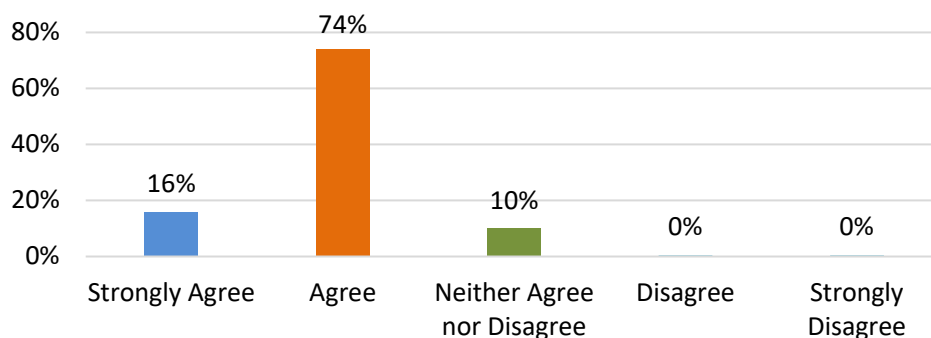


Figure 6. Survey Statement 9: teachers' responses to the degree of the challenge they perceive in implementing differentiated reading instruction for SWD (n=19)

In statement 10, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following: I have appropriate reading materials and text to scaffold instruction for SWD. Sixteen (84%) respondents agreed that there were appropriate materials and text to scaffold instruction. Based on responses from statements 9 and 10, the challenge in providing intervention in reading to SWD is not related to the lack of materials. The need for training on how to differentiate instruction in reading for SWD using the appropriate materials may be the problem.

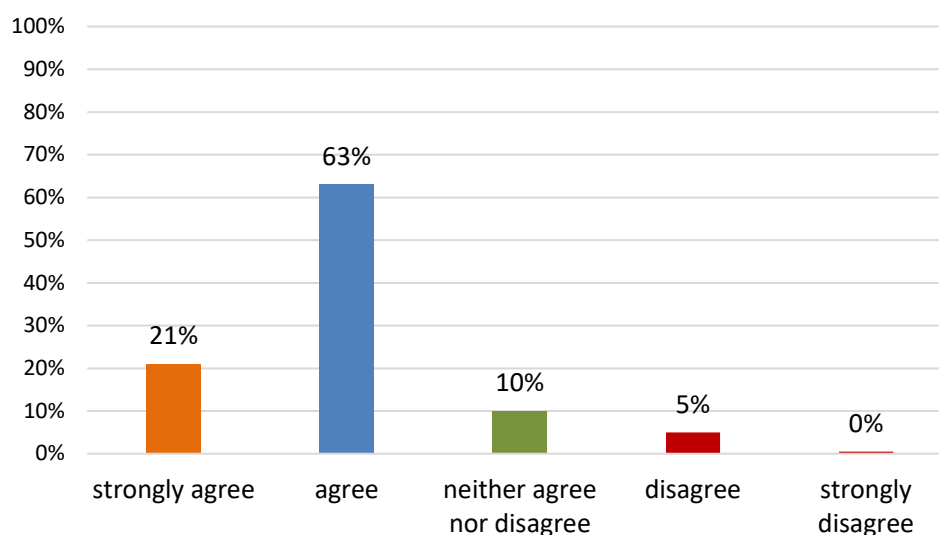


Figure 7. Survey statement 10: teachers' responses to the availability of appropriate scaffold instruction materials for SWD (n=19)

Eight open-ended statements were included in the teacher survey. I used a coding system to identify general themes and trends in the responses. According to Leavy, “The coding process allows you to reduce and classify the data generated” (2017, p.151). The following coding was applied to analyze the short responses:

1-scheduling, 2-time, 3-professional development, 4-resources, and 5-support.

In survey statement 12, I asked teachers to report what they felt was working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD. There were two major trends in the responses to what was working well. The first was support, with seven out of nineteen responses (37%) listing this in some manner in their response. This data was related to support by the ESE teacher, a paraprofessional, or additional push in support provided during the intervention block by resource teachers for SWD. One respondent noted, “the support from the paraprofessional and ESE teacher provides the opportunity to work in smaller groups during intervention.” The second trend that appeared in responses was scheduling, with six out of nineteen responses (32%) noting that the schedule allowed for a dedicated intervention block. One respondent listed that “scheduling of hourly tutor to provide push-in support during the block is helpful.”

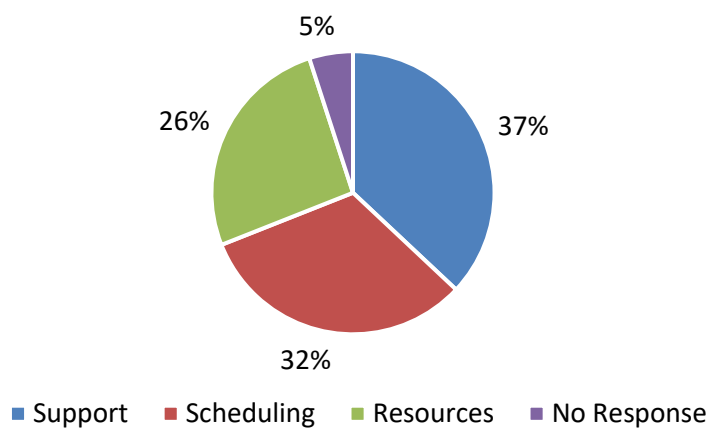


Figure 8. Survey statement 12: open-ended teachers’ responses to what was working well with current intervention in reading for SWD (n=19)

In survey statement 13, I asked teachers to report what they felt was not working well with the current intervention services for SWD. Three major themes emerged in the responses. The first was time, with six out of nineteen responses (32%) noting the time as a factor. Responses ranged from “not enough time” to time SWD receive “pull out support from the speech teacher taking away time in class.” The second theme that arose was scheduling with five out of nineteen responses (26%) listing that the schedule and structure for the intervention block were not working well for their particular class. One respondent noted that “time for intervention closer to the ELA block would help the focus.” The third major theme that emerged in the responses was resources, with four out of nineteen responses (21%) stating that the current materials in place from Curriculum Associates didn’t meet the needs of their students. This is a contradiction from the data collected in statement 5, where 89% of respondents reported that they had adequate resources to provide intervention. This leads me to believe that some respondents are explicitly referring to the Curriculum Associates materials as not adequate. This statement could have been worded differently to request more specific data as to what resources are currently available that teachers feel are adequate. One response specifically noted this about the Curriculum Associates materials saying, “the Language Arts Standards book (citation withheld to preserve confidentiality) is too challenging and no easy way to modify.” This data provides insights that one challenge in the delivery of intervention support for SWD is not in the lack of resources, but teachers lacking

knowledge of how to easily modify the resource to accommodate SWD.

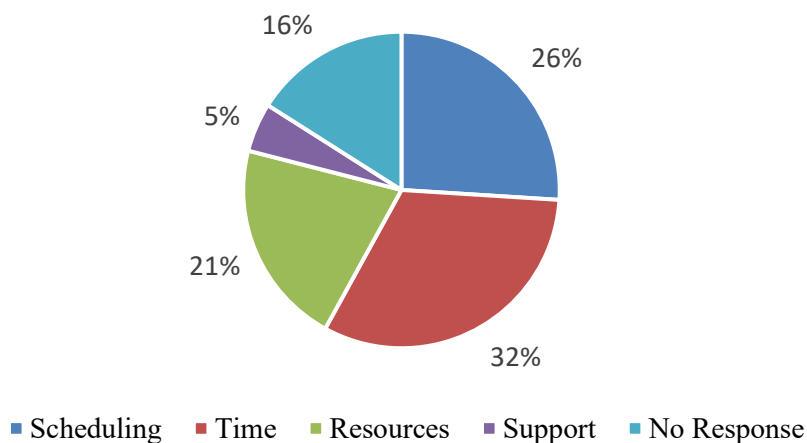


Figure 9. Survey statement 13, open-ended teachers' responses to what was not working well with current intervention in reading for SWD (n=19)

I designed survey statement 14 to collect feedback from teachers on the challenges in providing intervention services in reading for SWD. When asked to identify the greatest challenge in the current intervention services in reading for SWD was, the following themes emerged in the responses: time with ten out of nineteen responses (52%), scheduling with four out of nineteen responses (21%), resources with three out of nineteen responses (15%), and professional development with two out of nineteen responses (11%). There was one respondent who noted “not sure” in their response to this statement. This data shows that overwhelmingly, teachers feel that the time constraints in the schedule are one of the biggest challenges in providing reading intervention services for SWD.

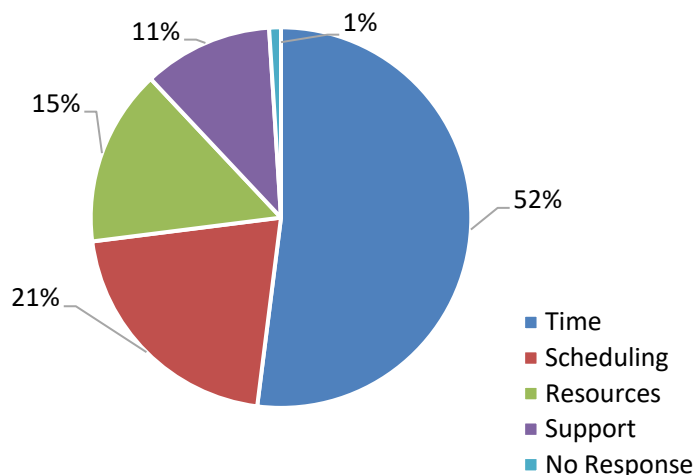


Figure 10. Survey statement 14, open-ended teachers' responses to the greatest challenge in the current intervention services in reading for SWD (n=19)

I designed survey prompts 15 and 16 to elicit feedback from teachers about ways to address the challenges perceived by them in providing intervention services in reading for SWD and suggestions to improve the current intervention program. The following were common themes that emerged from the responses. The theme concerning the provision of more time in the block elicited eleven out of nineteen responses (58%); this was noted by respondents as a way to address challenges and as a suggestion for improvement. The theme related to greater support being provided by the addition of personnel occurred as a response from four out of nineteen respondents (21%) in response to addressing challenges and as a suggestion for improvement. Additional resources were a response given by two out of nineteen responses (11%) who noted additional resources as a means to addressing challenges and as a suggestion for improvement. Two out of ten responses (11%) did not provide a response to these areas on the survey. Teacher responses demonstrates that additional time and additional support could help improve the current intervention program for SWD.

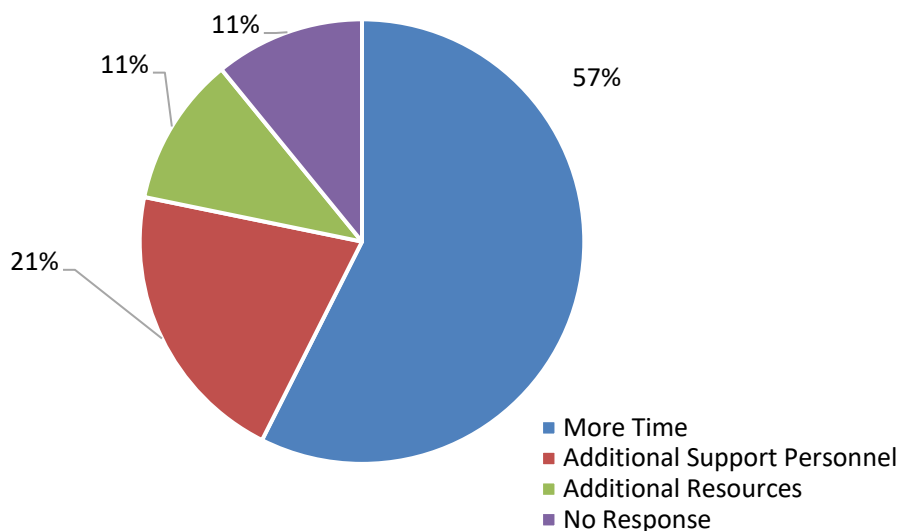


Figure 11. Survey statement 15 and 16, open-ended teachers' responses to how to address the challenges in providing reading intervention and ways to improve the intervention program for SWD (n=19)

I designed survey prompt 17 to elicit feedback on what instructional resources teachers felt would assist with reading intervention instruction for SWD. There were no common themes or resources noted in responses. One respondent noted additional resources were needed that focus on phonics. Another respondent noted leveled passages aligned to the reading standard as a needed resource to be able to adjust skill level appropriate content to students' needs. Survey prompt 18 was designed to elicit participants' responses concerning whether they thought that professional development would assist with reading intervention instruction for SWD. One respondent noted training for teachers is needed to assist teachers to identify and select skills which they should be targeting to support struggling readers. Another respondent noted that there is a need for training in specific strategies to implement into instructions to improve student ability to comprehend reading material. The other seventeen respondents either left this question blank or responded with the selection "not sure". Question 19 was designed to elicit respondents' ideas about any information that was not included in the survey: "Is

there anything else you would like to share about the SWD program?” There was not very much information gleaned from this prompt: thirteen out of nineteen respondents (68%) left this prompt blank; four respondents (21%) responded with “no,” and two respondents (11%) responded “not at this time”.

Interviews

Teacher interviews, consisting of twelve questions (Appendix D), were conducted to collect qualitative data on the intervention instruction provided to Students with Disabilities (SWD) in reading in the intermediate grades, this refers to 4th and 5th grade. These questions “were inductive and relied on non-directional language” (Leavy, 2017, p. 72). Of the 14 teacher interview invitations sent, I received 6 participation forms with choice of interview times and dates and signed consent forms to participate in interviews. This accounted for a 42.8% response rate for teacher interviews. The interview times ranged from 6 minutes, 40 seconds to 10 minutes, 8 seconds for an average interview time of about 8 minutes.

To analyze the data collected from the interviews, I used a coding system to code the interview responses. The coding system was set up to identify themes and patterns in the responses. The following coding was applied to analyze the questions correlating with survey short responses: 1-scheduling, 2-time, 3-professional development, 4-resources, and 5-support. This coding system was only used in questions 2-12 since question 1 was more open to overall perceptions by the teachers of the current intervention structure. Using the coding system and taking notes as I conducted the interviews allowed me to compare the interview data with that of my analysis of short responses to the survey.

Interview question 1 was designed to gain the teachers' overall perceptions on whether or not the current intervention support for SWD in reading was yielding positive results. All 6 respondents (100%) answered that the intervention support was yielding positive results in some way for students. Responses varied on reasons from targeting specific skills to consistent support blocked in the schedule. Four out of the six respondents, 66%, mentioned that the dedicated time block on the schedule for reading intervention allows for the small group instruction in their responses of why the current intervention support was yielding positive results. One teacher noted that “small groups allow for individualized support.”

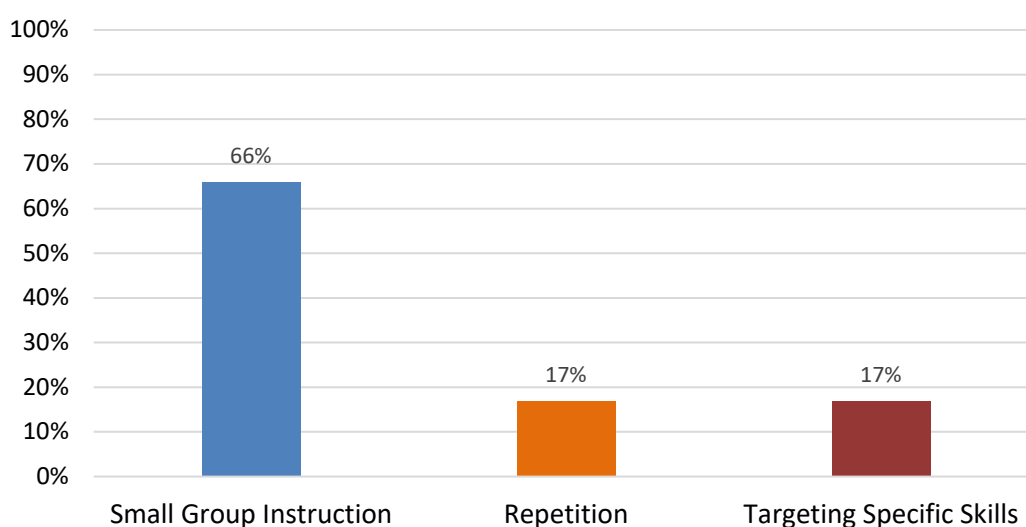


Figure 12. Interview question 1, teachers' responses to why the current intervention support for SWD is yielding positive results (n=6)

I asked interview question 2 to gather data on whether teachers felt that there was adequate time in the schedule to provide reading intervention for SWD. The responses to this question were split. Three responses, for 50% of respondents, noted that there was enough time and they prefaced it with answers that indicated a designated time block. One respondent answered, “Yes, but more time in the day would help.” The three

responses, for 50% of respondents, noted not enough time with the current 30-minute intervention block on the schedule. One respondent noted, “A block of 45 minutes in the intermediate grades is needed.” The data collected from this interview question aligns with the data collected from the survey in statement 4 in which eight out of 19 participants (42%) disagreed with the statement that there is adequate time in the schedule to provide intervention support in reading for SWD.

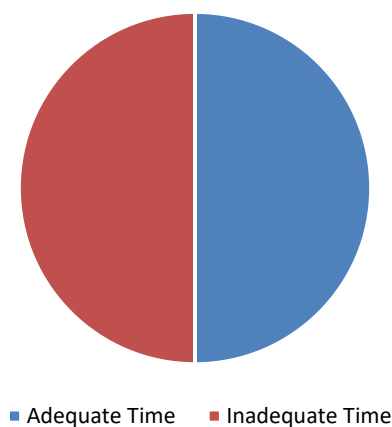


Figure 13. Interview question 2, teachers’ responses if they feel there is adequate time in the schedule to provide intervention to SWD (n=6)

Interview question 3 was designed to determine if reading intervention for SWD was provided in small groups and if this was working. All six respondents, for 100%, answered that intervention in reading for SWD was being provided in small groups. Two respondents noted that the small groups were working due to the additional push in support of extra personnel to keep groups to 8 or less.

Interview questions 4 and 5 were designed to get teachers’ feedback on what was working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD and what wasn’t working well. Two themes that emerged from the respondents about what was working well. The first was support, with three out of six respondents, 50%, noting this. This support referred to support from push in personnel such as a paraprofessional or as one teacher

noted “collaboration with ESE teacher.” The paraprofessional would be a classified staff member that would have some experience working with students and can go into the classroom to help students working on independent tasks so that the teacher can concentrate on small group instruction. The second theme that emerged was the schedule, with two out of six respondents, 33% referencing the schedule. Respondents noted that the dedicated block in the schedule with coordinating support was a factor in what was working with the intervention services for SWD. One respondent indicated that time for collaborative planning to align intervention resources and standards was beneficial. This was coded under time. Of the responses to what wasn’t working well, time emerged as the common theme, with three out of six respondents, 50%, noting time constraints. Time was pointed out in terms of not enough time to provide intervention support. Time was also noted in reference to the time SWD are pulled for other related services such as speech and resource support that affect their time out of class. One respondent noted that some students need individual support saying, “one on one or intensive small groups for select students would help.” Another respondent said that these students being pulled for related services such as speech and occupational therapy during the intervention block makes it difficult to have consistency in the instruction every week. This was noted under the schedule, since how the itinerant services (speech, language, SLD) are scheduled to provide services is a factor.

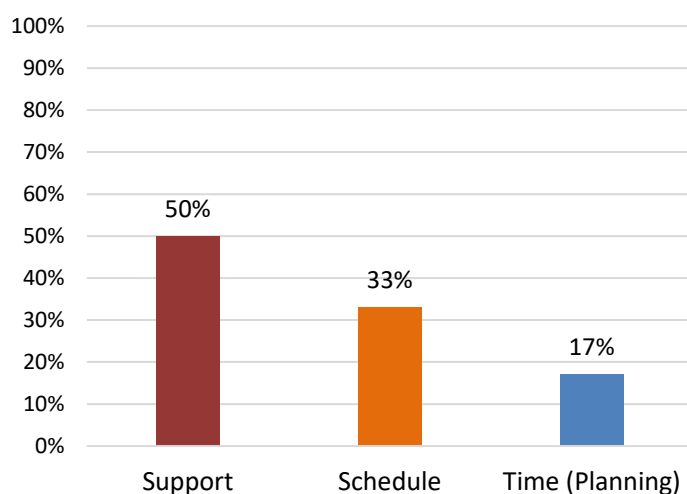


Figure 14. Interview question 4, teachers' responses to what is working well in the current intervention services for SWD (n=6)

Interview questions 6 and 7 referred to the greatest challenges in the current intervention services in reading for SWD and how to address the challenges. There were varied responses to the challenges in the current intervention services. Two out of six respondents noted the lack of resources to address the gap in skills between students as a challenge. One of the six respondents noted the need for resources to target vocabulary and phonics for a total of three out of six respondents (50%), noting resources in some form as a challenge to the current services. Time was noted in various ways, with two respondents indicating not enough time to differentiate multiple levels and one respondent noting that SWD require additional time. Responses related to how to address the challenges in the current intervention services, some of the current practices in place were noted, with three respondents noting that additional push in support for the intervention block is continued. Two respondents indicated that increasing the intervention block from 30 minutes to 45 minutes would address some of the time constraint challenges.

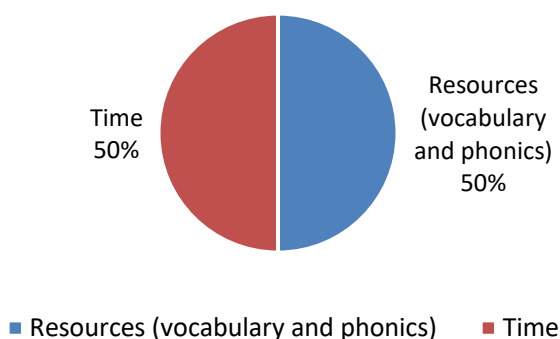


Figure 15. Interview question 6, teachers' responses to what is the greatest challenge in the intervention services for SWD (n=6)

In interview question 8, respondents referenced ways to improve the intervention program for SWD, and question 9 referred to what instructional resources would assist with reading intervention instruction for SWD. Five of the six participants, 83%, mentioned more time in the intervention block to individualize instruction as a way to improve the current program. Two respondents (33%) also said that daily reading intervention instead of three times a week, since in the current block, there are three days dedicated for reading and two days dedicated to math. One respondent noted that fluid grouping and the use of data to adjust groups frequently would improve targeting specific skills. This was noted as a scheduling improvement, which can guide the grouping of students in addition to the block of schedule, for total responses related to scheduling as 50%.

Responses referencing resources that would improve the current intervention program from question 9 noted specific materials for differentiated reading. Two respondents, 33%, mentioned the use of the Curriculum Associates Language Arts Standards books (citation withheld to preserve confidentiality) to expose SWD to grade-level standards but covering the content at a slower pace. Three respondents, 50%,

referenced using materials such as (Readworks, 2020) passages as resources to assist with fluency and practice with the capability of differentiating instruction through leveled passages.

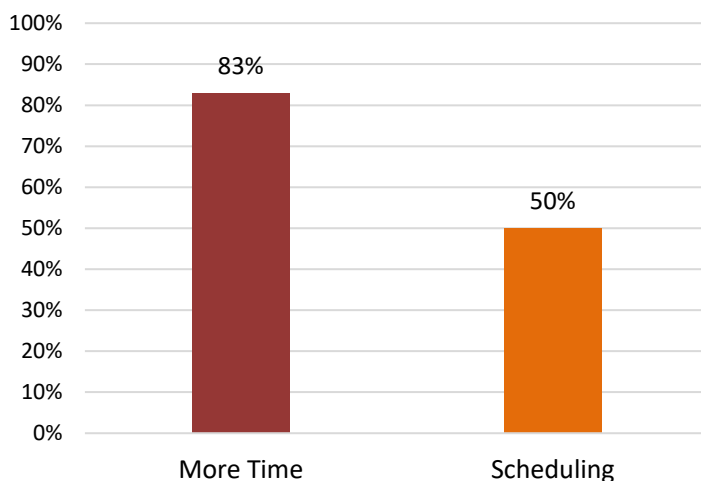


Figure 16. Interview question 8, teachers' responses to how to improve the current intervention services for SWD (n=6) *

I asked interview question 10 to gather data from participants if they had experience with a particular reading intervention program that they felt would benefit SWD in reading. Four out of the six participants, 66%, mentioned the i-Ready computer-adaptive program. Two teachers, 33%, said a program that targets phonics and vocabulary skill practice called *Making Words* to help SWD build phonics and vocabulary skills. This is a resource that uses a developmental approach to teaching phonics and spelling in grade 1st-3rd but can be used in the intermediate grades for students who need strengthening in phonics to increase vocabulary.

I asked interview question 11 to gather information about what professional development would assist teachers with reading intervention instruction for SWD. Two of the six participants (33%) noted that training on how to identify reading deficits to

target specific needs as needed. One participant (17%) noted how to address reading comprehension in the intermediate grades when students are reading at a primary level. The other three participants stated that they were unsure of what professional development was needed. I asked question 12 to allow participants an opportunity to share anything else they would like to discuss SWD support services. I did not receive any substantial feedback on this question. Most respondents answered “not at this time” or simply answered no.

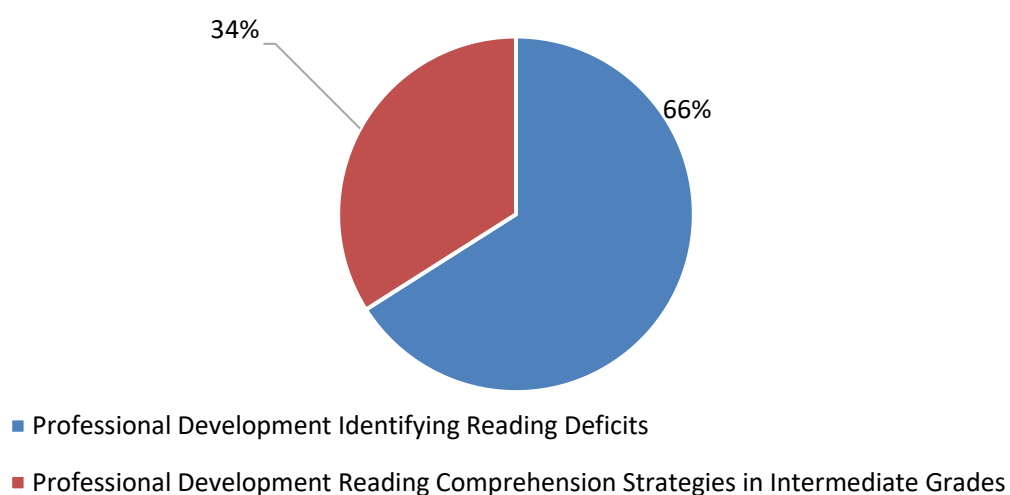


Figure 17. Interview question 11, teachers’ responses on what professional development would assist you with reading intervention instruction for SWD? (n=6)

Student Data

To gain insight into the overall performance of SWD in reading at ABC Elementary, I examined proficiency results for SWD on the English Language Arts (ELA) portion of the State Standards Assessment for 2018 and 2019. The results showed that there was a sizeable gap between the performance in reading for SWD compared to their general education peers. In 2018 SWD scored at a 44% proficiency rate compared to the 83% proficiency scored by general education students. In 2019 SWD had an increase in proficiency scoring at 53% proficiency, but despite the improvement, still

showing a 29% gap from their general education peers scoring at 82%. This data, compared to the district and state data, shows ELA proficiency for the state at 57% for the district at 55%. For SWD, the ELA proficiency is at 26.2% for the state and 20.3% for the district. This shows there is a consistent 30% gap in the state and district scores for SWD as well. The proficiency rates within SWD also varied between grade levels, with 4th grade showing the only positive gains from 2018 to 2019 scores for SWD. This data indicates that individual grade levels may have a better grasp of how to differentiate instruction for SWD due to their success with increasing student achievement results.

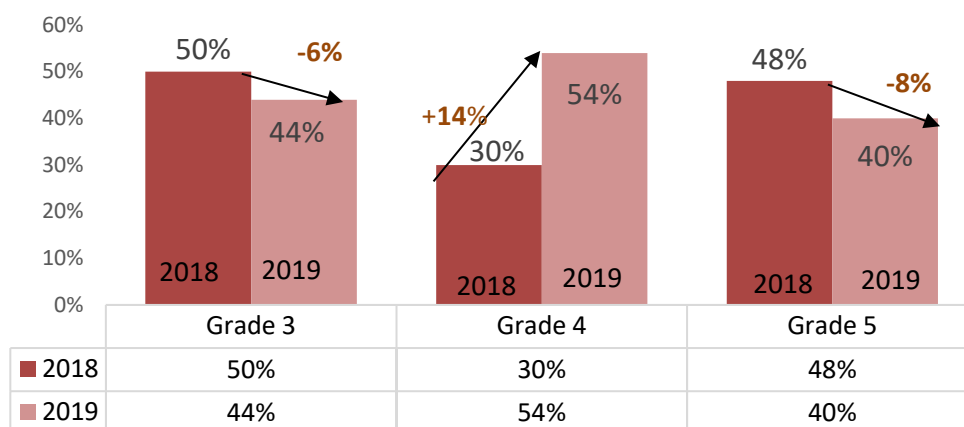


Figure 18. State Standards Proficiency in ELA for SWD from 2018 to 2019 (n=42 for 2018 and n=35 for 2019)(Data Source: State reporting source removed to maintain anonymity)

I also examined learning gains for SWD on the ELA portion of the State Standards Assessment for 2018 and 2019. In 2018 59% of SWD made learning gains in ELA compared to 72% made by their general education peers. In 2019 SWD scored 45% learning gains compared to 66% scored by general education students. Though the learning gains gap is at 20%, and not as big as the proficiency gap for SWD in ELA, there is a gap. These gaps increase from 4th grade to 5th grade, as illustrated in the figure below. All students at ABC Elementary had a dip in learning gains from 2018 to 2019.

This data may indicate that there are overall challenges in the delivery of reading instruction for all students, not just for SWD at the school. If you look at the data, tracking student testing groups, SWD in 4th grade made 57% learning gains from 3rd grade to 4th grade, but only made 38% learning gains from 4th to 5th grade. This data may also be an indicator of how the 4th-grade teachers deliver collaborative planning, and instruction in reading intervention for SWD may be something to explore and share with the 5th-grade team. My analysis of the data shows that 4th-grade teachers were able to help students make a more significant percentage of learning gains within a year than the 5th-grade teachers. Looking closely at how 4th-grade teachers plan for reading intervention and provide the small group intervention support to their students may be beneficial in identifying effective strategies.

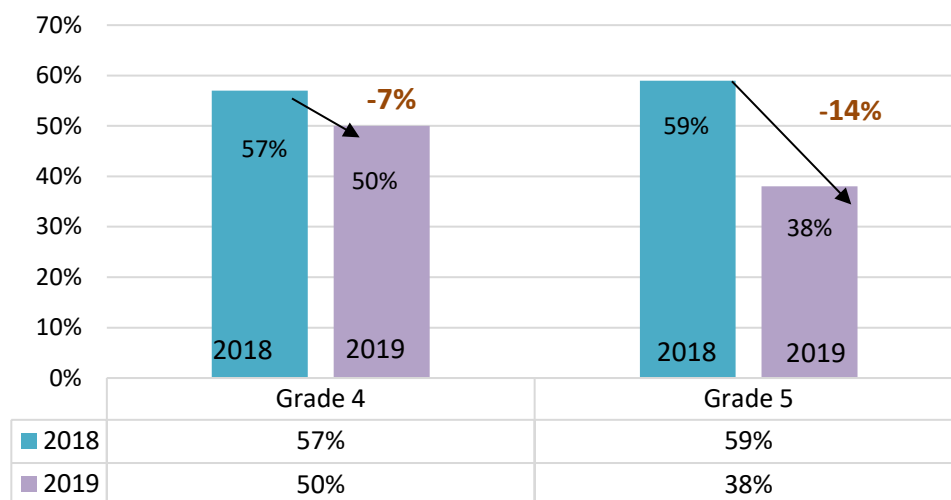


Figure 19. Learning gains in the ELA portion of State Standards Assessment for SWD from 2018 to 2019 (n=52 for 2018 and n=35 for 2019)(Data Source: State reporting source removed to maintain anonymity)

In addition to state assessments, I analyzed the results from the end of the year (EOY) i-Ready reading diagnostic for SWD in 2018 and 2019. Results showed that in 2018, 19% of SWD scored on grade level target on the EOY reading diagnostic

compared to 79% scored by general education students. In 2019, SWD scored 57% on grade level target on the EOY reading diagnostic compared to 81% on the target of general education students. On target scores for the EOY diagnostic in reading varied among the grade levels analyzed, but there was a trend of improvement across all grade levels from 2018 to 2019. There was an increase in the EOY results for SWD from 2018 to 2019, with 50% increase in third grade, 15% increase in fourth grade, and 16% increase in fifth-grade, noting that the use of the i-Ready computer-adaptive program in reading showed positive gains for SWD from 2018 to 2019.

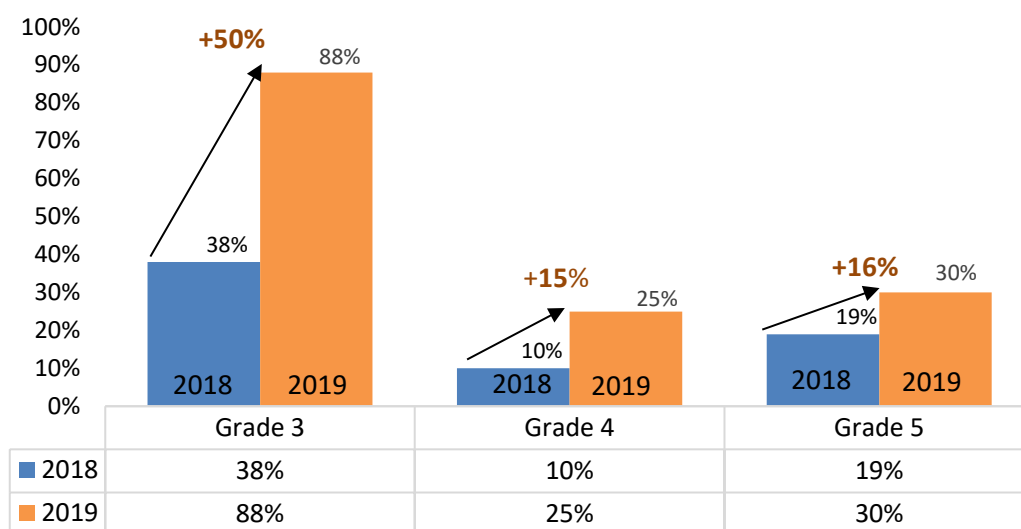


Figure 20. End of Year (EOY) i-Ready diagnostic results in reading for SWD from 2018 to 2019 (n=52 for 2018; n=35 for 2019) (Data Source: State reporting source removed to maintain anonymity)

Limitations

Though the data collected through my program evaluation provided me with insightful information about the reading intervention services for SWD at ABC Elementary, I did encounter some unanswered questions from my analysis. The first question is, what are the adequate resources the teachers are referring to when answering the survey question? There is conflicting data, in which teachers report they have

adequate resources to provide reading intervention on survey statement 5. Then later note in the open-ended questions that one of the challenges in delivering the intervention for SWD are the current resources. It is difficult to judge if teachers feel they have adequate resources, but when forced to use the purchased Curriculum Associates materials, they don't feel the resource is adequate. The question about adequate resources would be clear had I written the survey question to be more specific and ask to note specifics. Another unanswered question I have is, how does the collaborative planning process on select teams impact the delivery of intervention services for SWD? At ABC Elementary, the 4th-grade team has shown to yield higher learning gains for their SWD using the same resources and time constraints of the school. The answer to this question may be in how a team plans or how they structure the intervention block in their classrooms that may be yielding higher learning gains. I have observed the planning sessions and data meetings of the 4th-grade team at ABC Elementary, and they use data to group their students for intervention support carefully. In my professional experience, if other teams could duplicate this structure, it may improve the learning gains for all students on different grade levels.

Organizational Change Based on the 4 C Model

My program evaluation on reading intervention for SWD is based on the problem that SWD are struggling in reading and need to participate in specialized intervention services to make gains. Currently, the program model used in ABC Elementary school 1 to support intervention in reading is showing some academic gains for SWD, but not sufficiently addressing how to close the achievement gap for these students. There is a need for organizational change in the way we support SWD during reading intervention

or, in other words, the delivery model the school uses to provide the intervention. To address this change, we look at the 4C model by Wagner et al. (2006) that is “an approach to thinking systematically about the challenges and goals of change in school and districts they call the 4C’s”. The 4C’s, referring to contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies, can be used to analyze a problem of practice. I used the 4C’s Diagnostic tool to complete the AS Is Chart (see Appendix E) for my analysis of reading intervention for SWD at ABC Elementary, and to guide my recommendations for a change plan in the delivery model.

Contexts. ABC Elementary is recognized as a “School of Excellence” by the state department of education for its students’ high achieving performance on state assessments. The school is located in an affluent neighborhood, with the community having many private school options within the school zone. Historically ABC Elementary has been awarded a designation as an “A” school in the state’s accountability rating. The designation as “School of Excellence” is an example of the school’s ability to maintain the high performance for over three consecutive years. This designation also allows for some flexibility in mandated daily minutes in the English Language Arts block to be broken up from a continuous 120-minute block to a 90 minute and 30-minute block throughout the day. This designation is an influential economic factor for parents and community members supporting the local public school and choosing public over private education.

SWD comprise 20% of the student enrollment. 123 School District) has been focused on English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency for the past three years in an effort to raise the district’s reading proficiency. State assessment results in English Language

Arts show a decrease in learning gains from 59% to 45% for SWD at ABC Elementary, but an increase in proficiency from 44% to 53%. This increase in proficiency guides me to refer to my research question of, “What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is working well in the intervention services program for SWD?” to account for the increase in proficiency. 123 Public School District (pseudonym) has created a model in which teams at each school to participate in District Professional Learning Communities (DPLC). These teams have received training on close reading strategies to bring back to all teachers at their respective school sites to improve ELA achievement. In this model, school teams received training in effective reading strategies, such as close reading and text-dependent questioning techniques. School teams then returned to their schools and shared the strategies with their respective grade-level teams so that there were common strategies used school-wide to improve English Language Arts achievement. The use of these school-wide strategies by all teachers during the traditional ELA block could account for the increase in proficiency though not explicitly mentioned by teachers in their answer to the interview question.

The current master schedule at ABC Elementary includes a 30-minute intervention block built into the schedule for each grade level. This time block is seen as a barrier in providing reading intervention students for SWD, which is tied to my research question of “What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as the greatest challenges in the intervention services program for SWD?” In survey and interview questions tied to this research question, teachers noted the insufficient time as a challenge in providing the reading intervention for SWD. During the block, some push-in academic support is provided by the ESE teacher, tutor, or

paraprofessional for SWD for reading, which is related to my research question “What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is working well in the intervention services program for SWD?” Teachers noted on survey and interview questions that the additional support was working well. The push-in support, however, is limited to staff schedules, and in some instances, the ESE teacher can push in on certain days, but on other days the paraprofessional provides the push-in support. The reading tutor provides pull-out and push-in academic support once a week as needed. Though the current context has some structure in the way of terms of consistent school-wide and district reading strategies, there is still a considerable gap between the performance of SWD compared to their general education peers. The school and district have a vested interest in narrowing the achievement gap and ensuring reading success for all students. Continued structure of additional support by resource personnel will need to be a consideration of the change plan of the delivery model, and structures for targeting specific reading skills during the intervention block will have to be addressed in the school’s culture in terms of planning.

Culture. ABC Elementary has the shared belief that all students can achieve success. There is a vision for creating a technology-enriched environment to engage students in learning. Wagner et al. define some characteristics of an organization’s culture as “expectations and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (2006, p. 102). Teachers and staff members at ABC Elementary have a growth-mindset and build positive relationships with students to ensure they see the application of the real-world with their learning experiences. The school has an embedded culture of

meeting collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to discuss student data. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is a group of educators with a shared mission, vision, and values; collective inquiry; collaborative teams; an orientation toward action; commitment to continuous improvement; and a focus on results. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p.45). At ABC Elementary, grade level PLC's meet weekly to discuss student data and look for trends in the grade-level data to guide instruction. The PLC meetings are facilitated by the grade level team leaders who receive coaching and guidance from the instructional coach.

Common planning takes place weekly to address ELA instruction and reading intervention lessons. Targeted grouping is present on every grade level during the intervention block to address specific skills with students effectively. Coordinating and planning for targeted grouping across the grade level in the current schedule with the time constraints may not be working to provide reading intervention services for SWD adequately. My research question addressing this was, "What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is not working well in the intervention services program for SWD." Though there is a culture for collaboratively planning and providing lessons, the structure of the master schedule only providing a 30-minute block for intervention seems to be the greatest obstacle reported. Time was also the major theme collected from my research question, "What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as the greatest challenges in the intervention services program for SWD?" Specifically, the 30-minute time block was noted as not sufficient to address the needs of SWD and needed addressing in the organizational change plan.

Conditions. ABC Elementary currently has a 30-minute reading intervention block three times a week. The intervention block is consistent in the master schedule, and the thirty minutes was allotted to comply with the state's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) requirement of what struggling readers must receive in terms of targeted academic support outside of the English Language Arts (ELA) block. The general education teacher provides the delivery of intervention services in reading unless a student is in a self-contained classroom. In this instance, the intervention is provided by the exceptional education teacher. The class size average for students in grades K-3 is 18 students and 22 for students in 4th and 5th grade. The intervention is provided in the general classroom for SWD, except for students who are in self-contained classrooms. ABC Elementary (pseudonym) has one self-contained classroom with six students ranging in grades 2-5th. These six students receive reading intervention from the exceptional education teacher of record assigned to the self-contained classroom and the exceptional education paraprofessional assigned to the self-contained classroom.

Students are grouped for targeted support for reading intervention, with the 25% lowest-performing students receiving small group support from two adults. These adults include the classroom teacher and additional support personnel, which could be the ESE teacher, a paraprofessional, or a resource teacher. English Language Learners (ELL) students receive intervention support in this structure. If they fall in the lowest 25%, they receive small group instruction, in which one of the adults could be the bilingual paraprofessional or resource teacher. The designated personnel depends on the time and availability of the staff member to push into the classroom.

Currently, there is an achievement gap in ELA proficiency and learning gains

between SWD and their general education peers. This leads me to the assumption that there are challenges in providing intervention support students in reading to SWD. I collected data on how to improve some of the challenges noted through the following research question: “What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as ways to address these challenges (if any), or improve in the intervention services program for SWD?” Teacher responses to survey and interview questions related to this question noted that additional support during the intervention block and more time in the schedule. Providing additional personnel to support the intervention block for SWD is a financial burden since this allocation isn’t built into the school’s budget. To effectively provide conditions to support SWD during reading intervention, ABC Elementary would have to look at other funding sources and creative use of existing resources personnel. Creative ideas would include the compliance teacher and instructional coach, as well as the school’s classified staff help provide this additional support in the change plan.

Competencies. In relation to organizational change, Wagner et al. refer to competencies as “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (2006, p. 99). ABC Elementary currently has two certified Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers to support the ESE population at the school. One ESE teacher provides instruction in a self-contained classroom to students with Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD). The other ESE teacher provides resource support throughout the day in the resource room and pushes into the classrooms during intervention or academic time blocks to offer academic support for SWD within their general education classroom. ESE teachers have taken additional courses and passed state examination tests on

exceptional education services to be certified to teach SWD in grades K-12. Their general education teacher serves SWD the majority of the day. General education teachers have taken college course work and have passed state certification exams to be certified to teach English Language Arts instruction to elementary-aged students. General education teachers will need to have training in strategies to support their SWD in reading. Time constraints with teacher planning schedules during the day don't allow for the ESE teachers to attend collaborative planning sessions and Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings with all grade levels. The collaborative planning sessions are used by individual grade levels to plan for reading instruction. The PLC meetings are used to look at data to note grade level trends, group students by skill need for intervention services, and select deficit skills to target during the intervention. Since the ESE teacher serves students in grades K-5, her planning time is not associated with a particular planning block like the general education teacher's planning.

Limited professional development has been provided by the school and school district on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to teachers to help build expertise in differentiation strategies for their SWD. Recently the state has added a requirement for teachers to have at least twenty hours of professional development in exceptional education before recertification. 123 School District has designed online-modules on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies for teachers to take that satisfy this recertification requirement. Though these modules provide a practical overview and easy way to meet recertification requirements, it does not offer a comprehensive implementation framework to assist teachers with applying the knowledge to planning, teaching, and setting up instructional spaces. UDL strategies include the use of

engagement, representation, action, and expression by a teacher to meet the needs of the learner. To effectively implement any change plan in the delivery of intervention services in reading for SWD, collaborative planning sessions with the ESE teacher will have to be developed as well as professional development, specifically on the implementation of UDL strategies will need to be addressed.

My next step will be to create an organizational change plan for ABC Elementary. The plan will include input from all stakeholders, the implementation of a master schedule that provides flexibility in the daily schedule of support personnel, and professional development by curriculum experts to support the school's reading plan to improve learning gains and differentiation of instruction in reading. I would include this reading focus as part of the state's required School Improvement Plan (SIP) so that time and resources could be aligned to the school's improvement goals. Making this a focus for the school will ensure that all teachers and staff are focusing on reading improvement for all students, not just SWD.

First, I would seek input from teachers and resource personnel as to their specific needs to improve their ability to provide intervention services for SWD. The information will include insight on the scheduling of support personnel and how to maximize or increase the support for all students how teams use the collaborative planning time to plan reading intervention. It will also give insight on how data is used during grade level PLC meetings to identify grade level deficits, create instructional groups, and inform instruction. Information provided from this input can guide the structure and professional development calendar to provide specific training in differentiating instruction in reading. This training could include the efficient use of the current resources and exploration of

other materials used appropriately. This training could also incorporate elements of the Universal Design for Learning and proven strategies to be effective in the instruction of SWD.

Secondly, I would communicate the school's improvement plan with parents and the community and the current data to support the improvement as recommended by Wagner: "Data are employed creatively, compelling, and strategically to focus the community's attention on the children who are the heart of the work" (2006, p. 146). Meeting with the School Advisory Committee (SAC) and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) about the school's action plan to improve reading learning gains would gain understanding and support towards the school's goal for improvement. Though not mentioned in the data I collected, I believe that support can be leveraged to gain sponsorship from the PTO funds to provide evening curriculum nights focused on reading. These curriculum nights could benefit our families to learn how to assist their child's literacy development.

Next, I would meet with the administration, registrar, and personnel involved in the scheduling to develop a master schedule that can increase the intervention time block from 30 to 45 minutes for the intermediate grades. An intervention block of 45 minutes would provide a teacher with 18 students to provide at least 15 minutes of direct intervention academic support in a small group of no more than six students. This structure and time would allow the teacher to cycle or rotate students three times, so she provides a small group of direct instruction to all students during an intervention block. Focusing on only two grade levels for this change can make this an easier task when scheduling the academic support for SWD from the ESE teacher and resource personnel.

An effort would also be made in scheduling the intervention block close to the ELA block to help with the transfer of content and consistency for SWD when they leave the general education classroom setting to receive related services in a resource room.

Lastly, for the delivery of intervention services to improve for all students, teachers must feel empowered and confident in their delivery of the instruction. Ensuring teachers have adequate professional development in foundational reading strategies first will give them the skills and confidence they need to identify reading deficits in struggling readers successfully. Additional professional development in UDL strategies to be able to support SWD may be vital to helping SWD make gains in reading. Reading experts and district curriculum personnel could be used to develop a professional development calendar to support the teachers and resource staff at ABC Elementary (pseudonym).

Interpretation

My Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities identified successful components used at ABC Elementary (pseudonym) to provide specialized intervention support and an analysis of changes needed in the delivery model to support academic gains for SWD. Through my interpretation of the data, I hope to, as Patton encouraged, “make meaning of the findings and provide significance” (2008, p. 486) so that I can make recommendations for organizational changes that will provide improvement in the delivery of intervention services for SWD in reading. The current delivery model is not having a significant impact on student achievement for SWD on state assessments. Analysis of student data showed a decrease in proficiency from 2018 to 2019 for SWD in 3rd and 5th grade, with only 4th graders making gains. This decrease

was true in learning gains on state assessment from 2018 to 2019, with both 4th and 5th grade SWD showing a decrease in learning gains. In contrast, the end of the year (EOY) diagnostic on the i-Ready computer-adaptive program showed significant gains for SWD from 2018 to 2019 in reading, with an increase of over 15% in grades 3-5.

An analysis of the survey and interview data revealed several successful components in the current model used for intervention services for SWD in reading at ABC Elementary. The first component was built in time in the master schedule with additional personnel support during the reading intervention. Survey open-ended responses and teacher interviews both indicated that additional support during the intervention block allowed for small group instruction and individualized support for SWD. This finding aligns with my research of literature in where a case study summarized by Legere and Conca (2010) noted that flexible scheduling and paraprofessional support during the reading intervention had yielded positive results for SWD. Another successful component that arose from the data analysis of surveys and interviews was the use of appropriately leveled passages and individualized support on targeted skills through the i-Ready computer-adaptive program. These findings align with my research of literature in which a study by Castillo (2011) on repeated reading of leveled passages showed improvement in fluency for SWD in reading. The use of the i-Ready program with fidelity during the reading intervention block can account for the gains seen in the EOY diagnostic for SWD from 2018 to 2019.

The analysis of the survey and interview data revealed significant challenges and concerns with components of the current model used for intervention in reading for SWD. The first component identified as a challenge was the 30-minute time block.

Teacher surveys and interviews indicated that 30 minutes was not an adequate amount of time to provide specialized intervention support in reading to SWD. These findings align with my research of literature noted in a case study by Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010) in which teachers using a leveled reading intervention program noted that they had difficulty implementing the program within a 30-minute time frame. The second component identified as a challenge in the current model was the lack of explicit phonics and vocabulary practice in the current materials used. Responses related to this challenge from teachers noted the current resources. The current model is using a combination of i-Ready computer adaptive resources and Curriculum Associates Language Arts Standards books (citation withheld to preserve confidentiality) that provide practice on grade-level standards through non-fiction passages. Currently, ABC Elementary does not have specific materials to fill in gaps for students who need additional phonics practice to decode and vocabulary support to build knowledge. The i-Ready program does provide teacher resources through i-Ready central, but it requires teachers to search the site for specific skills by grade. I don't believe teachers are leveraging this resource or understand how to use it to provide additional phonics and vocabulary practice for students. This data aligns with my research of literature in which studies by Afacan, Wilkerson, and Ruppert (2018) note that a multi-component intervention program that offers practice in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing for SWD shows effective results in overall reading achievement. Guidance from the instructional coach during collaborative planning on how to access vocabulary and phonics resources from i-Ready central will be essential to help teachers target these skills with available already purchased resources.

The use of surveys with open-ended questions and interviews to collect data on the effectiveness of the current model of reading intervention for SWD allowed teachers to provide answers openly to the questions and note specific recommendations for improvement. These questions provided an opportunity to identify components that were effective in the current delivery model and challenges within the current model that may be affecting the reading achievement of SWD. The structure of the survey statements using an ordinal measurement scale could have impacted the results in the data collected since it allowed respondents to agree or disagree. This is significant because of the response to survey questions in which teacher respondents noted challenges did not provide a context of why they noted elements such as time, schedule, support, or resources as a challenge. More insight into why respondents listed these challenges would have helped further define and address teacher perceptions in providing reading intervention services for SWD. The data collected will be used to guide components such as time, schedule, and personnel, which need to be addressed in the change plan in the current delivery model for intervention services in reading for SWD at ABC Elementary.

Judgments

My project evaluation of Reading Intervention for Students with Disabilities (SWD) was designed to identify a delivery model in which reliable and successful specialized intervention support is provided to SWD in reading. My first two primary research questions focused on gathering perspectives from teachers on what they felt was working well and not working well with the current delivery model. These questions were:

- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is working well in the intervention services program for SWD?
- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report is not working well in the intervention services program for SWD?

When looking at the results of what is working well in the reading intervention services for SWD, findings noted that 37% of participants indicated that some push-in support and the dedicated schedule viewed as components that were working well.

Though the survey and interview data answered my two primary research questions, it would have been more effective to have teachers note specifics in their responses.

Though they noted general elements, such as push-in support, some responses were not specific about who provided the support, whether provided by the ESE teacher, resource teacher, or a paraprofessional. These findings related to what was working well with the intervention support, in terms of push-in support by additional personnel during the intervention block. These findings should be considered in the future changes and implementation of the intervention services in reading for SWD.

A significant component that arose in my results of what was not working well with the intervention services in reading for SWD was time. Forty-eight percent of participants on the survey noted that there was not enough time to provide intervention services to SWD in the current 30-minute time block. Time was also noted as a challenge in the interview data analysis. Another component that was noted in the survey data as not working well with the current intervention services for SWD was scheduling, with 21% of participants responding to a challenge in the schedule. More specific information to this question would have been helpful to determine if there was anything in addition to

time that was scheduling. Extending the intervention block to a longer time block should be a consideration in future changes in the delivery model of intervention services in reading for SWD. Also, careful examination of the time of day to schedule the intervention block in the master schedule and ensuring that it is connected to the English Language Arts block for more continuity in subject matter instruction for teachers and students.

My next two primary questions related to the teachers' perspective on the challenges related to providing intervention services in reading for SWD and how to address that challenge. These questions were:

- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as the greatest challenges in the intervention services program for SWD?
- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as ways to address these challenges (if any), or improve in the intervention services program for SWD?

Time was once again a major theme in the analysis of my research data, with 52% of respondents noting time as the greatest challenge in delivering intervention services in reading for SWD. Teachers noted time not only as the greatest challenge but identified time as an area of the current delivery model that was not working well. I believe this question served as a “corroboration, in which one set of findings is confirmed by the other” (Leavy, 2017, p. 181). I was able to connect a challenge with components of the current delivery model that need to be addressed. This research data points to the fact that a 30-minute time block for providing intervention services for SWD in reading is not adequate and should be increased in future models.

Scheduling also emerged in the analysis of my data as the greatest challenge in providing intervention services in reading for SWD, with 21% of respondents noting scheduling as the greatest challenge. Though my research questions did allow me to gather responses with common themes connected to challenges in delivering intervention services, they did not provide the specifics in the responses that could have been beneficial in making sound judgments and recommendations. What to change or address in the schedule other than time, such as the time of day or the pairing with the English Language Arts block, would have been helpful details that were not worded or specified due to the structure of the question. Though scheduling of the intervention block should be a significant consideration when making changes to the delivery model for providing intervention services for SWD, the limited data makes it difficult to make judgments or offer specific recommendations.

My secondary research questions focused on gathering data related to teachers' needs in professional development and instructional materials to provide reading intervention services in reading for SWD. These questions were:

- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as their needs for professional development to support SWD?
- What do general education teachers and exceptional education teachers report as their needs for instructional materials to support SWD?

The analysis of this data did not provide enough definitive answers to make judgments of teacher needs in terms of professional development. Seventy-nine percent of respondents noted that they had effective professional development in differentiating instruction. This data did not specifically help make connections on the specific nature of the

differentiated strategies or how it applied to reading instruction for SWD. Data analysis of this question also noted that 63% of participants said they would like additional professional development on how to differentiate instruction in reading. I believe this question would have yielded better results if it were broken down into more specific parts to generate more details from the participants. I think that since I conducted the interviews, this could have had an impact on the willingness of teachers to provide too many details.

Analysis of the data connected to teachers' needs for instructional materials also showed mixed results. Responses noted that 89% of participants felt they had adequate materials to provide reading intervention services for SWD. Still, at the same time, 58% responded that the current materials used from Curriculum Associates were not effective for differentiated instruction. It is unclear if the use of the i-Ready computer-adaptive program was a consideration in these questions since interview data did show participants noting the program as effective in targeting specific skills. Interview data did not yield any clarifying results when responding to this question, with one respondent noting a need for more "vocabulary instructional materials" and another indicating a need for materials to build phonics such as "Making Words." These results make it difficult to make judgments on specific needs for additional professional development or instructional materials since the data did not produce common themes or trends to use to make these judgments.

Recommendations

Based on the results of my program evaluation and my own experiences in providing intervention as a teacher and monitoring intervention services as an

administrator, I think ABC Elementary School should make changes in the current delivery model of intervention service in reading for Students with Disabilities (SWD). This change should consist of three major components: Time and scheduling structure, additional personnel support, and multi-component instructional materials. I believe these changes will help close the achievement gap in proficiency and learning gains in reading between SWD and their general education peers.

The first recommendation I propose to improve the delivery of intervention services in reading for SWD is restructuring of the master schedule to include a 45-minute reading intervention block connected with the students' English Language Arts (ELA) block in third through fifth grade. Since ABC Elementary (pseudonym) has been designated as a "School of Excellence," they have flexibility in the ELA block so it can be broken up into a 90-minute section and a 30-minute section instead of the continuous 120-minute block daily for ELA instruction. Breaking the ELA block into a 90-minute section will allow for the intervention block to be connected to the ELA block and the other 30 minutes to be used to integrate social studies standards with ELA standards. By using the additional 30 minutes of ELA to integrate social studies, it frees up the 30 minutes in the master schedule currently designated for social studies. Now an additional 15 minutes can be added to the current 30-minute intervention block to provide a 45-minute intervention block for all students in reading. This change in schedule, though it may require careful manipulation of other time blocks and requirements in the master schedule, would address the challenge of insufficient time in the schedule to provide intervention that was reported in the findings. Additionally, the placement in the schedule of the intervention block connected to the ELA block will address the other

noted schedule challenges noted in the research findings that would connect the intervention in reading to reading instruction, making it a smoother transition for SWD.

The second recommendation I propose to improve the delivery of intervention services in reading for SWD is the use of additional support personnel during the reading intervention block. This recommendation would require a redistribution of human resources across the school. The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teacher would have a flexible schedule so that he/she can push in and support SWD during the reading intervention block, with a priority in grades 3-5th. These students would be a priority since they take the state assessments and generate an accountability score for proficiency and learning gains in 4th and 5th grade. The ESE teacher schedule would change the time she provides instruction to primary students and uses for planning to be able to provide support to the intermediate grades during the intervention. Additional resource personnel such as the Reading Coach, Compliance Teacher, and Multi-Tiered System of Support Coach would also adjust their schedules so that they can provide push-in support. This support ensures that all classes with SWD would have additional personnel during the intervention block. The use of trained paraprofessionals can be incorporated in the schedule to support when additional instructional personnel is not available to assist with the reading intervention block. This paraprofessional support can also be instrumental in classes in which there is an increased number of SWD. Having the paraprofessional in the classroom allows the teacher to focus on providing small group instruction during the intervention block. The paraprofessional can assist students in working on independent tasks and the computer. The careful placement of the intervention block for each grade

level would have to be staggered to be able to leverage the use of the additional personnel across all grade levels.

My last recommendation is to carefully maximize the current materials used for reading intervention services for SWD that the research data shows are yielding positive results. I would also add additional resources that provide multi-component support and include adaptability to scaffold the instruction. Research findings showed that the i-Ready computer-adaptive program is yielding positive gains in reading for SWD on the diagnostic assessments. Teachers also reported that the program is beneficial in targeting specific reading skills. I would continue the use of the i-Ready computer-adaptive program weekly to address deficit skills and gaps for SWD in reading. I would leverage the use of the program during the first 15 minutes of the intervention block so that students are receiving at least 30 minutes of i-Ready support a week but ensuring that part of the daily intervention block is used for direct instruction. The additional small group support during the reading intervention for SWD is used to address specific deficits skills in comprehension, vocabulary, and phonics. The current materials used from Curriculum Associates address grade-level standards in terms of comprehension and do not offer the flexibility to scaffold the instruction according to the findings. Additional materials to build phonics and vocabulary were also noted in the research findings. I propose that the Curriculum Associates materials be used once a week during the reading intervention block to expose SWD to grade-level standards and specific question types that they will encounter on the state assessment. The other two days, I propose teachers use materials that help build foundational skills and have differentiated levels to allow for the scaffolding of instruction. Vocabulary and phonics were specific areas noted from

the findings of the research. Teachers can use vocabulary and phonics lessons from the Teacher Tool Box available through the i-Ready program to provide additional support in these areas. These materials are provided in multiple grade levels and provide explicit directions on how to deliver the targeted practice. The use of the Teacher Tool Box materials would address the multi-component need during the intervention block. Teachers may need professional development from the Curriculum Associates consultants on how to access these materials effectively and appropriately identifying deficit skill levels when analyzing student monitoring reports. Carefully analyzing students' growth reports can assist school personnel in viewing skills and lessons not mastered by students and where to access additional lessons and reteach materials to provide targeted skill intervention. Using materials that are already available and accessible to all teachers would minimize the need for ABC Elementary to have to buy an additional program or additional materials. The use of the Teacher Tool Box would provide direct instruction in the multi-component needs of the intervention services for SWD in reading and incorporate a structure that can be delivered in a small group setting by a teacher or paraprofessional.

Conclusion

My evaluation of the reading intervention programs for Students with Disabilities (SWD) provided answers to my research questions to identify components of a delivery model that was reliable and produced effective outcomes. My findings suggest that addressing the time and schedule, including additional support, and using materials that provide a multi-component of reading elements, has the potential of positively improving the delivery of reading intervention services provided to SWD. SWD experiencing

reading difficulties “benefit from an intervention that has multiple components focusing attention on increasing the rate and accuracy of reading” (Chard et al., 2002, p. 404). The use of the i-Ready computer-adaptive program provides opportunities for students to receive academic support in multi-component areas of foundational reading such as phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension. Access to the Teacher Tool Box also provides additional resources teachers can use to target deficits in particular areas such as phonics and vocabulary. ABC Elementary and like schools should consider the findings from my evaluation to develop a structure and future implementation of the delivery of intervention services in reading for SWD.

CHAPTER FIVE

To-Be Framework

Reading is an essential life skill, and schools are given the responsibility of teaching all students. As Van Keer and Vanderlinde stated, “Learning to read is one of the most crucial learning processes children are involved in during elementary school” (2013). My program evaluation on reading intervention for students with disabilities (SWD) at ABC Elementary provided some insight on how to improve the current delivery model and successfully close the achievement gap. My Change Leadership Plan (CLP) for ABC Elementary would begin with gathering data from all stakeholders on the current master schedule and delivery of reading intervention services: “Leaders must assess with diligence the readiness to change their organizations and themselves” (Reeves, p. 7). Assessing all stakeholders’ knowledge of the current schedule and delivery of reading intervention would provide valuable information as to any misconceptions that need to be addressed before implementing any changes in the reading intervention structure. Using the input explicitly collected from teachers and staff on their background knowledge would be valuable in moving forward with addressing the significant issues identified in my program evaluation and setting the stage for real change.

The first issue I would address in my CLP would be building teachers’ expertise. The fact that ABC Elementary) experienced a decrease in English Language Arts (ELA) learning gains on state assessments from 2018 to 2019 indicates that teachers may need additional professional development in reading strategies and differentiated instruction. They may also need professional development in the effective use of components from

the i-Ready Tool Box to target specific skill deficits in reading and access additional lessons and materials for re-teaching. Providing continuous professional development in not just reading but connecting all literacy components to increase ELA competencies for all students would be essential. In addition to addressing ELA expertise, building on teacher's knowledge of strategies associated with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) would be necessary if teachers are to address the needs of their SWD.

The next major issue I would address in my CLP would be the structural components of the intervention block at ABC Elementary (pseudonym). My findings indicated that time and the lack of additional support were significant barriers in the effective delivery of intervention services for SWD. The administration and all personnel associated with the creation of the master schedule would have to create ways to increase the intervention block from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes for fourth and fifth graders. Personnel schedules would have to be adjusted so that the Exceptional Education Teacher and school paraprofessionals could provide additional support.

Lastly, my CLP would focus on the connection of the purpose and value of improving reading intervention services for SWD with all stakeholders. The goal is to leverage purposeful peer interactions: "The key to achieving a simultaneously tight-loose organization lies more in purposeful peer interactions than in top-down direction from the hierarchy" (Fullan, 2008, p. 41). Providing additional planning time for teachers to conduct vertical Professional Learning Communities to collaborate would be essential. Focusing English Language Arts instruction on the School Improvement Plan (SIP) by using targets for learning gains and proficiency from state assessments, there would be a connection between my CLP and the SIP. Communicating the School Improvement Plan

and ELA targets with key parent organizations would be instrumental in creating support for improvements, soliciting outside funding for resources, and supporting changes associated with reading intervention schedules.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

To address and solve an identified problem, a CLP must develop a vision for what the future would look like if the plan were realized. The creation of a 4Cs TO-BE chart, the 4 C's Diagnostic Tool created by Wagner et al. (2006), can be used to assist leaders with a roadmap and visual representation of how to produce the desired results for their organization. In developing my TO-BE chart, I looked at the changes that would need to be made in the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of delivering reading intervention services at ABC Elementary. My TO-BE chart (Appendix F) outlines the necessary strategies, structures, and supports that will be in place in the effective delivery of reading intervention services to narrow the achievement gap in reading between SWD and their peers.

Contexts. The context of my CLP focuses on decreasing the gap in English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency and learning gains between SWD and their peers. One clear way to decrease this gap is to focus on ELA instruction as a school. This focus would align with 123 Public School District's focus on increasing ELA learning gains for all students. The district's focus on ELA created a structure for schools to receive specific training in reading strategies through the District Professional Learning Community (DPLC) model. ABC Elementary has a team that participates in DPLC. One of the reading strategies the school team has received training in is close reading. Close reading is the process of analyzing a piece of text closely to develop higher thinking

skills and increase comprehension. The school team has received training on close reading strategies to bring back to their grade level teachers to improve ELA achievement.

Building on the work that the DPLC team has started at ABC Elementary (pseudonym), I would continue to build teacher expertise and training on the use of close reading strategies. These strategies would support students' ability to comprehend texts and successfully answer questions related to the texts with methods for decoding the deeper meaning of the text. Research advances this need: "Significant research links the close reading of complex text whether the student is a struggling reader or advanced- to significant gains in reading" (Lapp, Moss, Grant and Johnson, 2015, p. 17). DPLC team members on each grade level can serve as teacher leaders and facilitate the lesson planning to ensure that close reading opportunities are embedded in the ELA instruction and across areas of the curriculum for all students in every grade level. For teachers to address learning gains for all students, careful considerations and scaffolds will need to be discussed in the planning and selection of complex texts. The collaboration of the Exceptional Education Teacher in common planning sessions in collaboration with DPLC team members will be vital to ensuring in determining the level of complexity of the text for SWD and how to build scaffolds to provide opportunities for success as they close read. Scaffolds for SWD would include academic support in phonics to assist with fluency and decoding of unfamiliar text. Academic support in vocabulary would have to be incorporated as students analyze non-fiction text to access prior knowledge and increase understanding. Leveraging the i-Ready computer-adaptive

program and adding additional lessons on the individual student's learning path in phonics and vocabulary would help strengthen these areas.

Culture. The culture of my CLP will include a structure for vertical Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to meet monthly. There will also be a focus on the use of data to drive planning and grouping to targeted intervention in reading. This will include data from i-Ready diagnostic assessments, fluency tests through cold reads, and Diagnostic Reading Assessments (DRA) given in the primary grades. This change in culture from meeting in only grade level PLCs to broader and larger vertical PLCs will shift the focus from grade level needs to school-wide needs. Using data to drive instructional planning and grouping for reading intervention will ensure that specific deficits in reading are targeted for groups of students.

The current structure for teachers to meet in PLCs is structured around the common planning a grade level has built into the daily schedule. Though this is valuable time that grade-level standards and targets are addressed, there is not an opportunity to collaborate with other grade-level teams. Lack of collaboration can limit opportunities for teams who yield higher results in student achievement with their SWD to share their strategies in the differentiation of instruction. This was the case at ABC Elementary, in which the fourth-grade team had consistently higher results in ELA proficiency and learning gains. The use of PLCs "provides a systematic method of ensuring that all teachers understand and can focus on the essential outcomes" (DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p. 176). A structure will be developed to build cultural competence in the area of school-wide collaboration, in which

teachers can meet in vertical PLCs to collaborate with other grade levels. Early dismissal Wednesdays once a month would be dedicated to the school calendar for this collaboration. Teachers would be organized in different vertical teams that would consist of one representative from each grade. This structure would keep vertical PLC teams small but provide focused discussions centered on strategies to differentiate reading instruction during the intervention block.

To ensure that targeted grouping for reading intervention is data-driven and fluid, there will need to be a shift on how data is used to plan for reading intervention. Weekly common planning of ELA will include the use of data to analyze common assessments and diagnostic results for weaknesses and deficits across the grade level. This will “help the team narrow the scope of inquiry and narrow the focus area for the work” (Boudett, City & Murnane, 2013, p. 68). This data will be used to determine targeted skills that need to be addressed during reading intervention and which grouping of students need what skills to facilitate the formation of the intervention groups. These groups should be monitored through scheduled bi-weekly progress monitoring checks so that the effectiveness of the intervention could be assessed and the adjustment to intervention groups is fluid.

Conditions. The ideal conditions to support reading intervention for SWD in my CLP would require that the intervention block be extended to forty-five minutes, four days a week. This is a fifteen-minute extension from the current thirty minutes already structured in the master schedule. The additional fifteen minutes is feasible using the content minutes from social studies, in which the content reading can be integrated in English Language Arts block. In addition to a more extended period,

providing additional support during reading intervention in classrooms with SWD would be beneficial. The extended time and additional support would ensure that differentiated, small group instruction can occur during the intervention block.

Increasing the reading intervention time and frequency would provide more time to target deficit skills in reading. The use of the i-Ready program to fill in instructional gaps in reading based on individual student needs has yielded positive results at ABC Elementary. The program, however, requires at least 45 minutes of online instruction weekly to produce results. The increase in time in the intervention block would allow for small group and differentiated instruction in which students can do rotations of 15 minutes from the computer program to the direct small group instruction provided by the classroom teacher. Marzano stated that “Small groups can enhance the processing of new information” (2007, p. 43). This additional time can provide a structure for small group differentiated instruction during the reading intervention block and the use of the i-Ready program’s other resources from the Teacher Tool Box to target specific reading deficits.

Additional support during the reading intervention block provides a structure for students to receive reading intervention in targeted small groups. By providing additional personnel, the teacher can pull small groups while the paraprofessional works with select students and monitors the classroom. Push in support by the ESE teacher during this time block can also be used to observe the progress of SWD on their reading and support with the delivery and monitoring of the targeted tiered intervention in conjunction with the general education teacher.

Competencies. My CLP will require that teachers and school leaders gain competencies in the area of reading instruction and knowledge of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Teachers need to gain expertise in the fundamental components of reading instruction to effectively identify deficit skills and correctly target appropriate interventions for students. Understanding how to use strategies related to the Universal Design for Learning will assist teachers with the successful differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of their SWD.

For students to become fluent readers, they need to master foundational reading skills. These skills include elements of phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, and reading fluency. For teachers to correctly identify deficit skills, they need an understanding of how to teach these components of reading instruction and how to provide tiered intervention on the skill accurately. Professional development that provides explicit instruction for teachers on how to teach, monitor, and assess the foundational reading skills will be critical in the successful delivery of reading intervention for all students. School leaders should also have a basic understanding of how reading is taught so they can provide actionable feedback when observing teachers during the ELA and intervention block. Having a shared understanding of the necessary components that need to be present during reading instruction will provide a foundation for successfully identifying skills that need to be addressed during tiered interventions.

Understanding how to use UDL strategies during reading instruction and intervention would be vital in helping teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of their SWD. Narkon and Wells support this: “UDL focuses on using

instructional methods, materials, and technologies that make the curriculum accessible for all learners” (2013, p. 233). Teachers will need professional development on how to incorporate UDL strategies during lesson planning. The planning of these strategies during reading instruction and reading intervention can provide engagement and scaffolds for SWD. School leaders should be informed of these strategies so that they can identify which teachers and classrooms are providing inclusive practices.

Conclusion

My CLP focuses on how to transform the current delivery model for reading intervention at ABC Elementary (pseudonym) so that all students, including SWD, make learning gains. The creation of the “AS-IS” chart (Appendix E) identified current issues in the context, culture, conditions, and competencies that are impacting the delivery of reading intervention. Using this framework, I identified the issues and developed a roadmap for change through my “TO-BE” chart (Appendix F). Successfully implementing the changes outlined in my CLP could transform the delivery of reading intervention to support SWD, narrow the achievement gap, and positively impact student achievement.

CHAPTER SIX

Strategies and Actions

My Change Leadership Plan (CLP) addressed specific areas that were needed to improve the delivery model of reading intervention at ABC Elementary (pseudonym). I used tools created by Wagner et al. (2006) to analyze the current structure through the “AS-IS” chart (Appendix G) and develop a vision for change through the “TO-BE” chart (Appendix H). Focusing on changes identified in my CLP in terms of context, culture, conditions, and competencies, I developed strategies and actions that are outlined in my Strategies and Action Chart (Appendix I). The implementation of these strategies and actions will address specific improvements required for the delivery of reading intervention for Students with Disabilities (SWD) to ensure these students make learning gains and narrow the achievement gap.

Context

The first two strategies I have identified in my chart address the changes that need to be made in terms of context to improve the delivery of reading intervention services at ABC Elementary. “You won’t close the implementation gap with another set of three-ring binders or announcements about the latest initiative” (Reeves, 2009, p. 93). The focus of these strategies should build upon existing structures that can show visible recognition of what works. The first strategy is to refine the use of close reading strategies to support ELA proficiency. This strategy will build upon the work that ABC Elementary and 123 School District have focused on related to improving reading achievement. The actions to ensure this strategy is implemented include using the current structure of District Professional Learning Community (DPLC) team members and the

instructional coach to share model lessons during common planning for the ELA block. The leadership team will periodically review lesson plans to monitor that close reading is embedded in the reading lessons at each level. The second strategy is to develop a structure for progress monitoring reading achievement of SWD consistently. The current computer-adaptive program, i-Ready, will be used to monitor reading achievement. The i-Ready progress monitoring capability will be used to monitor students in reading after each diagnostic consistently. The leadership team will review the i-Ready usage reports weekly and progress monitoring results monthly to monitor student growth.

Culture

My CLP addressed areas of need concerning the culture at ABC Elementary that I included in my chart as strategies three and four. Strategy three is to create a school-wide structure for teachers to meet in vertical PLCs. The creation of vertical teams will include representatives from each grade level. This team structure would enable discussions across all grade levels on effective reading strategies and practices. “People who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one another, thus creating momentum to fuel continued improvement” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 27). One Wednesday afternoon a month would be dedicated for teachers to meet in their vertical teams and collaborate on the implementation of effective strategies during the reading intervention to support student achievement. The fourth strategy is to develop a culture of data-driven instructional practices. “Some essential features that enable teams to harness energy and capitalize on learning include providing adults with relevant data to analyze” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 91). Teachers would need training on how to analyze data to identify deficit areas effectively. The leadership team would need to

provide teachers with time once a month to analyze grade-level data. Analyzing relevant data reports would be essential for teachers to be able to use the analysis to create tiered strategies to address deficiencies during the reading intervention block.

Conditions

Certain conditions will need to be present to fully implement my CLP, which I outline on my chart as strategies five and six. The fifth strategy is to increase the reading intervention to 45 minutes, four times a week, for 4th and 5th-grade students.

Manipulation of the master schedule will provide a consecutive 45-minute block in 4th and 5th grades for reading intervention four times a week. The sixth strategy to improve the conditions related to the delivery of intervention is to provide additional personnel to support students in the lowest reading intervention block, which includes SWD.

Scheduling will ensure that other staff is pushed into classrooms serving the lowest reading intervention groups with SWD. The additional personnel can assist in the classroom so that teachers can target tiered reading skills in small groups. As a building administrator, I have seen firsthand how teachers can effectively provide tiered reading intervention to a small group and target a specific skill. This small group instruction can happen efficiently when extra personnel is in the classroom to support the other students and minimize the interruptions to the small group instruction. The use of flexible scheduling for ESE teachers and paraprofessionals will be essential to this strategy so that they can provide additional support within the select classrooms during the reading intervention block four times a week.

I identified two areas in my CLP to build teacher competencies that are integrated into strategies seven and eight on my chart. Strategy seven is to increase teacher expertise

in reading instruction. Teachers need to have a deep understanding of foundational reading skills and how to identify deficits in these skills in struggling readers. Professional development in foundational reading skills would be provided to build this competency. Once teachers can adequately identify deficit skills to target, they “must believe in the relevance of an explicit reading strategy” (Van Keer & Vanderlinde, 2013, p. 57) to target during the intervention block. Training in foundational reading skills will increase teachers’ understanding of how to identify deficit reading skills and the importance of providing specific tiered intervention in these skills to address this deficit. Extending the knowledge and application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is the eighth strategy to build teachers’ competencies. To ensure that they experience success in reading, SWD require scaffolds to access the learning. The use of UDL practices and strategies in lesson planning by teachers can help SWD improve skills and make meaningful gains. Teachers will need professional development on how to incorporate UDL strategies into daily instruction. Classroom observation and review of lesson plans will be a way to monitor teachers’ application of UDL strategies from the training. Communicating with our parent organizations on how to support all our students through these inclusive practices will be achieved through curriculum and open house nights.

Conclusion

Through my program evaluation and research on reading intervention for SWD, I developed a CLP to improve the current delivery model of intervention services at ABC Elementary. To implement the changes, I noted in my CLP, specific strategies and actions were developed in terms of the context, culture, conditions, and competencies needed at ABC Elementary. These changes were noted in my Strategies and Action

Chart (Appendix G). The chart serves as a guide on how to use the specific strategy and accompanied action steps to ensure a successful implementation of the CLP. Using these strategies and actions as a guide, real progress can be made to close the achievement gap in reading between SWD and their general education peers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications and Policy Recommendations

The results of my program evaluation on reading intervention for students with disabilities (SWD) at ABC Elementary provided insights on how the school can improve the current delivery model to assist in narrowing the achievement gap between SWD and their peers. The data shows that there is a 30% gap in reading proficiency and a 20% gap in reading learning gains on state assessments between SWD and their peers. Current state requirements for K-12 Reading intervention require students who have been identified as deficient readers receive daily intensive intervention. The only stipulation is that this intervention occurs daily, outside of the 90-minute reading block, and be conducted in a smaller group setting. Research shows that successful interventions need more than a small group setting to be effective. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek share that “To meet the needs of students, interventions must be timely, directive, and systematic” (2010, p. 23). To comply with state requirements, 123 School District has required that reading intervention at the elementary level be scheduled daily for 30 minutes in addition to the 90-minute English Language Arts (ELA) block. My organizational Change Leadership Plan (CLP) suggests the adoption of a policy by the state and local districts to extend the required daily intervention services to 45 minutes, four times a week, in addition to the 90 minute ELA block for students in the intermediate grades, grades 4th and 5th, at the elementary level.

This policy change would support my CLP by focusing on the necessary conditions of time and support for learning that will ensure that there is a commitment to learning for all students in line with research findings: “A commitment to learning of

each student means additional time and support for learning when he or she struggles” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2010, p. 11). The current model of thirty minutes doesn’t adequately provide additional time for targeted small group support for SWD. Using state assessment data from third and fourth grades, districts and schools would be able to adequately identify all students who are showing deficits in reading, including SWD. This data would be used to accurately schedule a block of 45 minutes four times a week for identified students in fourth and fifth grades to receive reading intervention services. The extended time would provide teachers with opportunities to target specific skills in small groups as well as use the i-Ready computer-adaptive program to positively impact reading growth for all students and narrow the achievement gap for SWD.

Policy Statement

The policy I am recommending for 123 School District to support schools like ABC Elementary is one that increases the reading intervention block to 45 minutes, four days a week for 4th and 5th-grade students showing deficiencies in reading. Though intervention efforts in reading have yielded some positive results at ABC elementary, there is still a gap in reading proficiency and learning gains between SWD and their peers. The increase in time support findings from my program evaluation and CLP in which time consistently is a barrier to adequately providing small group, differentiated, targeted interventions for students in reading. The policy change would provide additional time for teachers to work in small groups with students to support their specific reading needs during the reading intervention. This extra time would provide a structure for students to use the i-Ready computer-adaptive program to work on deficit skills.

Analysis of Needs

The recommended policy to increase the intervention block for fourth and fifth-grade students in reading will require an analysis of the needs and changes that will be involved to implement the policy thoroughly as recommended in research: “The link between the policy environment and classroom instruction is a central issue in the sociology of education” (Diamond, 2007, p.286). This analysis will include looking at the policy from the following six distinct disciplinary areas: educational, economic, social, political, legal, and moral, and ethical. This analysis will allow me to carefully look at the necessary considerations and changes that will be involved in the full implementation of the policy.

Educational Analysis. The educational issue related to my policy is the achievement gap between Students with Disabilities (SWD) and their peers in the area of reading. A gap in reading achievement is unacceptable for any student as reading is the core of early education, as stated by Derringer: “mastering reading skills has long been a core of early education” (Derringer, 2017, p. 60). Participation in specialized intervention services can assist struggling readers to make gains. My program evaluation of reading intervention services for SWD at ABC Elementary indicated that the daily 30-minute reading intervention block is insufficient to provide specialized, small group support in reading by the general education teacher. The new policy will require the school’s master schedule to provide fourth and fifth-grade students a 45-minute reading intervention block four times a week.

Ensuring that SWD make learning gains in reading is the focus of this policy. For these students to make sufficient gains to narrow the achievement gap, they will require

targeted tiered intervention in reading provided in a small group setting. The intervention block will build on the core and then differentiate the instruction in small groups and through the i-Ready adaptive computer program to address deficit skills. This practice will maximize growth: “Building on core teaching and learning practices that are solid, the intervention can refine them for maximum individual growth” (Tomlinson, 2000, p.7). The 45-minute block will provide enough time for teachers to rotate through multiple small student groups to provide direct instruction on targeted skills. In contrast, the other students work independently on the i-Ready program.

Economic Analysis. This policy change will have an economic impact in two significant ways. First, it will impact the number of students that receive tutoring services before school due to their reading performance on state assessments. Currently, school budgets have a small amount reserved through the Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) component. The amount allocated through SAI usually doesn’t cover the cost of paying teachers at their hourly rate to provide the small group tutoring support in reading before school. To keep tutoring groups small and targeting all students below reading in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades, additional funds must be used from the school’s general funds to provide this tutoring. Increasing the intervention block to target deficit reading skills for struggling readers could improve students’ reading performance on state assessments and reduce the number of students below grade level requiring the tutoring service. Reducing the number of students requiring tutoring will also save costs because fewer tutors will be

required to provide the intervention. This would be a cost-saving to the school since general funds will not have to be used to cover what the SAI funds doesn't for tutoring.

A second economic impact the policy would have is the cost of providing additional professional development for teachers in foundational reading skills. This training is vital to ensure that teachers can identify deficit skills to target during the reading intervention block. The increase in time during the intervention block is designed to allow teachers additional time to meet with students in small groups and provide tiered intervention. This additional time is in keeping with Lapp, Moss, Grant, and Johnson's observation: "Learning to become a skilled, purposeful reader requires the support of teachers who know how to create focused, personalized, varied, scaffolded, and motivating learning experiences" (2015, p. 1). Financial resources will have to be used to provide professional development to teachers through consultants or district experts on the components of foundational reading skills and how to identify which skills are deficit when students are struggling to read. Time for professional development will also be an impact of this policy since it would require a block of time for teachers to receive the training during their contractual time. Early release Wednesdays at ABC Elementary allows for the school day to end an hour early to provide time for teachers to receive professional development. If additional time is needed beyond the hour designated on early release Wednesdays for teacher training, funds may need to be used to pay for substitute teachers. Substitute teachers would enable for teachers to attend the training for a full day during their regular work hours on the school campus.

Social Analysis. The first social implication related to the policy change is the ability for Students with Disabilities (SWD) to access grade-level curriculum. "Students

with disabilities continue to perform well below peers in reading and, as a result, enter middle school lacking foundational skills necessary to meet grade-level standards” (Cook and Rao, 2018, p. 179). Providing additional time in reading intervention will allow for SWD to receive the necessary support they need to improve their foundational reading skills. Early intervention to narrow the achievement gap in reading will increase SWD’s success at the secondary level so that they can access grade-level content.

Secondly, the policy change will socially impact teachers’ confidence in identifying deficit foundational reading skills and effectively implementing an intervention strategy, as emphasized by Cook and Rao: “Although teachers may provide accommodations that can support reading fluency for SWD, it is also necessary to provide specialized instruction to improve deficit areas” (2018, p. 180). The professional development provided in reading will build teachers’ capacity to identify and to teach foundational reading skills. The competence will translate to an effective system to identify and target deficit skills during the intervention block that can positively impact student achievement for SWD.

Political Analysis. Politically my policy change is associated with ensuring that SWD have access to the general education curriculum while being provided specialized instruction to meet their needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, mandates that these rights are afforded to these students (U. S. DOE, 2015). Reading intervention is intended to improve the academic performance of SWD so that they can fully access the general education curriculum with their peers. The individual needs of students are unique and growing. Wagner et al. reminds us that “American public education is highly politicized

and becoming more so, with constituencies making demands on the politicians and school board members they elect” (2006, p. 65). State standardized assessments to monitor student progress and evaluate teacher performance is a reality today and has led to the continued politicized agenda demanding accountability through standardized testing. The achievement gap in reading on standardized testing between SWD and their peers reflects the notion that our schools are not meeting the needs of this population and, therefore, not complying with the requirements of IDEA.

Legal Analysis. The legal issue related to my policy is the requirements set by the state to provide students with instructional interventions beyond what is provided universally in the content area. For example, “The basic elements of the State’s MTSS are required by the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)” (Florida Department of Education, 2020). Currently, the requirement outlines that students receive at least 30 minutes of intervention academic support outside of the English Language Arts (ELA) block daily. My policy would increase the intervention requirement by 15 minutes to 45 minutes, four times a week, and leave the option of continuing for only thirty minutes on Wednesdays due to early dismissal at ABC Elementary school. The state’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is meant to be a continuum in which students have access to instruction and support at varying intensity levels based on need. Increasing the time of the intervention ensures that the basic tenets of the law and requirements are carried out fluidly and lead to improved academic outcomes for SWD in reading.

Moral and Ethical Analysis. The moral and ethical implications related to my policy are that literacy is a civil right. Our SWD have a right to be educated with their

peers and be provided supplemental services if needed, to benefit from public education. The achievement gap in reading between SWD and their general education peers shows that these students are not making equitable gains. Ravitch reminds us that the gaps have causes that must be addressed: “We have made genuine progress in narrowing the achievement gaps, but they will remain large if we do nothing about the causes of gaps” (2013, p. 55). Currently there are still gaps between general education peers and SWD. In my program evaluation alone, I noted a 50% gap within ABC Elementary’s SWD and general education peers on the state’s standard assessment results for English Language Arts proficiency. My policy addresses one cause in the reading gap between SWD and their peers due to the lack of foundational reading skills. Increasing the reading intervention block to provide tiered support in the deficit skills can assist with increasing reading proficiency for SWD. When the achievement gap is narrowed, then we can ensure that all students are making gains and having a positive and equitable experience from their public education.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

The proposed policy will impact the relationships between teachers and staff at the school level. Changing the master schedule and increasing the intervention block will require teachers to embrace the need for the increased block of time to provide tiered support. Assuring teachers that they are doing their job but refining their skills can lead to more significant gains for all students, needs to be the message of this policy change. Kotter stated wisely that “New ideas can easily seem to suggest that someone isn’t doing their job” (2013, p. 117). Teachers and staff will need to be open to improving the delivery of intervention to support all students. Teachers will need to embrace the

challenge of increasing their own foundational reading skills through professional development so they can effectively identify deficit skills and provide the appropriate tiered intervention for students.

The community's relationship and support of the policy will be dependent on communicating the urgency for the change, as Wagner states: "The first critical step in creating a community-wide focus on the skills that matter most for students is engaging in the strategic planning" (2008, p. 274). Communication by school leaders to the community on how the changes to the master schedule to increase the intervention block in reading will result in gains for students will be crucial. The strategic planning of the change should also be communicated with feeder middle schools, which would be positively impacted by the policy. Ensuring that students leave the elementary setting as confident and proficient readers will minimize the number of students that will need to be enrolled in reading remediation classes instead of electives at the secondary level.

The other stakeholder relationships that the policy will impact is our parents. Having the support and engagement of parents is vital to any school initiative. I have experienced firsthand working with my parent organizations how this support can lead to increased resources and assistance with communicating the message to other parents at large. Educating parents on the urgency for the change and sharing that there is a plan to address the intervention for deficit skills while allowing on grade level students to work on enrichment skills will be critical. Once parents understand how the policy can increase reading proficiency for SWD and strengthen reading for all students across the board, leading to the school's increased reading scores on the state assessment, they will support the policy. Proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA) impacts a school's

rating on the state's accountability system. For schools like ABC Elementary to keep their high achieving rating, they must continue to show proficiency and learning gains in ELA. Having this status affects the community's real estate and economic growth, which would be important to community members and parents.

Conclusion

The policy change proposed is based on results from my program evaluation on reading intervention for students with disabilities (SWD). For SWD to make gains to narrow the achievement gap, they will require intensive targeted support during the reading intervention block. Intensive targeted support during the intervention block will require extended time in the master schedule and additional personnel to support small group instruction. Teachers will need to be provided professional development in foundational reading skills to build their capacity to identify and target deficit reading skills adequately. The community will need to be engaged so they can understand the benefits of the policy to students at the secondary level and support it. More proficient readers at the elementary level will result in a decrease of remedial classes needed to be offered at the secondary level. This would allow students to take electives and participate in career and technical programs. Public schools have the moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that all students are provided with free and equitable education. Our SWD should be provided with specialized instruction to meet their individual needs. This policy can ensure increased gains for SWD and successful outcomes in reading for all students.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The problem at the center of my program evaluation is that the current delivery of intervention support for Students with Disabilities (SWD) in the fourth and fifth-grade classrooms at ABC Elementary is not yielding adequate results to close the achievement gap. The analysis of research allowed me to examine successful elements of reading intervention for SWD and identify components of a delivery model that produced effective outcomes. Schools and teachers must ensure that all students are provided with the support necessary to grow in reading. Reading is a life skill that all students will need to be productive members of society. Developing a delivery model that produces successful outcomes for all students should be a priority for our schools.

Discussion

The purpose of my program evaluation of reading intervention services for SWD was to identify a delivery model that would lead to improved outcomes in reading for these students to close the achievement gap successfully. The goals of the evaluation included identifying an effective delivery model that could be implemented during the reading intervention block by the general education teacher as well as effective strategies and resources that can lead to high gains in student achievement. The process I used to address my program evaluation goals was to review literature, collect data through teacher surveys, teacher interviews, and review student data on state assessments and i-Ready Diagnostics for SWD. My findings revealed that addressing time in the schedule and using materials that provided a multi-component of reading elements could be

structured to develop a reading intervention model that could yield increased results for all students.

I created a Change Leadership Plan (CLP) based on my program evaluation and research to address the context, culture, conditions, and competencies needed in the delivery of reading intervention services at ABC Elementary. The context of my plan showed that there was a gap in English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency and learning gains between SWD and their peers. My plan focused on English Language Arts (ELA) instruction for all students as a priority to address this gap adequately. Focused instruction on ELA instruction at ABC Elementary would be achieved through the continued use of The District Professional Learning Communities structure, in which grade level experts received training on strategies to improve reading comprehension. The strategies were then shared with individual teachers at each grade level so that effective and common reading strategies would be used at ABC Elementary.

My CLP addressed the culture needed to ensure that ELA proficiency was a focus of planning instruction. This would be achieved through the use of vertical Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Meeting in vertical teams would provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in data to drive planning related to school-wide needs instead of grade-level needs. This structure would also provide a dedicated time once a month during PLC Wednesdays, in which teachers could collaborate with other grade-level teams. Early student release on Wednesday allows an additional hour for teachers to use for professional development, grade-level PLC meetings, and planning. This structure can be used to designate one Wednesday a month for vertical PLC meetings.

The conditions needed to provide effective reading intervention to SWD would require additional time in the master schedule. My CLP addresses the barrier of not enough time in the master schedule to provide reading intervention for SWD by extending the intervention block to 45 minutes, four times a week for fourth and fifth-grade students. This additional 15 minutes to the existing 30-minute block can be structured by addressing Social Studies Standards during the ELA block, thus providing the extra time in the schedule that is typically dedicated to the Social Studies block. The extended time during the intervention block will enable teachers to differentiate instruction and target skills in small groups. In the extended time, SWD would participate in 15-minute rotations between independent skills, direct teaching in small groups by the teacher, and use of the i-Ready computer-adaptive program to address deficit skills.

My CLP plan outlines the competencies that teachers will need to instruct struggling readers. The focus on elements of foundational reading skills and planning for SWD through the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies would be a priority. By becoming competent in instructing and assessing students in the elements of foundational reading, teachers would be able to identify deficit skills and provide targeted intervention. Understanding how to plan and create a learning environment using UDL strategies can help teachers scaffold instruction to meet the needs of their SWD. My CLP addressed the context, culture, conditions, and competencies to close the proficiency and learning gain gap between SWD and their peers. The extension of the reading intervention block is a critical component of my CLP that led to my suggested policy for 123 School District.

My recommended policy for 123 School District to support targeted reading intervention for SWD at the elementary level is to increase the reading intervention block from 30-minutes to 45 minutes four times a week for fourth and fifth-grade students showing a deficit in reading. ABC Elementary would have to adjust the master schedule to build in the additional time. This adjustment can be made by integrating the Social Studies Standards during the ELA block, freeing up the time dedicated for Social Studies on the master schedule. The increase in time would afford general education teachers the ability to provide small group instruction and rotate students through the i-Ready computer-adaptive program to work on deficit skills. This policy would allow SWD to receive the intensive targeted support in reading to make gains and close the achievement gap.

123 School District should adopt a plan in which the Social Studies standards and content are embedded in the two hours of the ELA block. This would ensure that schools have an additional thirty minutes in the master schedule in which to extend the intervention block for fourth and fifth-grade students. This extra time would enable schools to structure a 45-minute reading intervention block, four times a week, to address deficit reading skills and close the achievement gap for SWD.

Leadership Lessons

The process of conducting my program evaluation allowed me to gain valuable leadership lessons and insights into my leadership skills. The first leadership lesson learned is that the ability to read and comprehend text is a complex skill. My research of literature on components of effective reading intervention programs for SWD allowed me to gain insight into the foundational elements of reading instruction. It also showed me

how critical the direct, small group instruction provided by the teacher could be for students. To accurately identify deficit skills in struggling readers, teachers must understand the elements of foundational reading instruction. Once a month, one early release Wednesday will be dedicated to professional development at ABC Elementary with a focus on foundational elements of reading instruction. The district's elementary reading resource teacher and the school's reading coach would provide the training for teachers and structure application and practice. The following month a follow-up training of the introduced strategies would be provided to allow participants to share what strategies they used and the results through data. The reading coach would conduct classroom observations to provide feedback to teachers on how strategies could be incorporated during the intervention and small group instruction. The first three months of the school year would focus on providing professional development in foundational reading skills. This understanding would allow teachers to target specific skills and provide targeted instruction effectively. Knowledge of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) as a teacher and how to plan effectively to meet the needs of Students with Disabilities is essential for teachers to meet the needs of all their students. During preplanning, the staffing specialist and exceptional education teacher will provide an overview of UDL. They will provide resources and strategies for how to plan for and create an inclusive classroom environment—doing this overview before the school year starting is vital so that teachers can prepare their classroom space and lessons to support SWD. As a building administrator, I have to provide the necessary professional development for my teachers in foundational reading skills and strategies related to the Universal Design of Learning. This training would assist teachers in providing instruction

and supporting SWD needs adequately. I would use general funds to pay for substitute teachers to give a half-day training during the instructional day. I would schedule district resource reading coaches and program specialists to commit to two full days of training on my campus. This would allow me to do a morning and afternoon session of about 25 teachers and use a full day substitute to cover both sessions. I would schedule a fall training and follow up spring training to provide for opportunities for the safe practice of strategies for a couple of months by classroom teachers. I would use a combination of district digital resources already created by our district on UDL and a review of strategies and implementation by the staffing specialist and MTSS coach during a Wednesday afternoon reserved for professional development to support teachers in the implementation of these strategies.

The second leadership lesson I learned is how much the structure and time designated for the reading intervention block can impact the delivery of instruction. Feedback from teacher surveys and interviews noted the time as a significant barrier for teachers' in their ability to provide tiered interventions in small groups for their SWD during the reading intervention block. I learned that in my role as an administrator, I could remove this barrier if I create a master schedule that provides additional time in the reading intervention block for 4th and 5th-grade students at least four times a week. Integrating Social Studies standards during the English Language Arts block (ELA) would create extra time in the master schedule. Social Studies texts provide a unique opportunity for students to be engaged in reading non-fiction content during the block.

Additionally, the use of Document Based Questions (DBQ) answered through the use of historical documents provided opportunities for students to also write during the

ELA block related to the Social Studies Standards. Schools should look at opportunities to integrate subjects in meaningful ways to make connections for students. The use of DBQ type lessons provides a structure for Social Studies Standards to be integrated during the ELA block. Districts already provide DBQ training for teachers in fourth and fifth grade in 123 School District. Ensuring that all fourth and fifth-grade teachers at ABC Elementary receive the training in DBQ would provide the framework and expertise to integrate these lessons during the ELA block. The integration of these subjects would give additional time in the master schedule, usually dedicated to Social Studies instruction. This additional thirty-minutes a day can be used to extend the intervention time for fourth and fifth-grade students to 45-minutes. This time is crucial to enable teachers to provide targeted support in small groups to students to ensure struggling readers make learning gains.

As a leader, this program evaluation has shown me the benefits of doing research and how the data collected can be used to develop a Change Leadership Plan (CLP). As a leader, I developed skills to help me address systematic change in my school building by looking at the context, conditions, culture, and competencies of the school and its teachers. I also learned that a well- developed CLP can be used as a roadmap to enact real change for an identified problem by a school leader. In the case of my program evaluation, developing a plan that can potentially improve the delivery of reading intervention services for all students and help close the achievement gap for my SWD is a worthy pursuit.

Conclusion

By evaluating the delivery of reading intervention for SWD, I was able to use the results from the study to make recommendations for ABC Elementary on how to improve the services for these students. I was also able to guide school leaders on how to implement a CLP and advocate for a specific policy that could benefit all struggling readers. As a leader, I gained valuable insights on how critical the role of teaching particular foundational reading skills is for all children at the elementary level. I also reaffirmed my belief that as school-based administrators, we must advocate for SWD. In other words, being equitable may mean providing more for this group of students.

Addressing the significant themes that emerged from my evaluation resulted in making recommendations to the structure in which reading intervention services should be provided to yield effective results. A policy directed at increasing the reading intervention block to 45-minutes would offer additional time for targeted support by the teacher through the use of a small group structure. Specific strategies and actions related to the CLP provide the “how” for school leaders to support reading instruction for all students in a systematic manner. Ensuring that all students receive explicit reading instruction to make reading gains should be a priority for every school.

Struggling readers must receive targeted tiered support to address deficit skills. In the case of SWD, the structure and delivery of the interventions are crucial since reading affects every other school activity. “A child who does not learn to read well will find it almost impossible to be successful in school or the workplace” (Forness, Kavale, Blum, & Lloyd, 1997, p.4). Our public-school system has a moral obligation to ensure that all students, regardless of their disability, become literate and contributing members of our society.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey Invitation

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in my National-Louis University doctoral research study regarding the Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities (SWD).

The enclosed survey has been designed to collect information on the current delivery model of reading intervention services provided to SWD at our school.

Your participation in the research study is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total.

If you agree to participate in this study, please answer the questions on the survey as best you can. It should only take approximately 10 minutes to complete and should not interfere with instructional time. Please sign and return one Informed Consent Form in the envelope marked "Consent" to the labeled box in the front office work room. Once you have completed the survey, place the completed survey in the envelope marked "Survey" to the labeled box in the front office work room. Keep a copy the extra copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records.

Thank you for your assistance in this research study. I appreciate your feedback.

Sincerely,

Diana Greer

Appendix B

Teacher Survey on Intervention Instruction in Reading for Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Use the scale below to respond to the following statements:

		strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree
1.	Intervention support for SWD in reading yields positive results.					
2.	The i-Ready computer adaptive program provides beneficial support and practice in reading skills for SWD.					
3.	There is adequate time in the schedule to provide intervention support in reading for SWD.					
4.	Reading intervention in reading is provided in small groups of six to eight students.					
5.	I have the resources I need to provide effective reading intervention to SWD.					
6.	Resource materials from Curriculum Associates are effective in providing intervention to SWD.					

7.	I have received adequate professional development on how to provide reading intervention to SWD.					
8.	I have participated in professional development on how to provide differentiated instruction for SWD.					
9.	There are challenges in differentiating instruction for SWD in reading.					
10.	I have appropriate reading materials and text to scaffold instruction for SWD.					
11.	I would like additional professional development on specific strategies in reading to support my SWD.					

Provide a short written response to the following questions:

12.	What is working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD?
13.	What is not working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD?

14.	What is the greatest challenge in the current intervention services in reading for SWD?
15.	What are ways to address the challenges in the current intervention services in reading for SWD?
16.	What are ways to improve the intervention program for SWD?
17.	What instructional resources would assist you with reading intervention instruction for SWD?
18.	What professional development would assist you with reading intervention instruction for SWD?
19.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the SWD program?

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Invitation

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in my National-Louis University doctoral research study regarding the Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities (SWD).

My project will address the process of which reading intervention services are provided to SWD and how it impacts our school. I will use the data I collect to understand the current delivery model of reading intervention services for SWD and findings that may lead to providing effective specialized intervention support and resources to SWD. I would like to interview you in regards to your thoughts on the reading intervention services at our school.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the interview and agree to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. I will audio tape and transcribe the interviews. All information collected in the interviews reflects your experience and opinion as a teacher providing reading instruction to SWD.

If you agree to participate in this interview, return this invitation with selected days of the week and times below that will be convenient to schedule the interview. Return the interview invitation in the provided envelope labeled “interview times” to the labeled box located in the front office work room. Please sign and return one Informed Consent Form in the envelope marked “Consent” to the labeled box in the front office work room. Keep a copy the extra copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records.

Thank you for your assistance in this research study. I appreciate your feedback.

Sincerely,

Diana Greer

Appendix D

Teacher Interview Questions on

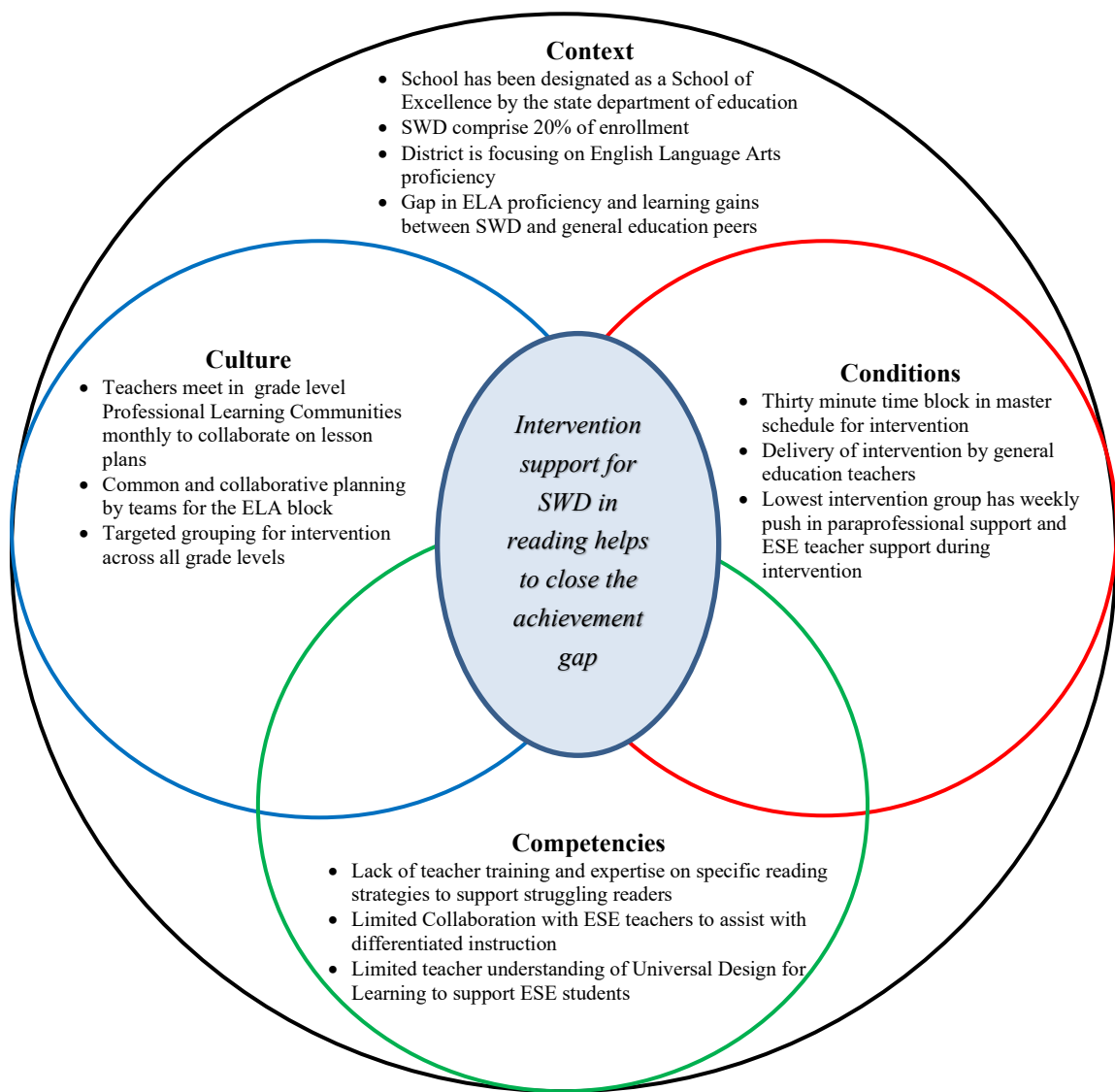
Intervention Programs in Reading for Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Questions	Research Notes
1. Please describe why or why not you feel the current intervention support for SWD in reading is yielding positive results?	
2. Please describe why or why not you feel there is adequate time in the schedule to provide intervention support in reading for SWD?	
3. Is reading intervention provided in small groups of six to eight students? How well is this working, or not working? If it is not, should it be? Why or why not?	
4. What is working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD?	
5. What is not working well with the current intervention services in reading for SWD?	

6. What is the greatest challenge in the current intervention services in reading for SWD?	
7. What are ways to address the challenges in the current intervention services in reading for SWD?	
8. What are ways to improve the intervention program for SWD?	
9. What instructional resources would assist you with reading intervention instruction for SWD?	
10. Is there a particular intervention program that you've had experience with that you feel would benefit SWD?	
11. What professional development would assist you with reading intervention instruction for SWD?	
12. Is there anything else you would like to discuss today about SWD support services?	

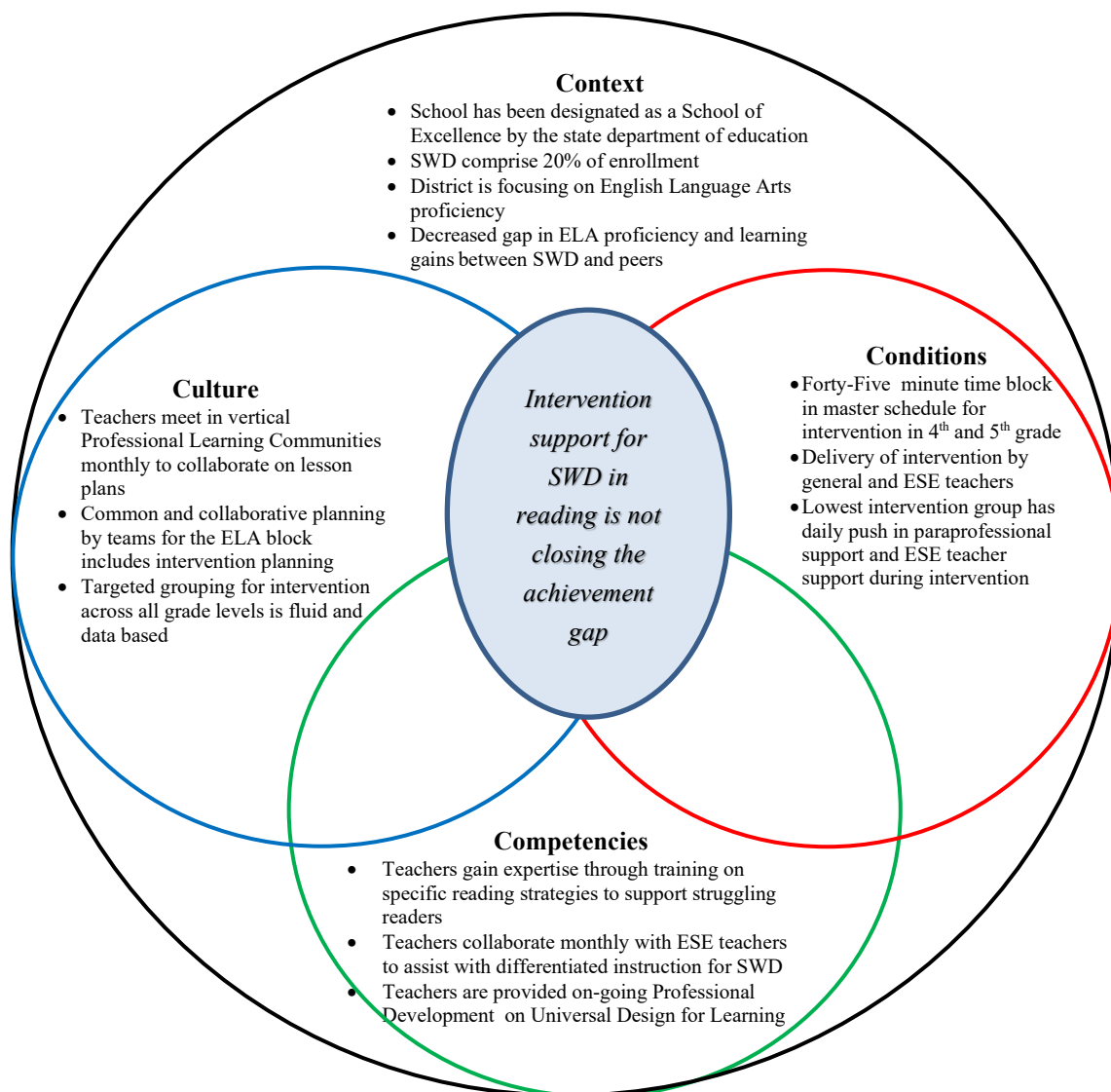
Appendix E

AS IS 4 C's Analysis for Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities



Appendix F

TO BE 4 C's Analysis for Evaluation of Reading Intervention Programs for Students with Disabilities



Appendix G

Strategies and Actions Chart

Context	Strategies	Actions
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refine the use of close reading strategies to support the ELA proficiency. 2. Develop a structure for progress monitoring reading achievement of SWD consistently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPLC team members and instructional coach will share model lessons and facilitate common planning for ELA. • Administration will review lesson plans to ensure that close reading strategies are embedded in reading lessons. • i-Ready progress monitoring in reading will be scheduled for all SWD after each diagnostic. • Administration will review i-Ready usage reports weekly and progress monitoring results monthly.
Culture	Strategies	Actions
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Create a school-wide structure for teachers to meet in vertical PLCs. 4. Develop a culture of data-driven instructional practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create vertical teams that include representatives from each grade level. • Provide time once a month on Wednesday afternoon for teachers to meet in vertical PLCs to align strategies and instruction. • Train teachers on how to effectively analyze data to identify deficit areas. • Provide teachers with time once a month to analyze grade level data and create tiered strategies to address deficiencies.
Condition	Strategies	Actions

	<p>5. Increase intervention to 45 minutes for 4th and 5th grade students.</p> <p>6. Provide additional personnel to support the lowest reading intervention blocks with SWD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The master schedule will be manipulated to provide intermediate grades with 45 minutes of reading intervention four times a week. • Provide additional personnel to the lowest reading intervention classrooms so that teachers can conduct intervention in small groups. • Use flexible scheduling for ESE teachers and paraprofessionals so that they can push in to select classrooms during the reading intervention block four times a week.
Competencies	Strategies	Actions
	<p>7. Increase teacher expertise in reading instruction.</p> <p>8. Extend teachers' understanding and application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop professional development for teachers in foundational reading skills. • Develop professional development for teachers on how to incorporate UDL strategies in daily instruction.