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Collaborative Professional Learning in Early Literacy: The Impact on Teacher Knowledge, Actions, and Beliefs

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COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN EARLY LITERACY: THE
IMPACT ON TEACHER KNOWLEDGE, ACTIONS, AND BELIEFS

By
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jaime Henderson Dawson under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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Literacy is the foundation for individual success and economic independence. Early
literacy development is an area of importance; thus, professional learning in early literacy
is critical and significant. This study examined the impact of a collaborative professional
learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how
learning transfer resulted in changes to instructional practices. The study utilized an
explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Data were collected from participants in a
specific collaborative professional learning model, the Early Literacy Professional
Development (ELPD) model. Quantitative data were collected through surveys to
identify professional learning topics perceived as having an impact on theoretical
knowledge, collaborative features from the professional learning experience perceived as
having an impact on teaching practices, and the relationship between the professional
learning and teacher self-efficacy. Qualitative data were collected to examine how
instructional practices were influenced by these topics and how collaborative features of
professional learning affected learning transfer and impacted practices. Findings
indicated close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and
writing as topics impacting theoretical understanding of early literacy acquisition.
Changed instructional practices were identified from these topics: varied grouping,
responsiveness, reciprocity, and strategy instruction. Discussions and conversations,
shared teaching demonstrations, and teacher leader support through coaching and

modeling were collaborative features perceived as impacting practices. Conversations, authentic experiences with students, and shared teaching demonstrations were collaborative features affecting the transfer of learning. The findings showed a correlation between the professional learning and self-efficacy, resulting in a statistically significant relationship.

Keywords: collaborative professional learning, early literacy, teacher knowledge, teacher actions, teacher beliefs, self-efficacy; collaboration, professional learning, professional development, transfer of learning

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Today's world is one in which knowledge is rapidly increasing and innovations abound. As society has shifted to a more digital, information-based world, these changes have created increased literacy demands. In today's global economy, the workforce must be able to "ask great questions, critically analyze information, form independent opinions, collaborate and communicate effectively" (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015, p. 20). Being literate is the necessary foundation for these skills needed in the workforce today. Regardless of the career field, employees in today's workforce use "reading and writing to acquire and share information, [in] communicating with other employees and the public at large, tracing and recording pertinent information, and developing reports and disseminating policies" (Graham, et al., 2017, p. 279).

Literacy levels have a direct impact on the quality of the nation's workforce, which affects the national role in the global economy. The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies is an effort by the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) to assess and compare the skills and competencies of adults around the world. It is considered the "the most current indicator of the nation's progress in adult skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments" (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., para. 3). As of 2013, the United States had a larger percentage of adults performing at bottom levels than the international average (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The United States Department of Education (2019) published a report, Adult Literacy in the United States, that stated 43 million adults in the country have low literacy skills (para. 4). There is a pressing need to ensure that our nation has a literate workforce capable of working in a globalized society.

Becoming literate is a key factor in the corporate success of our nation and its workforce (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014).

In addition to forming the cornerstone of a competitive workforce and a driving factor in a person's employability, literacy impacts other areas of one's life as well. Data gathered on adults with low levels of literacy show that 43% of them live in poverty, while 70% of adults on welfare have low literacy levels (ProLiteracy, n.d.). The consequences of illiteracy also include a higher likelihood of incarcerations. Research found illiteracy rates among prison populations are estimated to be as high as 75% (Saniato, 2017). Adults with low levels of literacy are more likely to have health issues and more likely to misuse medications or misunderstand health information provided by doctors (Strauss, 2016). Conversely, being able to read is associated with a variety of positive life experiences across all domains of life including employment status, level of wages earned, socioeconomic status, and physical and mental health and well-being (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014).

The current state of literacy in the education systems of the United States is a significant concern. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a measure examining what students in the United States know and can do across the country. It is often referred to as the Nation's Report Card and gives insight into how students in the United States are performing academically. In 2019, overall average scores decreased in reading on the NAEP assessment compared to 2017 in both fourth and eighth grades (Nation's Report Card, n.d.). Additionally, a smaller percentage of students scored at or above NAEP proficient than in 2017 in both fourth and eighth grades. Many student subgroups scored lower on reading in 2019 compared to 2017

(Nation's Report Card, n.d.).

State literacy data also pose cause for concern. Only two states scored lower than South Carolina on the NAEP reading (Nation's Report Card, n.d.). South Carolina was one of nine states with a score decrease between 2015 and 2017 (Nation's Report Card, n.d.). State literacy data mirror these national trends. Scores from 2018 showed that less than half of students in third through eighth grades met or exceeded grade level expectations in reading on SC READY, the state's accountability measure given at the end of each school year (South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.a). On the 2017 administration of the ACT, a national college admissions examination with two achievement levels based on ACT's College Readiness Benchmark Scores, more than 70% of students in the state scored not ready on the reading subtest (South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.b). The not ready score is indicative that a student would likely not pass a college course with a C or better (South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.b).

Early literacy plays a significant role in later literacy achievement, which can have a significant impact on an individual's employment, socioeconomic status, and physical and mental health. The quality of schools and teachers matters. Students of highly effective teachers are more likely to graduate, attend college, and work in higher paying jobs (Goldhaber, 2016). Because of differences in teacher certification requirements, there is a difference in teacher quality across schools and states, and many researchers have argued for a policy focus on teacher quality as "the most important schooling variable" (Goldhaber, 2016, p. 60). Having a highly trained and knowledgeable teacher, particularly in the primary grades, has the potential to affect student literacy

achievement with effective reading instruction, which can address reading difficulties that may alter a student's life trajectory (Washburn et. al, 2011). Early literacy teachers must be highly trained with the knowledge and skills critical in laying the foundation for each student to have a literate future.

Research suggests that many teachers lack the pedagogical knowledge to effectively address the reading deficiencies of struggling readers (Lane et al., 2009; Snow et al., 2005). Duke (2019) argued,

> Teaching reading to a class of first graders is akin in complexity to being an emergency room physician, requiring a broad range of knowledge and skills and the ability to manage and coordinate many "cases" at once. One might argue that the stakes are higher in an E.R., but they are high in classrooms too, given that reading difficulties are associated with serious long-term effects.… E.R physicians have typically had four years of undergraduate school, four years of medical school, three to four years of residency, and perhaps even further specialized training to prepare them for the role. In contrast, one can be certified as an elementary school teacher after just an undergraduate degree, only part of which is focused on teacher preparation, or through alternative and emergency certification processes that involve even less preparation than that. (p. 9)

Duke went on to argue for rigorous standards for teacher preparation that allow teacher candidates to specialize and experience more time in the practice of implementing research-based instructional strategies in classrooms with children.

Other research echoes issues around the quality of teacher preparation for literacy teachers. The National Center for Teacher Quality (2016) found only 39% of 820

undergraduate elementary programs included instruction in the five essential components

of early reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) in

their coursework through lecture, textbook, course assignments and readings, or in

student teaching practice. Scales et al. (2018) argued too often teacher preparation

programs are preparing candidates for technical compliance instead of professional

judgement.

> Learning to teach literacy is not simply learning content, skills, and strategies, but
>
> a way to think about teaching as a flexible, adaptive process that takes into
>
> account district requirements, school culture, teacher expertise, curricular
>
> demands, and students' needs. Teachers need to make professional judgments
>
> during teaching, and perhaps even become subversive in adaptations, depending
>
> on their teaching contexts. (Scales et al., 2018, p. 17)

To meet the demands of 21st century learning, school systems must build educator

capacity and provide "effective professional learning" (Fullan et al., 2015, p. vii).

Educational systems often provide professional development for teachers as part of their

requirements for recertification. Professional development does not immediately result in

professional learning or changes in teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Research completed by the Learning Policy Institute found that professional development

is usually for a short duration, less than 8 hours on a topic typically in a workshop

provided outside of the normal teaching day (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

To improve student achievement in literacy, it is imperative that teacher

knowledge and performance be addressed. The quality of teacher education and

professional development has the potential to improve literacy achievement and must be

addressed (Shanahan, 2018). Arguably, "finding ways to support and develop teachers…remains a strategy worth pursuing" (Gore et al., 2017, p. 2).

Problem Statement

Literacy learning is a foundational skill needed for successful life outcomes, yet literacy levels remain a cause of concern at the local, state, and national levels in the United States. There have been many different efforts to recognize and address literacy difficulties through legislation, curriculum programs, and state and federal initiatives. In the last 30 years, the field of education has much research around literacy learning from which to draw; however, there has not been much change in national proficiency scores. It is widely recognized that a highly knowledgeable and effective literacy teacher makes a significant impact on student literacy learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Schmidt, 2017; Snow et al., 2005). There have been great efforts to provide professional learning in support of the cultivation of highly knowledgeable and effective literacy teachers at local, state, and national levels. To this end, there exists a variety of research on what makes professional learning effective, but a pervasive change in the way professional development is delivered remains unrealized (Darling-Hammond, 2010; New Teacher Project, 2015). Schools spend significant funds on professional development with varying results, yet there is a lack of long-term results from professional learning in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2010; New Teacher Project, 2015). Underachievement and achievement gaps in literacy still exist (Nation's Report Card, n.d.; South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative

professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Gaps exist in the current research related to early literacy professional development (ELPD) and the transfer of professional learning. Questions remain about how professional development and professional learning play a role in improving teacher practices. Research exists that argues professional development has little impact, while other research argues professional development has significant impact (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The connections between effective professional development, the transfer of professional learning, and changes in teacher practices are still vague and unclear, despite decades of research (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fullan, 2005).

Within the field of literacy, there are calls for more research to "uncover more information about classroom practices related to reading instruction" (Gonsalves, 2015, p. 184). Since the early 1980s, much research has been done to look at the effectiveness of training for specific programs and interventions (Gallagher, 2016). There are varied and wide-ranging studies that exist looking at specific early literacy training models, which are specific to a program or curriculum (Gonsalves, 2015; Schmidt, 2017). Many studies looked at one-on-one specialist training (Schaefer, 2014; Smith, 2011; Stouffer, 2015). The timeliness and relevance of this study were supported by the wide range in foci of existing studies. This study provided additional information to inform the field of early literacy by addressing some of these gaps in existing research.

Conceptual Framework

"A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the

main things to be studied—the key factors, variables or constructs—and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 20). Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this research study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for the Study
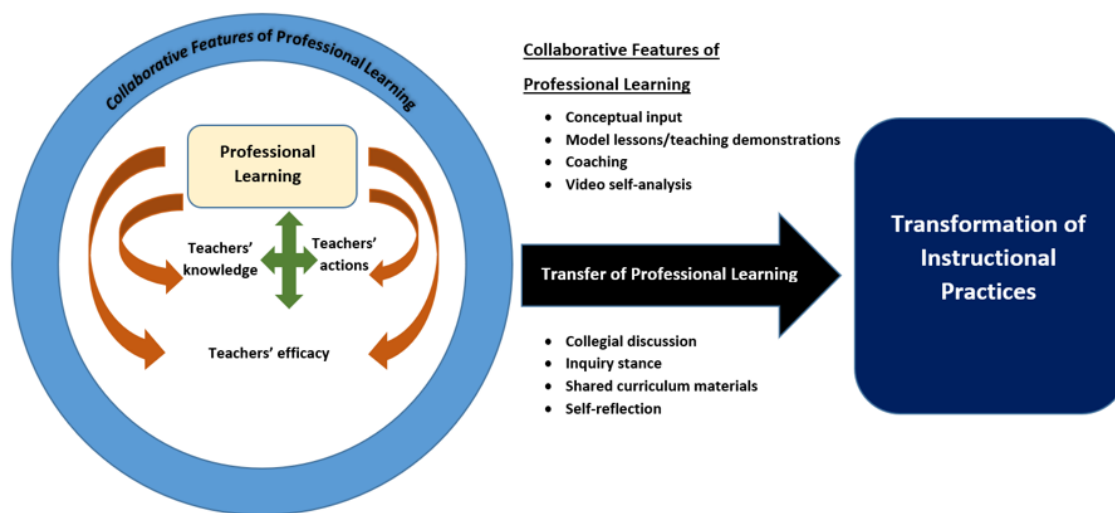
Note. Conceptual Framework for the Study. This figure shows the conceptual framework and explains the relationship between professional learning and the collaborative features of professional learning that impact learning transfer leading to transformed instructional practices.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework that undergirds the study. Professional learning affects teacher knowledge, teacher actions, and teacher sense of efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Estes, 2005; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015). There are collaborative features of professional learning that support changes in teacher knowledge, actions, and sense of efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Estes, 2005; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015). The collaborative features examined in this study included a conceptual input, model lessons and teaching demonstrations, coaching,

video self-analysis, collegial discussion inquiry stance, shared curriculum, and self-reflection. This study examined the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. The study was framed by sociocultural learning theory and adult learning theory, specifically Knowles's (1980, 1984) Theory of Andragogy, Vygotsky's (1978) Social Learning Theory, Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and Mezirow's (1978, 1997) Transformational Learning Theory. The study looked at the collaborative and social features of a professional learning experience, which are framed in the work of Knowles (1980), Vygotsky, and Lave and Wenger (1991). The study also looked at professional learning and its accompanying collaborative features as vehicles for the transfer of professional learning which is grounded in Mezirow's (1978, 1997) Transformational Learning Theory. Each of these specific theories is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Five overarching research questions within the context of a collaborative professional learning model informed the study.

1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?

2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?

3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?

4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?

5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?

Chapter 3 includes a thorough description of the study's research questions and methodology.

Context of the Study

The research was conducted using participants from elementary schools in the southeastern part of the United States who have voluntarily participated in a common professional learning experience, the ELPD model of early literacy professional learning. In the ELPD model, teachers participate in a professional learning community (PLC), observe one another's practice, and collaborate with colleagues to problem solve instructional issues related to teaching young readers in the emergent stages of reading. The participants taught in districts and schools served by a state training center, which will be referred to as STATE University Early Literacy Assessment and Training Center throughout the paper to protect confidentiality as suggested by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010, p. 16). These sites have hosted the ELPD model of early literacy professional learning. The STATE University Early Literacy Assessment and Training Center is the only such training center in the state. Using a population of participants who have completed the common professional learning

experience allowed me to gather data about the specific collaborative features of the professional learning experience that impact teacher knowledge, actions, and sense of efficacy and lead to transformed instructional practices. The population of participants for this research study was teachers who completed the 1-year professional learning experience. While the study may initially appear to be narrow due to its specific context, the findings from the study offer opportunities to improve collaborative learning practices around instructional techniques and structures for professional learning adaptable to other contexts and needs within the field of early literacy and early literacy professional learning, specifically instruction for emergent readers.

Definition of Terms

Coaching

Coaching is a process by which a trained professional provides job-embedded professional development for teachers by offering guidance, support, and assistance within the context of their instruction. Coaching promotes "collaborative, collegial learning in a supportive environment" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 41). Within this study, a Reading Recovery® teacher leader provides coaching within the context of the ELPD model.

Collegial Discussions

Collegial discussions are the discussions related to theoretical knowledge and teaching actions as part of the professional learning experience. Collegial discussions in the study take place after reading a shared piece of research or text, during model lessons and teaching demonstrations behind a one-way glass, after model lessons and teaching demonstrations behind a one-way glass, or as part of self-reflection.

Conceptual Input

A conceptual input is a resource used to ground a professional learning experience in research, a conceptual basis, or theoretical basis (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). A conceptual input helps link theory to practice. These may include professional texts, a theory, partnerships, or the work of an outside expert (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Within this study, the conceptual input is the professional text, *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (3rd ed.; Clay, 2016) and Clay's literacy processing theory (Clay, 2001, 2016).

ELPD Model

The ELPD Model is a specific 1-year professional learning experience offered to participants through a state training center to advance the teaching of early literacy focusing on literacy acquisition for emergent readers. The participants in the study completed the ELPD professional learning experience model.

Collaborative Features of Professional Learning

Collaborative features of professional learning are the common experiences or activities within the context of a professional learning experience (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). The collaborative features of professional learning examined in this study support changes in teacher knowledge, teacher actions, and teacher sense of self-efficacy and support learning transfer. The features in this study include a conceptual input, model lessons/teaching demonstrations, coaching, video self-analysis, collegial discussion, inquiry stance, shared curriculum materials, and self-reflection (Anderson, 2016; Chien, 2017; Estyn, 2014; Mezirow, 1991; Morgan & Bates, 2017; Reading Recovery® Council of North America [RRCNA], 2018; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Schön, 1987; Taylor, 2016;

Todd, 2017).

Instructional Practices

Instructional practices are teaching practices employed in planning instruction and delivering literacy instruction (Morrow et al., 2019).

Inquiry Stance

An inquiry stance is "where questioning ones' own practice becomes part of the teacher's work" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 42).

Model Lessons

Model lessons are demonstration lessons in the professional learning experience taught for observation by teachers behind a one-way glass or through a video feed, either live or recorded (RRCNA, 2018).

Professional Development

Professional development is an intentional and planned sequence of training or learning experiences to advance teacher capacity and build pedagogical skills (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019).

Professional Learning

Specific changes in professional knowledge, teaching skills, attitudes, beliefs, teaching decisions, or actions (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019).

Reading Recovery®

Reading Recovery® is a specific one-on-one early literacy intervention for use with at-risk first-grade students with daily instruction provided by a trained Reading Recovery® teacher (Clay, 1991, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2016; RRCNA, 2018). The ELPD model of professional learning referenced in this study is based on the Reading

Recovery® training model.

Reading Recovery® Teacher Leader

A Reading Recovery® teacher leader is someone who has completed the Reading Recovery® teacher leader training, having completed 30+ hours of postgraduate courses in early literacy theory and the requirements for the state's Literacy Coaching Endorsement. A Reading Recovery® teacher leader is a trained Reading Recovery® teacher and trainer who teaches the ELPD professional learning experience model in a series of graduate courses and provides instructional support to teachers during the 1-year professional learning experience (RRCNA, 2018).

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is giving serious thought and attention to one's teaching actions and motives (Mezirow, 1991; Morgan & Bates, 2017; Schön, 1987; Taylor, 2016). Self-reflection can involve a verbal exchange with another colleague about one's teaching actions or motives, or it can involve a private consideration of one's teaching actions and motives (Mezirow, 1991; Morgan & Bates, 2017; Schön, 1987; Taylor, 2016).

Shared Curriculum

Shared curriculum materials are the tools and materials teachers have available to use in their daily instruction (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). In this study, the shared curriculum is the high-quality instructional materials that promote children who are learning to read and write. This shared curriculum includes leveled book sets from a variety of publishers that span across a gradient of text levels appropriate for beginning readers.

STATE Reading Recovery® and Early Literacy Training Center

The STATE Recovery and Early Literacy Training Center is a state training center housed at STATE University that provides training and ongoing professional development for Reading Recovery® teachers and classroom teachers in the primary grades focusing on early literacy assessment, instructional strategies, and the teaching of struggling readers and writers.

Teaching Demonstrations

Teaching demonstrations are model lessons, taught for the purpose of demonstrating teacher actions and decision-making while in the act of teaching, in the professional learning experience (Anderson, 2016; Chien, 2017; Estyn, 2014; Todd, 2017). These lessons can be live teaching demonstrations taught for observation behind a one-way glass or video demonstrations, either through a live feed or recorded (Anderson, 2016; Chien, 2017; Estyn, 2014; Todd, 2017).

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is a teacher's belief in their own ability to address a specific issue in the context of their instruction and how well they feel they can impact student learning in the context of their instruction (Eun, 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Theoretical Understandings

Theoretical understandings refer specifically to teacher content knowledge about early literacy development and literacy processing theory (RRCNA, 2018).

Transfer of Professional Learning

Transfer of professional learning relates to the knowledge, actions, and beliefs learned in a professional learning experience that are transferred and applied into real

world contexts, specifically classroom instruction in individual, small group, or whole group reading instruction (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019).

Video Self-Analysis

Video self-analysis is the process of a teacher taping their instruction as a tool for reflection as well as the documentation of teacher development and student learning (Wetzel et al., 2016).

Assumptions

I assumed the teachers were honest in completing the surveys and in comments shared during focus group discussions. I also assumed each participant provided open and honest information about the transfer of learning and application of their learning from participation in the ELPD model. Furthermore, I assumed the fidelity of what each participant reported as happening in their implementation of classroom instruction.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations of this evaluation were "characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries" (Simon, 2011, p. 2). The delimitations related to the scope and period for data collection, selection of subjects, and methodology and instrumentation in collecting quantitative and qualitative data.

There was a relatively short time frame to collect data, which limited the scope of the study. The study only considered one window of data collection for both quantitative and qualitative data rather than comparing data collected over multiple years or multiple windows of time. The scope of data collection only represented teachers in primary or early elementary grades, as these are the grade levels of the population participating in the ELPD model of professional learning. The data collection only collected information

related to professional learning topics and the transfer of professional learning in the areas of literacy, which also limited the scope of the study. There was no random assignment to a treatment and control group based on the survey design.

I also allowed for subjects from the population to choose to participate in the study, which affected the sample size. The research was conducted using participants from 65 elementary schools in 10 training sites in the southeastern part of the United States. Participants were able to opt in and opt out for both the survey responses and the focus group discussions. There was no historical comparison of teacher perceptions and the transfer of learning from the professional development training model before and after participation in the ELPD model.

I led focus groups discussions, but any teacher I trained was not included in the population to reduce any potential bias or influence. The focus group discussions allowed for survey responses to be discussed in detailed and specific ways but only included questions based on responses across all participants, thus limiting the scope and boundaries of the study. There was no alignment of focus group participant responses to their own actual responses.

Finally, the selection of instrumentation was considered a delimitation of the study. The first part of a two-part survey as data collection used a new instrument I created rather than one preestablished in the field of early literacy. I vetted the first part of the survey to establish construct validity by having experts in the field of early literacy review the questions for the survey items and focus groups.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the issues related to the selection of the subjects

and the period of data collection. The study was limited to a population of participants in a specific professional learning experience who opted to participate in the study. Participants self-reported perceptions, which was a limitation. Other factors, such as personal feelings towards the specific professional learning model, potentially influenced the survey responses and responses in the focus group. Participants were assured all responses were anonymous, as an attempt to control for this limitation.

Another limiting factor for this study was related to sample size. The sample only included teachers who participated in the professional development model and opted to participate in the survey. The combination of these two requirements impacted the sample size.

While the study examined the theoretical knowledge and collaborative features of the professional learning experience from a specific ELPD model, it did not account for any other trainings or professional development. These factors could have impacted theoretical knowledge and the transfer of learning to classroom instruction and were therefore considered a limitation. This limitation also included any learning, or lack thereof, in preservice training or in subsequent training that could have influenced teacher perceptions and responses during data collection.

Significance of the Study

The impact of collaborative professional learning in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices is pertinent and far-reaching. This study was important because the impact of professional development efforts affects teacher practices, which ultimately affect student achievement. As a profession, education has a body of research that

supports the characteristics of effective professional development, yet how the specific features of professional development contribute to the transfer of learning and specific professional learning opportunities that help teachers deliver improved classroom practice in early literacy is an area in need of further study. Teacher education programs at the university level, organizations who develop and deliver professional learning experiences, and other researchers focused on the transfer of professional learning benefit from the findings of this study.

Summary of Chapter 1

Literacy is an essential skill needed for life in our 21st century global society. Educational institutions must prepare and support high-quality teachers through professional development to participate fully and successfully in our 21st century global society. The subsequent chapters of this study include information to understand the study in its entirety. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature pertaining to the theoretical frameworks grounding the study, professional development, topics relative to early literacy and literacy acquisition, the ELPD model, and teacher efficacy. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the study and the rationale for its selection. Chapter 4 presents the data collected and analyzed. Chapter 5 concludes with the interpretations of the findings as well as limitations and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

Given the rigorous demands of 21st century workplaces, it is imperative every classroom be equipped with a highly effective teacher to meet the requirements of college and career readiness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goldhaber, 2016).

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. The context of this study is a shared professional learning experience, the ELPD model of early literacy professional learning offered through a state training center. In the 1-year professional learning experience for this specific model, teachers attend a series of graduate courses that provide both theory and a practicum where they work with, collect, and report data on individual students. After completion of the 1-year professional learning experience, teachers return to their classrooms to apply their learning from the training to individual, small group, and whole group reading instruction. This study collected specific data on teacher perceptions and practices but also transcended that specific data to provide information applicable to the theory and knowledge base related to early literacy training and professional learning models. Although there is research in the field focusing on the characteristics of effective professional development, the role of teacher beliefs and teacher practices on early literacy instruction, and on best practices in early literacy, more research is needed to guide the work of literacy leaders to improve early literacy instruction. The review of literature begins with a review of adult learning theory and sociocultural learning theory foundational to the study's theoretical framework, purpose,

and constructs. A second section reviews research on professional development. A third

section reviews research on topics relative to early literacy and literacy acquisition.

Research related to the ELPD professional learning model and applicable research is

discussed in the fourth section. A fifth section details research related to teacher efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study examines the impact of collaborative professional learning and how

professional learning is transferred and applied. The study is grounded in adult learning

theory and sociocultural learning theory. Within theories of adult learning, the study is

framed by theories of andragogy, situated learning, and transformational learning theory.

Each theoretical framework provides important information serving as a foundation for

the study and represents a shift from a "psychological orientation toward a sociocultural

orientation" (Glickman et al., 2018, p. 65).

Andragogy

The theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) posited four basic tenants of adult

learning. First, adults possess an inherent need to be self-directing and have ownership of

their learning (Knowles, 1980). They want to be involved in selecting and planning their

learning. Second, they bring a varied background of experiences to each learning

situation (Knowles, 1980). Their previous experiences, both successes and failures, are

part of their learning. Third, adults are driven by a need to solve real-world problems and

be involved in real-world tasks (Knowles, 1980). They often prefer to be involved in

task-driven learning as opposed to passive intake of isolated information and theory.

Furthermore, they often need to understand why specific tasks are valuable as learning

tasks and then learn best when given opportunities to explore and discover how to apply

their own learning. Fourth, adults are performance oriented and want to apply their learning to their own real-world situations (Knowles, 1980). Being able to engage in authentic application of instruction is a key factor in adult learning. Knowles (1984) later also argued adults are intrinsically motivated as they mature. Andragogy (Knowles, 1980, 1984) frames the study as it relates to professional development and professional learning experiences as well as the study's examination of the transfer of learning from professional learning experiences.

Sociocultural Learning Theory

Sociocultural Learning Theory is another theoretical framework that undergirds the study (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is a social process, and cognitive growth is fostered through interactions with one's environment, society, or culture. Social interaction is a key factor to cognitive growth. "Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the [learner] is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning happens first through collaboration with others and is then integrated into one's mental structures for understanding. Another important aspect of sociocultural learning theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where learning is neither too easy nor too difficult. It is through interactions with others, often through verbal discourse, that the ZPD is stretched and grows. This social interaction is facilitated by a more knowledgeable other who provides supports to facilitate the learner's cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978). Based on Vygotsky's work describing the ZPD, Wood et al. (1976) created the term scaffolding as supports provided to learners within the ZPD. Sociocultural learning theory informs this study as it relates to the collaborative features

of professional learning described in the study, specifically the roles of collaboration, reflection, collegial discussion, and coaching. It also provides a theoretical base for the collaborative components of professional learning opportunities and professional development in the literature reviewed for the study.

Situated Learning Theory

Situated Learning Theory is based on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991). This theory posited learning as part of a larger process of cultural practice and as such must be interpreted as "participation in the social world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 43). Lave and Wenger argued, "rather than learning by replicating the performance of others or by acquiring knowledge transmitted in instruction, we suggest that learning occurs though centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community" (p. 100). The community of learners provides support to understand and make sense of information and ideas. This theory posited that learning is situated or embedded in the activity and context and thus is often unintentional. Lave and Wenger called this a process of legitimate peripheral participation where a less experienced novice takes part in a community of learners that helps them move toward expertise. The novice develops their own learning within a community through shared experience and is scaffolded by discussions with others within the community. Lave and Wenger's notion of a community of practice provided a basis for the collegial and collaborative features of professional learning examined in this study. This theory applies to the study as it relates to learning with the collaboration of a professional learning experience. It is also foundational to understanding the features of professional learning examined in the study, namely the role of model lessons, coaching, and collegial discussions.

Transformational Learning Theory

Transformational Learning Theory was developed by Mezirow (1978). Mezirow (1978) developed this theory to understand how people use reflection to think about their beliefs and experiences to change their understandings of the world. He described learning as "the process of [a]ffecting change in a frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). This theory posited transformative learning helps learners be more reflective and open to changing perspectives (Mezirow, 1978, 1997). For transformative learning to occur, learners face a situation or a dilemma which does not fit into their current understandings and forces them to adjust their ways of thinking to accommodate for a new experience. The role of reflection in context of collaborative dialogue is an important tenant in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. By experiencing transformational learning, the learner becomes able to think critically and apply new knowledge to novel situations and events (Mezirow, 1997). The professional learning opportunities and features of professional learning examined in this study are supported by Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978), specifically collaboration, collegial discussions, video self-analysis, and self-reflection.

Professional Development

Professional development is a central component in education today. Effective professional development is essential in creating a systemic approach to teaching and learning that promotes positive outcomes for students. Professional learning must be continuous and intentional. Professional learning is needed to help teachers learn and refine the skills to support "student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and

collaboration, and self-direction" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. v).

Federal Initiatives and Reforms

In recent years, education reform and teacher quality have been presented as critical issues at the national, state, and local levels. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) implemented requirements for high-quality professional development that met specific requirements tied to student achievement. In 2009, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA, 2009) was introduced by the Obama Administration. This act outlined professional development to fuel school reform and improvement. Under ARRA, states could apply and receive ARRA funds to plan for teacher improvement. In 2010, the *Blueprint for School Reform* from the U.S. Department of Education outlined the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. This document also emphasized professional development as a key component to the success of schools. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), signed into law in 2015, required that states provide activities to increase the knowledge and skills of teachers.

The focus of and funding for professional development are also topics central to education reform and teacher quality. While districts spend more and more money on professional development, it is important to note that a change in teacher actions or student achievement is not a guarantee. Significant questions remain about how teachers transfer their professional learning into classroom practice and how professional learning experiences can facilitate this transfer. There have been mixed findings on the research around professional development (Hill et al., 2013).

Research on Effective Professional Development

Research exists on professional development that led to changes in teacher actions and student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The Learning Policy Institute set out to investigate the characteristics undergirding professional development that transformed practice. In a report, 35 studies demonstrating a link between changes in teacher practices and positive student learning outcomes were identified and used as part of a meta-analysis. From the findings of this meta-analysis, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified seven design elements that characterize effective professional development. The seven characteristics of effective professional development include that the design is content focused, uses active learning grounded in adult learning theory, supports collaboration in a job-embedded context, uses modeling of effective teaching, provides support from a coach or expert, includes feedback and reflection, and is of a sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Research has established that effective professional learning is content focused, meaning it is focused on the content and subject areas teachers teach in their current teaching assignment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). A content focus allows the teaching knowledge and skills in the professional development to be applied directly. Professional development, when context specific and content based, is most often "situated in teachers' classrooms with their students, as opposed to generic professional development delivered externally or divorced from teachers' school or district contexts" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 5).

Active learning is another characteristic of effective professional development, as argued by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). Active learning involves consideration for

how teachers learn in addition to what they are learning. Active learning sharply contrasts with traditional professional development that is a lecture style of delivery. Active learning "engages educators using authentic artifacts, interactive activities and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 5).

Collaboration is another characteristic of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Collaboration can include pairs, small groups, or schoolwide collaborative efforts. Collaboration is grounded in the ideas of learning as a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Learners learn by interacting with others, and professional development engaging participants in social learning interactions provides collaboration. "Collaboration supports a togetherness mind-set and develops collective knowledge that extends beyond individual, isolated experiences in classrooms" (Bates & Morgan, 2018, p. 624).

The use of modeling is another characteristic of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Modeling effective practice promotes teacher learning as it helps teachers to "have a vision of practice on which to anchor their own learning and growth" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 11). Different kinds of modeling can include videos of teaching, demonstration lessons, observations of colleagues, and curriculum materials such as exemplars of unit lesson plans, sample assessments, and samples of student work.

The role of coaching and expert support helps guide and facilitate teacher learning in effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). A coach or expert exemplifies expert knowledge about content and evidence-based practices. Coaching can

involve one-on-one assistance with the context of a classroom or facilitating group workshops. Research revealed that teachers who have been supported through coaching are "more likely to enact desired teaching practices and apply them more appropriately than those receiving more traditional [professional development]" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 13).

Furthermore, feedback and reflection are tenants of effective professional development, as cited by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). Feedback and reflection, both key components of adult learning theory, capitalize on adult needs to think about and receive constructive comments on their practice. Feedback and reflection work in tandem to help teachers shift practice toward improvement.

For professional development to be effective, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argued that it must be of a sustained duration. To embody the other six characteristics of effective professional development, there must be dedicated time and space for a deep quality of learning. Meaningful learning that leads to transformed practices cannot take place in short, 1-day workshops. Episodic and fragmented learning does not support deep learning. In their meta-analysis of research, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) reviewed professional development initiatives that "typically spanned weeks, months, or even academic years, with ongoing engagement in learning by teachers" (p. 15) and concluded that "professional learning must be sustained to have an impact" (p. 15).

Other research echoed the characteristics of effective professional development Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argued. Research involving a nationally representative sample of teachers from Title II-funded professional development identified five characteristics to make professional development more likely to be effective; these

characteristics included "content focus, active learning, coherence with instructional context, sustained duration and collective participation" (Gallagher, 2016, p. 2). Other research noted what professional learning looked like and sounded like by describing active learning, coherence, collaboration, and duration (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Finally, Fullan et al. (2015) drew attention to the importance of job-embedded collaborative learning where "professional learning is best served by learning from other professionals and their practice" (p. 3).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated some effective professional development embodies several of the characteristics, while others possess most but not all of the characteristics. The combination of the characteristics of effective professional development requires collaborative learning cultures, which research has also shown to be an effective form of professional and organizational improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Research on the power of collaborative practices supports a "national movement toward the concept of continual learning and social contexts for teacher change" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 3).

The importance of collaborative structures for professional learning is critical (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Fullen, 2012; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Research compared the traditional professional development with collaborative learning communities designed to incorporate collegial dialogue around teaching practices and experiences (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Sailors & Price, 2010). The results from these studies supported collaboration in PLCs as way to impact teacher knowledge, instructional applications of learning, and increases in student achievement. Other studies included professional development models based on collaborative inquiry (Abe et al.,

2012; Gersten et al., 2010; Williams, 2013). These studies also suggested collaborative learning communities have a statistically significant impact on teacher knowledge, instructional application, and student achievement.

"How these PLCs shift the teachers themselves remains under-researched" (Anderson, 2016, p. 39). Although the collaborative structures and PLCs are recognized in research to impact teacher capacity and practice, how collaborative features in professional learning interact, in concert or individually, to help teachers transfer their professional learning, leading to a transformation of instructional practices is an area for further study. Existing literature contains gaps in how a community of teachers in PLCS or other collaborative communities influences the attitudes and practices of teachers.

Lack of Evidence for Effectiveness of Professional Development

While some studies highlighting professional development that indeed led to changes in classroom practices, there is also research suggesting reform efforts and efforts to increase teacher quality have not resulted in changed classroom practices (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Fullan et al. (2015) argued even professional development that is well developed, well planned, and well funded often still fails. Three examples of such reform include Cohen and Hill's (2001) math reform in California, Borman's (2005) study of math and science reform, and the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform's (2005) study of reforms in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Seattle. In each of these studies, little change occurred at the level of classroom practice. In these examples, there were "good ideas, well-resourced with curriculum materials and professional development funds" (Fullan et al., 2015, p. 3) and the "strength of individual professional development offerings [were] quite high" (Fullan et al., 2015, p. 5). Research concluded

"most PD fails to impact classroom practice and student learning" (Fullan et al., 2015, p. 3).

Gallagher (2016) argued that even when professional development increases teacher content knowledge, it does not always lead to "substantial changes in teacher practice" (p. 2). A large-scale study of professional development on early reading revealed success in increasing the content knowledge of teachers, but there was only one of three instructional practices measured that showed change (Garet et al., 2011). There were no effects on student achievement demonstrated (Garet et al., 2011). There is no silver approach to professional development (Gallagher, 2016).

Kennedy (2016) studied design features of professional development and found the following characteristics were not associated with its effectiveness: a focus on content knowledge or participation by a group collectively and with intensity. Additionally, many studies on the effectiveness of professional development are based on models in which there is wide variation in the "actual form and substance…raising questions about why something so various is uniformly assumed to be a good thing" (Kennedy, 2016, p. 945). Other research acknowledged this wide range of variability in focusing on teacher professional development where "variables spanned what they did, how much time they spent doing it, what they believe and even where they worked" (The New Teacher Project, 2015, p. 18).

Other research echoed concerns about the lack of "robust evidence of the effectiveness of professional development for teachers" (Gore et al., 2017, p. 1). The links with classroom practice in the research result in a void of evidence concerning the ongoing effects of professional development on teaching practice (Council for the

Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; Cuban, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Hill et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2016). A large-scale study found,

> Every development strategy, no matter how intensive, seems to be the equivalent of a coin flip: Some teachers will get better and about the same won't. What separates them may be a host of highly individualized variables or a combination of many we have not yet pinpointed. (The New Teacher Project, 2015, p. 22)

The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth About Our Quest for Teacher Development (New Teacher Project, 2015) found that although districts and school systems have spent large sums of local, state, and federal funds on helping teaching improve, there is evidence that "most teachers do not appear to improve substantially from year to year" (p. 2). Based on this report, existing professional learning supports need to be reevaluated; the findings call not for reduced investments in professional development, but rather the findings call for organizations and educational systems to reevaluate the professional learning supports and programs already in place (The New Teacher Project, 2015). A reevaluation is needed to "consider redesigning structures and mechanisms of professional learning" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 3).

Professional Development Versus Professional Learning

Learning Forward, formally known as the National Staff Development Council, published standards for high-quality professional development which support a paradigm shift from thinking about professional development to professional learning which views the teacher as a lifelong learner (Learning Forward, 2011). Professional learning is more than professional development; professional learning results in changes in the knowledge, actions, and beliefs of teachers (Fullan et al., 2015; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Sawyer and

Stukey's (2019) work examined professional learning to move student learning and instructional practice forward. Sawyer and Stukey argued for a redefinition of "structures and mechanisms for professional learning…in order to make significant progress on changing classroom practice" (p. 3). Despite the research on effective characteristics of professional development, a disconnect exists between research and reality. "It is not enough to simply check off a list of essential characteristics of effective professional learning" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 7). Knowing the characteristics of effective development is not enough. It is imperative to "consider how the essential characteristics are linked together while also making room for additional characteristics or features that may play an important role in teacher learning and student achievement" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 7). Several features of professional learning posited by Sawyer and Stukey as keys to transformed instructional practices are further discussed in this literature review.

Collaborative Features of Professional Learning

Sawyer and Stukey (2019) outlined features of professional learning which supported transformed instructional practices. These features include a conceptual input, shared teaching demonstrations, coaching, video self-analysis, collegial discussions, an inquiry stance, a shared curriculum, and self-reflection. Eight of these features are objects of this current study. Each feature and the accompanying research are reviewed and summarized. A description of how each feature is included in the context of the study is also described.

Conceptual Input

A conceptual input is a critical feature for professional learning (Sawyer &

Stucky, 2019). Conceptual inputs are outside resources which are central to the research or theoretical basis for the learning (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). These conceptual inputs allow "innovations to be tried on a solid base of theory and links that theory to actual classroom practice" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 11). The conceptual input for this study is Clay's (2016) *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2nd ed.). This professional text is grounded in Clay's (2001, 2016) literacy processing theory. This theory views literacy acquisition as an emergent process where students grow at individual rates and paths which are shaped by experiences, aptitudes, and interests. Literacy learning is not viewed as a lock-step instructional process. Learners engage in specific strategic cognitive processes as they read and write, thus linking this literacy processing theory to a constructivist framework (Clay, 2001; 2016). The conceptual input, Clay's (2016) *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2nd ed.), provides the theory and teaching procedures used within the context of the professional learning in this study.

Coaching

Coaching is another key feature to professional learning. Coaching, as a support for professional growth, is well documented in research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; DeMonte, 2013; Eisenberg & Medrich, 2013; Kraft et al., 2018; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Coaching involves a professional development approach that can offer consistent observation and feedback and support teacher reflection and adjustments to instructional practices.

> If coaching is longer in duration, if teachers collaborate around what they learn from coaching, if they get to observe instruction and then talk about the observation with a coach, then it is more likely to be effective. This feature hinges

on the expertise of the coach to do this work. If the coach is not an expert in

teaching teachers, then it is unlikely that coaching will be effective. (DeMonte,

2013, p. 8)

A coach serves as the more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Central to the idea

that learning is social and cultural, interactions with someone who is more

knowledgeable promote learning growth.

The teacher's zone of proximal development is thought of as a learning space

between his or her present level of teaching knowledge consisting of content

(theoretical) and pedagogical knowledge and his skills and his next (potential)

level of knowledge to be attained with the support of others. (Eun, 2011, p. 2)

Working with a coach stretches teachers to grow in their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Coaching promotes learning together by connecting knowledge and practice. A coach is

often a "partner in learning" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 41). The use of coaching in

professional learning provides support for follow-up and an ongoing, continuous aspect

of support for professional learning that is necessary to help new ideas and actions "take

root in our practice" (Sawyer & Stucky, 2019, p. 41).

Kraft et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 60 studies of teacher coaching

programs in the U.S. and other countries that both used a causal research design and

examined effects on instruction or achievement. These authors found positive effects of

coaching on instructional practice (Kraft et al., 2018). Findings also indicated that

combining coaching with group trainings is associated with a larger effect size on

instruction and a larger effect size on achievement and suggested that teachers may gain

benefits from building content knowledge before coaching (Kraft et al., 2018). In terms

of instructional outcomes, research also suggested pairing curriculum or instructional resources and materials with coaching is associated with positive gains (Kraft et al., 2018).

Coaching is another feature of professional learning referenced in this study. In the context of this study, the coaching feature being examined is provided by a Reading Recovery® teacher leader in the form of lesson observations and follow-up discussions with teachers.

Shared Teaching Demonstrations

Modeling of practice through shared teaching demonstrations is a feature of professional learning that supports improved instructional practices (Chien, 2017; Estyn, 2014; Todd, 2017). Shared teaching demonstrations and peer observations of teaching are collaborative forms of professional development used to improve classroom teaching practices and student learning (Chien, 2017; Day, 2013; Grimm et al., 2014). In these settings, one teacher is positioned as the teacher being observed, while other teachers participate as observers of the lesson, often led by a coach or lead teacher. During shared teaching demonstrations and peer observations, teachers who are observers can engage in reflective dialogue around teaching decisions and actions they are observing in relation to their own practice. Teachers who are being observed receive support from their peers after the shared lesson as they discuss what happened in the lesson in relation to student learning. Observing colleague instruction is beneficial for both the observers and the teacher engaged in the lessons being observed (Anderson, 2016). This type of collaborative learning structure is powerful when "the goal of the observation is the development of pedagogical knowledge and skill" (Anderson, 2016, p. 14). Observing

others in the act of teaching allows one to view and reflect on others' teaching approaches, while discussing one's own teaching approaches and practices builds efficacy and strengthens teacher decision-making around student learning. Mutual benefits for both observers and teachers being observed are a benefit of shared teaching demonstrations (Todd, 2017).

Because teachers have the support and collegial trust of their peers and leader, they are more likely to discuss theories of learning and reflect on their application and effectiveness (Tzotzou, 2014). Positioned within a PLC, shared teaching demonstrations allow teachers to see effective classroom teaching and to share effective techniques (Chien, 2017; Estyn, 2014). Participating in shared teaching demonstrations as an observer and engaging in the dialogue with colleagues after the shared teaching demonstrations help teachers build their skills of reflection in thinking about the processes of teaching and learning which helps them gain insights to improve their own teaching. It helps them engage in reflective thinking about the teaching and learning processes, allowing them to gain insights into their own teaching.

Compton-Lilly (2011) is another researcher who looked at the role of shared teaching demonstrations in building teacher self-regulation skills. This study interviewed Reading Recovery® teachers who teach demonstrations behind a one-way glass for colleagues throughout the year. The study involved a specific population of teachers, Reading Recovery® teachers, but Compton-Lilly argued the "the lessons learned pertain to many instructional programs" (p. 1). Compton-Lilly noted there were benefits to teaching demonstrations, including the opportunity to observe and discuss reading instruction and extend their own thinking about how to support students as they are

learning to read.

Beck et al. (2015) studied peer observation as a process for improved professional development. Peer observation supported "experimentation, observation, reflection, the exchange of ideas and shared problem solving" (Beck et al., 2015, p. 14). Observing peers shifts the locus of control for learning to teachers rather than relying on a knowledge delivery mode of professional development. In peer observation, teachers can use their background knowledge and experiences to reflect and affirm their beliefs. Beck et al. described gains in student achievement, levels of collaboration and collegiality, and levels of teacher creativity and leadership as benefits of employing a process of peer observation.

The model lessons and teaching demonstrations referenced in this study include a design feature specific to the ELPD model. In the professional learning experience, teachers teach lessons with individual students behind a one-way glass. Teachers teach students in a one-on-one lesson, while other teachers observe and discuss the lesson behind a one-way glass. Before the model lesson, the group discusses the context of the lesson and student's progress as well as a focus for observations. During the lesson, the teacher leader leads a discussion of teachers observing behind the one-way glass focusing on the teaching decisions and moves made by the teacher being observed and the students' specific reading behaviors regarding active problem-solving to read and write texts. This structure is similar to peer observation, focusing on building each teacher's theoretical understanding and providing an opportunity for teachers to discuss teaching and engage in individual and collaborative reflection. Often observation of teaching is synonymous with evaluation tools; but in the context of this study and the literature

reviewed, the goal of peer observation and shared teaching demonstrations is to improve teacher practice.

Model lessons and shared teaching demonstrations support teachers taking a critical view of teaching decisions within the context of live teaching. During the model lessons and shared teaching demonstrations, teachers observing the live lesson are involved in examining and reflecting on teaching decisions and challenging and exploring alternatives to the instructional decisions viewed during the demonstration lessons. This observation, reflection, and discussion during live lessons support examination of teaching practices (Stouffer, 2015). Seeing model lessons and shared teaching demonstrations also allows for observing teachers to see a wide range of reading behaviors of readers, usually more variation than would be encountered in an individual classroom (Stouffer, 2015). In this way, teachers can consider possible approaches to better differentiate their instruction for learners.

Video Self-Analysis

Video self-analysis is another component of professional learning with potential to affect teaching practices (Wetzel et al., 2016). Video provides data and evidence for teachers to use for reflection. Using videos to analyze teaching decisions is an effective way to build understanding related to the complex process of teaching and learning (Lewis et al., 2012). Furthermore, video offers a chance to return to the act of teaching while not directly engaged in making in-the-moment decisions. The use of video in teacher preparation was popular in the 1960s and 1970s and is still used today mostly as a "case-based approach" (Wetzel et al., 2016, p. 543). Cases of teaching are often used to stimulate conversations around teaching practices. In this way, teaching practices can be

deconstructed to take on the perspectives of both teachers and students in the complex

acts of teaching and learning (Wetzel et al., 2016). In this type of case-based approach,

the deconstruction allows participants to break down teaching into smaller parts and look

at the impact of the teacher's work in terms of the student's work. Another approach to

video analysis follows a "reflective practice-based use" (Wetzel et al., 2016, p. 535) to

help teachers look at experiences and moments in teaching context. Within this reflective

practice-based use,

> video aids in understanding the complexity of classroom teaching but also builds
>
> spaces for reflective thinking and learning though practice. Through video we can
>
> do the following:
>
> - Document the teaching practices that happen in classrooms
>
> - Zoom in on particular situations that grab our attention
>
> - Capture moments of surprise and tension
>
> - Move from evaluation to rich description in our reflection
>
> - Find patterns and relationships between teacher moves and learning. (Wetzel
>
>   et al., 2016, p. 535)

Wetzel et al. (2016) studied retrospective video analysis (RVA). RVA uses video

in the service of reflecting on teaching and encompasses three main components:

recording, viewing, and identifying strategies (Wetzel et al., 2016). Videoed lessons can

be viewed and discussed with a coach or more knowledgeable other or with a group of

teachers and a coach or more knowledgeable other as a professional learning experience.

The discussion and analysis follow a framework of generating strategies the teacher used,

focusing on the learner's engagement in the work, the teacher's and students' use of

reading strategies, and specific moments that were surprising or challenging (Wetzel et al., 2016). The importance of the collaborative learning of the group engaging in RVA cannot be underscored. Teachers must learn to recognize powerful teaching moves. RVA and its accompanying discussions help teachers as they support the notion that "learning to teach occurs through practice and rich discussion and dialogue about students and teacher" (Wetzel et al., 2016, p. 533). As teachers view and discuss their own work, they can make judgements and consider possible alternatives to use in future teaching. Wetzel et al. (2016) argued, "retrospective video analysis helps teachers develop their own tools for refining their literacy practices" (p. 533).

Video self-analysis is a collaborative feature within this study. Throughout the yearlong professional learning experience, teachers engage in videoing their own teaching and viewing it for reflection both with peers and on their own. RVA and its accompanying analytical discussions are supported by the teacher leader providing the professional learning experience. Engagement activities within the training use videos of the teachers' own teaching to invite inquiry about teaching practices "in the name of developing a more conscious understanding of literacy teaching" (Wetzel et al., 2016, p. 535).

Collegial Discussion

As the field has shifted to more collaborative structures for professional development and professional learning experiences for teachers, there exists an increased focus on the use of collegial dialogue and conversations as a characteristic of effective professional development. Dialogue provides teachers a way to explain their understandings, confusions, and newly developed knowledge. It provides a way to

internalize one's own learning (Schaefer, 2014). Research found that "professional development approaches that incorporated dialogue about instruction provide evidence that this combination had a positive effect on the development of teacher knowledge" (Schaefer, 2014, p. 40).

The use of dialogue in adult learning is grounded in sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Social interaction involving language is the way learners acquire knowledge, particularly with the support of a more knowledgeable other who uses language as a tool to scaffold new learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is a tool for taking in, organizing, and internalizing new learning and is thus an important feature or context for professional learning experiences. Conversations with others support the construction of knowledge from direct experience and reflection on the experiences (Schön, 1987). Drago-Severson (2009) defined collegial inquiry as "a dialogue that takes place between two or more people" (p. 154) and further characterized the concept as "purposefully examining and reflecting on one's assumptions beliefs, values, commitments, and convictions as part of the learning, teaching and leadership process" (p. 154). Dialogue involves examining and thinking critically about an issue with others and goes beyond the kind of reflection one would engage in as an isolated individual. It is often difficult to consider other perspectives critically and move beyond one's own thinking when facing a complex issue as a sole individual. Conversely, structured opportunities for dialogue with others is powerful "in the re-viewing and consideration of alternative and more effective ways of thinking and responding" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 154). This reviewing and generation of alternatives help shift assumptions and beliefs. Drago-Severson's research found four reasons for the use of collegial inquiry: sharing

leadership, learning from a variety of other perspectives and relationship building, learning by both the organization and individuals, and managing change and the complex issues faced in instruction.

Other research supported the use of collegial dialogue and conversations impacting professional learning. Abe et al. (2012) studied a specific program, Pacific CHILD, and looked at both student achievement and student learning. The use of professional dialogue was a component of the training associated with this program. This quantitative study found that the dialogue within the weekly learning team meetings enhanced teacher learning (Abe et al., 2012). Burke et al. (2011) also looked at a professional development approach using embedded dialogue. Based on interviews conducted and analyzed as part of this study, teachers identified the dialogue as one way they were able to improve their learning. These conversations had two benefits. They provided opportunities for articulating understanding and refining knowledge. They also helped the teachers use their refined knowledge to impact classroom instruction.

Lyons (1994) conducted a study to examine teacher conversations around instruction specifically in early literacy teaching. The study examined transcripts of conversations between Reading Recovery® teachers and Reading Recovery® teacher leaders during demonstration lessons behind a one-way glass. On one side of the one-way glass a Reading Recovery® teacher taught a model lesson, while on the other side of the one-way glass, Reading Recovery® teachers in training engaged in collaborative dialogue about the lesson and the students responding. The conversations behind this one-way glass took part over a year of training. During the first part of the year's training, the Reading Recovery® teacher leader led most of the conversations, and any dialogue

between teachers was more of a one-way exchange or a question and answer session. Over the year, the teachers learned to "support, extend and challenge each other's thinking" (Lyons, 1994, p. 276). This social process led to the construction of knowledge and represented a "chain of reasoning" (Lyons, 1994, p. 276). The study worked to "describe how chains of reasoning are formed and describe shifts in teacher understanding and ability to collectively construct chains of reasoning over time" (Lyons, 1994, p. 276). After midyear in the training, teachers were responsible for 95% of the discussion as they were "supporting, challenging, extending, and refining each other's cumulative thinking" (Lyons, 1994, p. 283). The use of collegial discussions and teacher-led conversations around both instruction and theoretical understanding improved teacher knowledge (Lyons, 1994). Furthermore, Lyons's research showed the importance of creating opportunities for teachers to develop chains of reasoning to explain and infer important constructs related to their classroom practice. "By collectively constructing chains of reasoning while observing, analyzing, and discussing student-teacher interactions in progress behind a one-way glass, teachers refine what they already know and, in the process, develop a more coherent theory of learning and teaching" (Lyons, 1994, p. 286).

Collegial discussions are a feature of professional learning examined within this study. These discussions include discussions around professional readings, the examination of student learning data, and teacher daily lesson records. This shared dialogue also takes place before, during, and after shared teaching demonstrations behind a one-way glass. These collegial discussions are a collaborative feature of the professional learning model and part of the study's conceptual framework.

An Inquiry Stance

Professional learning that leads to instructional changes is grounded in a stance of inquiry (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Historically, inquiry has been a key component in education as part of Dewey's (1933) idea of reflective action. An inquiry stance involves looking at one's own practice critically "where questioning ones' own practice becomes part of the teacher's work" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 42). Other researchers have defined teacher inquiry as the intentional way teachers learn and study to improve their own teaching (Kim, 2018; Stremmel, 2007). An inquiry stance requires a shift in perspective taking which provides a new way of thinking and viewing a concept or problem. Because of this shift in perspective taking, inquiry as a stance promotes curiosity, reflection, and alternative seeking as approaches to teaching practice (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016; Ravitch, 2014).

Research examining inquiry stance in practice has focused on research in classrooms leading to problem-based solutions (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016). While solution-based problem-solving helps both teachers and students, inquiry as a stance goes beyond simple problem-solving in practice. Lawton-Sticklor and Bodamer (2016) argued, "practitioners who engage in deep exploration of their practice do so within and outside of research projects" (p. 3). Inquiry as a stance requires teachers be "committed to our own processes of self-reflection and the continual investigation into, and systematic, data-based critique of, our practices and the contexts – both macro and micro – that shape them" (Ravitch, 2014, p. 3). Inquiry as a stance calls for teachers to challenge the norms and contexts of practice to transform their own teaching and learning (Ravitch, 2014).

Furthermore, inquiry as a stance involves teachers engaging in a systematic way. It is not a single activity or cycle, but rather "a long-term positioning or a consistent perspective" (Kim, 2018, p. 3). Internalizing an inquiry stance is a complex change in one's understandings and practices. Becoming a reflective and responsive teacher is more than just occasional or situational self-reflection or exposure to new research (Ravitch, 2014). Inquiry as a stance posits teacher learning as a continual and changing process that does not begin during undergraduate education and end at a predetermined point in one's teaching career (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016).

While inquiry does not always follow a linear process or cycle, it is defined by "research actions: gathering data, analyzing results, and making conscious changes to practice" (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016, p. 3). While reflection is a part of inquiry, inquiry is not merely a process of reflection. An inquiry stance involves "carrying out research practices that seek to deeply and systematically explore questions that arise from reflection" (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016, p. 395). Other researchers defined an inquiry stance as a collaborative and collegial process whereby the shared responsibility and accountability enhances the inquiry process (Kim, 2018; Snow et al., 2015). In collaborative inquiry, teachers rely on others to support their work as they study their own practices and think about their own teaching experiences. This idea of collaborative inquiry is founded on the idea that inquiry occurs in a socially situated learning environment (Kim, 2018).

An inquiry stance approach is a feature of professional learning examined within the study. This inquiry stance refers to the act of questioning one's own instructional decision-making. The study of both student and teacher data recorded in anecdotal notes,

lesson records, assessments, and videos is used within the context of the professional learning experience as part of this questioning of one's own instructional decision-making. An inquiry stance is assumed by both the teacher individually and group collectively in the professional learning experience being studied.

Shared Curriculum

High-quality shared curriculum materials and resources are a feature that make the transfer of professional learning more likely to happen (Sawyer & Stucky, 2019). It is important to keep what is taught and how it is taught coordinated (Wiener & Pimental, 2017). Making connections to professional learning with materials used every day helps teachers see instruction differently and helps them see how to scaffold student learning within and around those materials (Gallagher, 2016). "Professional development that offers new knowledge and skills combined with program materials that help teachers transfer new ideas into their instruction can be a potent combination for instructional improvement" (Gallagher, 2016, p. 5). These types of shared curriculum materials align with Sawyer and Stukey's (2019) idea of a conceptual input in that they both tie the professional learning to a common ground. Teachers who have high-quality curriculum materials embedded as part of a professional learning experience are more likely to have higher student achievement (Kleickman et al., 2016). A shared curriculum as part of a professional learning experience can serve as a "powerful tool for teacher change" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019, p. 14). Shared curriculum is another collaborative feature of professional learning examined within the current study. In this study, the shared curriculum materials include book sets of leveled texts appropriate for students used in the practicum part of the ELPD model.

Self-Reflection

Effective teachers use their professional judgement before, during, and after lessons as they make teaching decisions; and they reflect on the results seen in student learning based on their teaching decisions (Taylor, 2016). Schön (1987) conceptualized the idea of reflection on action versus reflection in action. The main difference is when the reflection takes place. Reflection on action takes place before the lesson or teaching begins, or it takes place after the lesson or teaching is completed. Reflection in action takes place during instruction. Schön theorized reflection on action helps teachers plan instruction and make decisions in the real moments of teaching. "When the processes of reflection on action and reflection in action are part of a continuous cycle, students and teachers both benefit" (Morgan & Bates, 2017, p. 11).

Continuous improvement in teaching practices is a lofty but important aim which requires intentionality and commitment by the teacher to reflect on the teaching practice (Bryk, 2009; Gallimore & Emerling, 2012; May et al., 2016; Taylor, 2016). Engaging in reflection on practice requires a deliberate commitment of time and energy on the part of a teacher. Wall and Palmer (2015, as cited by Morgan & Bates, 2017) argued for a commitment to "moments of stillness…to think deeply and find the answers on their own" (p. 629). Taking time to reflect helps teachers to teach with clarity and focus and solve real-world problems within the context of their teaching practice (Morgan & Bates, 2017). Reflection on action and reflection in action of teaching can be centered on a wide variety of contexts. The contexts for reflection on action and reflection in action include videos of teaching interactions and students responding to instruction, student work samples, student assessments, live teaching demonstrations, through professional reading,

or as part of professional learning experiences in collaboration with others (Morgan & Bates, 2017).

Writing is a one tool that supports reflection (Purcell, 2013; Taylor, 2016). Literature from the field on teacher writing as a reflection method reported benefits to teachers, improved practice, and increased engagement with one's work (Makinen, 2013). Other studies reported heightened levels of reflection (Sung et al., 2009), while Farrell's (2013) research found teacher written reflection increased self-awareness. Still other research found improved results of professional development as a result of written reflections (Moss et al., 2008; Sung et al., 2009). Taylor (2016) conducted a case study looking at teacher perceptions of engaging in written reflection and the engagement of systematic written reflections of teaching. Results of the study demonstrated that reflection combining inner thoughts, reflective writing, and discourse are beneficial and impact teaching practice. Teachers in the case study perceived a change in their practice in just 6 weeks (Taylor, 2016). Teachers in the case study also reported an increased sense of efficacy as a result of structured written responses about observations of the literacy behaviors of their students and responsive teaching based on these observations of student learning (Taylor, 2016).

Teacher reflection is often considered an independent and individual activity that leads one to change practices. However, teacher reflection can occur and be supported in collaborative contexts. Kennedy and Smith (2013) reported collaborative, organizational structures that promote and support reflective practice impact teacher effectiveness. These reflective times can be individual or occur in collaboration with others. As Morgan and Bates (2017) argued, "recognizing the importance of time to think cannot be

underestimated as part of teacher professional development" (p. 112).

Reflection alone benefits teachers but must be followed with actions based on the realizations and new understandings resulting from the reflection (Mezirow, 1991; Morgan & Bates, 2017; Taylor, 2016). Teachers must assess the outcomes of their teaching, pinpoint strengths and challenges, and deliberately act upon their findings. While reflection is cyclical, it is an ongoing process rather than one that begins and ends. As Morgan and Bates (2017) described,

> Reflection on action allows us to identify an area of focus, think deeply about our practice, and reflect in action to adjust instruction that support students. This of course leads to additional reflection, refinements, and action, but as the cycle continues, we are smarter at each step for having worked through previous issues, collaborated with colleagues, and attended at a deep level to our students' needs. (p. 113)

Self-reflection is a feature of professional learning examined within the study. Self-reflection includes thinking critically about one's practice and making judgements about teaching decisions and rationales in one's practice. In the context of the ELPD model used as the professional learning experience in this study, self-reflection includes both individual reflection and reflection as part of a collaborative group discussion. Teachers in the ELPD model reflected on their teaching practices through viewing videos of teaching interactions and students responding to instruction, student work samples, student assessments, live teaching demonstrations, or professional reading.

Transfer of Learning

The application of professional learning and how professional development

supports learning transfer are important concepts. "There is a strong need to foster learning transfer in all areas of adult learning" (Foley & Kaiser, 2013, p. 6). Foley and Kaiser (2013) discussed the concept of learning transfer as the process of applying new knowledge or concepts to another experience different from the context in which the new knowledge of concept was learned. Literature focusing on learning transfer focused on several concepts, including near and far transfer, high- and low-road transfer, and positive and negative transfer. Haskell's Taxonomies for Transfer of Learning is another way of conceptualizing learning transfer (Calais, 2006; Foley & Kaiser, 2013; Haskell, 2001).

Near transfer occurs when the knowledge and concepts learned are used in the same context (Foley & Kaiser, 2013). Conversely, far transfer refers to situations in which the learning and the application are very different contexts, making it harder for the learner to understand how to apply the learning in a different situation (Foley & Kaiser, 2013). Perkins and Salomon (1989) conceptualized high- and low-road transfer. In situations regarded as low-road transfer, a learner can repeat the learning or skill such that it becomes "reflexive and automatic" (Foley & Kaiser, 2013, p. 7). When the application situation is similar to the context of learning, they can replicate the knowledge or skill. High-road transfer is different in that it requires supporting the learner to think reflectively about the knowledge and skills and then intentionally think about how to connect them to another context. The kind of support required might include "encouraging cognitive understanding, purposeful and conscious analysis, mindfulness, and application of strategies across disciplines" (Foley & Kaiser, 2013, p. 7).

Learning is filtered through the learner's background experiences which impacts learning transfer, either positively or negatively (Foley & Kaiser, 2013). Positive transfer involves using prior learning in a current situation or context (Foley & Kaiser, 2013). There is an alignment of prior learning experiences and the new learning situation or context. With negative transfer, a learner's prior learning experiences conflict or are misaligned with the new learning situation or context. They are unable to envision what the learning looks like in another context because of their prior experiences (Foley & Kaiser, 2013).

Calais (2006) categorized learning transfer using six levels of Haskell's (2001) taxonomy. Haskell's taxonomy included the following levels: (a) nonspecific transfer, (b) application transfer, (c) context transfer, (d) near transfer, (e) far transfer, and (f) displacement or creative transfer. For the transfer of learning to be significant, according to Haskell, there must be new learning rather than just reframing existing knowledge. Within these six levels, Haskell categorized five types of knowledge: declarative, procedural, strategic, conditional, and theoretical knowledge. Haskell's taxonomy described 14 types of transfer of learning ranging from content-to-content transfer to relational transfer. Calais used Haskell's taxonomy to conceptualize a basic understanding of the nature of transfer and to argue the critical role of learning transfer in relation to learning new knowledge and skills.

Simply participating in a learning experience, a training model, or other kind of professional development is not enough. "It is imperative to understand that simply taking part in a learning transaction does not guarantee that the expectation of transfer will occur" (Foley & Kaiser, 2013, p. 8). Many barriers influence successful learning

transfer. Some factors that influence successful learning transfer are dependent on the learner. These learner dependent factors include the lack of the prerequisite knowledge, motivation, or confidence. Some factors that inhibit successful learning transfer are dependent on the facilitator. Facilitator factors that inhibit successful learning transfer include a lack of follow-up support, lack of modeling the knowledge or skill, or lack of providing opportunities to practice the knowledge or skill in varied contexts. Foley and Kaiser (2013) argued that facilitators of adult learning who do not adequately plan and design conditions and contexts for learners to transfer knowledge and skills to occur are barriers for learning transfer. Research supported scaffolding, schema, purposeful reflection, repetition from multiple aspects, concept mapping, and diversity of delivery methods as impactful methods for increasing learning transfer (Foley & Kaiser, 2013).

ELPD

Research examining professional learning in the area of literacy typically focuses on one program or intervention as program evaluations (Basma & Savage, 2017). While this information can contribute to the field, Basma and Savage (2017) argued, "A key question then is whether PD in fact does play a cascading causal role causing change in teachers' actions that in turn causes growth in student learning outcomes" (p. 458).

One study of ELPD yielding a positive effect on reading achievement is the Literacy Collaborative (Rebora, 2012). The professional development in the Literacy Collaborative focused on intensive instruction and effective literacy-based exchanges between teachers and students. Teachers were taught to use effective scheduling with large blocks of time for literacy instruction and a variety of whole class and small group instructional models. Rebora (2012) stated,

In recent years, the Literacy Collaborative has acquired an impressive research

profile. Most prominently, a recently published longitudinal study by researchers

at Stanford University found that the program boosted primary-grade students

reading skills by an average of 32 percent over three years. Other studies have

tied the Literacy Collaborative to standardized test score gains (including among

English-language learners), advances in student writing skills, improvements in

instructional quality, and positive changes in both teachers' and students'

perspectives on literacy instruction. (p. 2)

While professional development in literacy, such as the Literacy Collaborative, is shown

to improve student outcomes, there exists a need for further study into ELPD.

Allington (2011) argued that the U.S. has the knowledge to have every child

leaving first grade reading on grade level, yet few school systems do what they need to

do to make this statement a reality. Schaich (2016) mirrored this claim, stating, "there is

ample research that shows student achievement can be raised by increasing the

professional knowledge of teachers about evidence-based practices in teaching reading"

(p. 23). While there are studies on professional learning in the area of literacy, these

studies are done as a meta-analysis and do not provide disaggregated data on literacy

professional development (Basma & Savage, 2017). Basma and Savage (2017) reviewed

the impact of professional learning on student reading achievement and raised concerns

about the current body of literature examining this construct. These researchers asserted,

"there are pressing scientific, policy, economic, and pedagogical reasons for undertaking

thorough reviews of the effectiveness of PD on student learning outcomes" (p. 458). Such

meta-analyses are done with a wide range of foci, and outcomes are often across different

subject areas (Basma & Savage, 2017). For this reason, these meta-analyses may yield "a very inaccurate view of the state of the discipline-specific PD literature" (Basma & Savage, 2017, p. 458). For example, if a meta-analysis looks at a wide range of professional development models and most of the included studies examine science or math professional development, there could be a skewed view of effective literacy professional development. For this reason, studies that look at professional development in the area of literacy are needed.

Basma and Savage (2017) conducted a tertiary systematic review which looked at existing meta-analyses and systematic reviews. These authors stated,

> Our analysis of the existing meta-analyses and systematic reviews on PD and reading achievement did not reveal the existence of a homogenous large set of quality individual studies subject to review or meta-analysis, to answer our basic questions about PD. Indeed, there exists no well-executed meta-analysis on PD and reading per se. (Basma & Savage, 2017, p. 462)

Existing studies focused on different programs and often used different delivery modes ranging from workshops to summer institutes to virtual training to coaching models. There was little consistency among the studies to facilitate drawing strong conclusions about literacy professional development (Basma & Savage, 2017). From the tertiary systematic review, Basma and Savage narrowed their focus to 17 studies to review, six of which were meta-analyses and 11 were from single research articles. With this narrowed pool of studies, the researchers conducted another meta-analysis and found that overall professional development did have a significant effect on student reading with an effect size of 0.225 (Basma & Savage, 2017). While this study contributes to the field of

literacy professional development, Basma and Savage continued to argue the literature on reading professional development needs further study. "A comprehensive conceptual review of PD and teacher professional change would be valuable" (Basma & Savage, 2017, p. 470).

Early Literacy and Literacy Acquisition

Given the magnitude and importance of literacy on an individual's academic, career, and lifelong successes, the topic of early literacy and literacy acquisition is critical. Ensuring literacy proficiency is a long-debated topic which is related to school reform and professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duke, 2019; Scales et al., 2018; Washburn et al., 2011). Many factors influence early literacy and literacy acquisition.

Theoretical and Historical Perspectives of Early Literacy Acquisition

Historically, the view of literacy acquisition focused on reading readiness. Early in the 20th century, child development theories focused on the developmental states of childhood and espoused a maturational view (Giles & Tunks, 2015). In this view, children grow and develop through maturational stages. Maturational theory, as applied to reading, came to be termed reading readiness and was "synonymous with teaching a set of prerequisite skills" (Giles & Tunks, 2015, p. 524).

Chall (1983), one researcher who studied reading development, came up with a scheme for reading stages to study and understand how reading developed. Chall outlined six proposed stages, delineating the ages and grades given for each stage were approximations. The theory noted that individuals may vary in their progression, but generally, most children followed the same sequence. Chall asserted that her reading

stages theory provided implications important for instructing students, evaluating students, looking at the effects of classroom environment, gaining a better understanding of reading difficulties, and continuing research on reading development. Her stages of reading and how well or how quickly a person progresses through them were dependent on factors in both the environment and the individual.

Over time, the reading readiness view shifted. "Teachers and researchers began to critically examine the assumptions surrounding the necessity of skills acquisition in learning to read during the 1980s and 1990s" (Giles & Tunks, 2015, p. 524). Teale and Sulbzy (1986) described a view of emergent literacy. Their term emergent literacy was based on the doctoral dissertation work of Clay (1966). According to Teale and Sulzby, reading and writing are not pre-anything; they are in a state of becoming. These authors argued, "it is not reasonable to point to a time in a child's life when literacy begins. Rather, at whatever point we look we see children, in the process of becoming literate" (p. xix). In studying the concept of emergent literacy, Teale and Sulzby argued the following about reading and writing development as part of literacy acquisition:

- Reading and writing behaviors are evident before formal instruction.
- Literacy development is a more appropriate term than reading readiness.
- Reading and writing behaviors are related and development in one area does not go before the other.
- Reading and writing develop in authentic, real-world settings.
- Children are capable of cognitive work from birth.
- Children learn language through social interactions in the world around them.
- Children move through general levels of reading and writing acquisition but

do so in a variety of ways and at different points in their chronological age. Emergent literacy has become "universally accepted as a view which accepts and legitimizes children's early, nonconventional reading and writing behaviors" (Giles & Tunks, 2015, p. 524).

Clay was another researcher focused on emergent literacy and early literacy acquisition. Clay was a child psychologist who studied young children learning to read and write (Doyle, 2013). Clay's (2001) work documented "behavioral changes in children's literacy development by capturing performance in reading and writing tasks collected over time" (Doyle, 2013, p. 636). Clay (2001) described learning to read and write as a complex process and defined reading as,

> a message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised. It is complex because within the directional constraints of written language, verbal and perceptual behaviours are purposefully directed in some integrated way to the problem of extracting sequences of information from texts to yield meaningful and specific communications. (p. 1)

Clay's (2001) work focused on the literacy behaviors of proficient readers and writers and "sought to base her inferences on patterns of development in the behaviors of those children exhibiting expected changes in reading and writing over their first year of school" (Doyle, 2013, p. 637). From her studies, Clay (1991, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2016) developed a theory of literacy processing. In a literacy process theory view, children emerge into literacy at individual paces and by following individual paths leading to the common outcome of learning to read and write. Essential early skills and knowledge in the development of literacy processes exist, yet learning to read and write is not a

sequential, lock-step process. Child literacy acquisition is viewed through a constructivist lens, and "children are viewed as actively constructing their own systems of literacy skills through their negotiation and completion of accumulated reading and writing tasks" (Stouffer, 2015, p. 41).

Children actively engage in cognitive processes as they read and write text. Clay (2001) described,

In a complex model of interacting competencies in reading and writing the reader can potentially draw from all his or her current understanding, and all his or her language competencies, and visual information, and phonological information, and knowledge of printing conventions, in ways which *extend both the searching and linking processes as well as the item knowledge repertoire.* Learners pull together necessary information from print in simple ways at first…but as opportunities to read and write accumulate over time the learner becomes able to quickly and momentarily construct a somewhat complex operating system which might solve the problem. (p. 224)

The cognitive processes described in this theory of literacy processing include monitoring information form a variety of sources, searching for and using information from a variety of sources, checking information against other information, considering and deciding on alternatives, and self-correcting errors (Clay, 2001, 2005, 2016). In the earliest interactions with text, proficient readers use language and visual and motor information so "what on the surface looks like simple word-by-word reading...involves children in linking many things they know from different sources (visual, auditory/phonological, movement, speaking/articulating, and knowledge of the language)" (Clay, 2001, p. 79).

Clay's (2001) work posited proficient readers access visual information from text in terms of letters, letter clusters, word parts, and words, with syntactic and semantic information (Doyle, 2013). While literacy acquisition is a complex process, Clay's (2001) work documented the change of literacy behaviors over time.

> They gain proficiency as a result of opportunities to engage in reading and writing continuous texts with supportive instruction. They acquire more knowledge to support their processing, and over time their behaviors indicate acquisition of a more efficient and effective inner processing system a complex network of working systems for processing text. (Doyle, 2013, p. 646)

Another major shift in the consideration of learning to read occurred in 1997 when the United States Congress directed the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHHD) and the Secretary of Education to convene a national panel to address the critical aspects of learning to read. The National Reading Panel (NRP) published two reports. NRP outlined five essential elements essential for reading instruction: phonemic awareness instruction, phonics instruction, fluency instruction, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension instruction (NICHHD, 2000a; 2000b). NRP acknowledged that the elements are not an exhaustive list.

> The Panel's silence on other topics should not be interpreted as indication that other topics have no importance or that improvement in those areas would not lead to greater reading achievement. It was simply the sheer number of studies identified by Panel staff relevant to reading…that precluded an exhaustive analysis of the research in all areas of potential interest. (NICHHD, 2000a, p. 3)

Writing and its role in literacy acquisition are topics not included in the reports from

NRP. The NRP report emphasized the benefits of instruction in the five elements identified. The panel did not "focus specifically on early interventions for at-risk learners and did not seek to identify recommendations of alternative instructional procedures for students having difficulty learning to read" (Doyle & Forbes, 2003, p. 2).

In 2010, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were published by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. CCSS focused on the creation of a rigorous set of standardized learning goals in English language arts from kindergarten through high school which emphasized college and career readiness. The foundation skills of literacy acquisition are represented in CCSS, including "word-level processes, vocabulary, oral discourse and the conventions of written language" (Madda et al., 2019, p. 29). Comprehension and writing also are outlined as part of CCSS. CCSS focused on "deeper learning as well as higher-order reading and writing processes [representing] a much-needed shift from an overemphasis on basic skills" (Madda et al., 2019, p. 29).

In summary, the theoretical and historical perspectives on literacy acquisition, particularly related to young children learning to read, have been complex. Such topics are often central in the ongoing debate about how children learn to read and write. These theoretical and historical perspectives have grounded existing research related to best practices in literacy instruction.

Best Practices in Literacy Instruction

Madda et al. (2019) addressed best practices in literacy instruction considering the shift in literacy demands of 21st century learning. These authors argued there are many facets to best practices in literacy instruction. In alignment with the recommendations of

NRP, Madda et al. argued for "balanced word reading instruction" (p. 33) which focuses on phonics instruction and context instruction "to get to the point where readers need them minimally, thus freeing up their thinking skills for higher-level process" (p. 33). Madda et al. argued for "strategy instruction, rich talk about text and semantically rich conversations about word meanings" (p. 33) as necessary components of effective literacy instruction. Concerning writing, best practices in literacy focus on both the process and product of writing. Balancing text difficulty, genre, and disciplinary literacy, which focuses on reading and writing as tools across disciplines, were identified as best practices in literacy (Madda et al., 2019). Other factors related to teacher behaviors were identified as best practices in literacy. These teacher behaviors included a variation of the amount of teacher control and support based on student needs and the ability of teachers to navigate using predetermined curriculum while still meeting individual needs (Madda et al., 2019).

Just as there has been much research and debate over literacy instruction in general, best practices for early literacy have also been studied. Literacy instruction in general has been shaped by the theoretical and historical perspectives previously discussed, including emergent literacy theory, literacy processing theory, national policies, and the creation of state and national standards. Morrow et al. (2019) reviewed best practices in early literacy and stated a single method or approach is not "universally effective for all young children" (p. 78). The teacher's role is a critical factor. "Teachers need to possess a broad repertoire of theories and instructional strategies and draw from this repertoire to address students' varied learning needs" (Morrow et al., 2019, p. 78). The following foci were identified as best practices in early literacy acquisition: a

classroom with a supportive and positive view; comprehension of fiction and informational text; word study that addresses print concepts, phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency words and fluency; writing, speaking and listening; and vocabulary development (Morrow et al., 2019).

International Literacy Association (ILA) Professional Standards

In 2015, the International Reading Association became the International Literacy Association (ILA). This name change signified an "appropriate emphasis on the broader scope of skills, processes, and application that compose literacy" (ILA, 2018, p. 11). ILA, a professional organization, provides leadership in literacy by "using rigorous research-based approaches to demonstrate what effective literacy instruction looks like" (ILA, 2018, p. 15). The goal of ILA's (2018) standards is to "ensure that every future teacher and specialized literacy professional has access to the best knowledge that experts and practitioners can provide" (p. 11). These standards serve as the foundation for program development and educational policy. They serve as the basis for "preparing highly qualified professionals by establishing high-level expectations, with explicit suggestions that program developers can use in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs" (ILA, 2018, p. 7).

Primary classroom teachers should be equipped to provide effective instruction for all students, ranging from intervention to enrichment, depending upon student needs (ILA, 2018). They should know to how to "support the language development and literacy learning of their students" (ILA, 2018, p. 67). Primary classroom teachers should collaborate with others to improve literacy instruction (ILA, 2018).

The ILA (2018) standards outlined seven standards: foundational knowledge,

curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity and equity, learners and the literacy environment, professional learning and leadership, and practicum and clinical experiences. Within the context of this study and the conceptual framework, the standards related to foundational knowledge, assessment and evaluation, learners and the literacy environment, and professional learning and leadership most closely align to the constructs int his study. For this reason, these ILA standards will be reviewed and summarized.

In terms of foundational knowledge, primary classroom teachers should understand the stages of development children progress through in reading, writing, and oral language development. They understand the importance of using multiple texts and integrating reading with other subjects. They should "demonstrate knowledge of major theoretical, conceptual, and evidence-based components of pre-K/primary reading development (i.e., concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) and evidence-based instructional approaches that support that development" (ILA, 2018, p. 67).

In considering the ILA (2018) standards for assessment and evaluation, primary classroom teachers should have a full understanding of the purposes of different kinds of assessments. A complete understanding of the strengths and limitations of different kinds of assessments is a critical part of a primary classroom teacher's knowledge. These teachers should know how to use a variety of data sources for assessing and drawing conclusions related to student needs and should use data in an ethical way (ILA, 2018).

The ILA (2018) standards for learners and the literacy environment described six main characteristics of primary classroom teacher understanding and competencies.

These teachers should understand student learning theories and be able to harness the motivation and engagement of a wide range of students. They should provide a rich and varied range of text experiences for students and promote digital literacy while emphasizing safe digital citizenry (ILA, 2018).

Professional learning and leadership are also defined in the ILA (2018) standards. Primary classroom teachers should participate in professional learning activities to support their own growth. They should belong to literacy organizations and engage in reading professional literature and research. As reflective practitioners, primary classroom teachers should reflect on their own practices. It is imperative these teachers "collaboratively participate in ongoing inquiry with colleagues and mentor teachers and participate in professional learning communities" (ILA, 2018, p. 75). As professionals engaging in both leadership and learning, primary classroom teachers should advocate for the profession and for effective literacy instruction for all students.

Profile of Exemplary Primary Literacy Teachers

Stouffer (2015) identified a profile of exemplary primary literacy teachers while studying the potential transfer of teacher professional learning within the context of a specific reading intervention, Reading Recovery®. Using survey and case study methods, Stouffer (2015) studied teachers who had completed Reading Recovery® training and returned to the classroom teaching literacy to examine how teachers resituated their professional learning. Stouffer's (2015) study found that Reading Recovery® training influenced primary classroom literacy instruction in observable ways. While the findings contribute to the larger field of literacy learning, his work yielded a profile of exemplary literacy teachers, which is applicable to the literature review for the current study.

In a review of related literature, Stouffer (2015) reviewed research on characteristics of exemplary primary literacy teachers and focused on three viewpoints: what they did, what they knew, and what they believed was most important to literacy instruction. The term exemplary was used to apply the findings to a "larger multifaceted construct" (Stouffer, 2015, p. 65) rather than focusing on a "checklist-like archetypal ranking system for literacy teachers" (Stouffer, 2015, p. 65). Stouffer (2015) identified the actions and language, knowledge, and beliefs of what was defined as exemplary primary literacy teachers. Stouffer (2015) concluded the success or effectiveness which made the teachers exemplary was an ability to lift student literacy achievement outcomes above other teachers. Exemplary primary literacy teachers were able to take teaching procedures, language, knowledge, and beliefs and form a "personal theory of literacy instruction" (Stouffer, 2015, p. 291). This researcher explained,

> Over time, drawing from their training and experience, teachers construct knowledge and form beliefs about how literacy develops and how it should be taught. Teachers enact their personal theories through the procedures they select and language they incorporate into their instruction. Or, teachers' habitual practices, over time, may shape what they understand or believe about how reading and writing should be taught. (Stouffer, 2016, p. 34)

Figure 2 shows a graphic representation of Stouffer's (2016) personal theory of literacy instruction as part of his profile of exemplary literacy teachers.

Figure 2

Four Components of a Personal Theory of Literacy Instruction
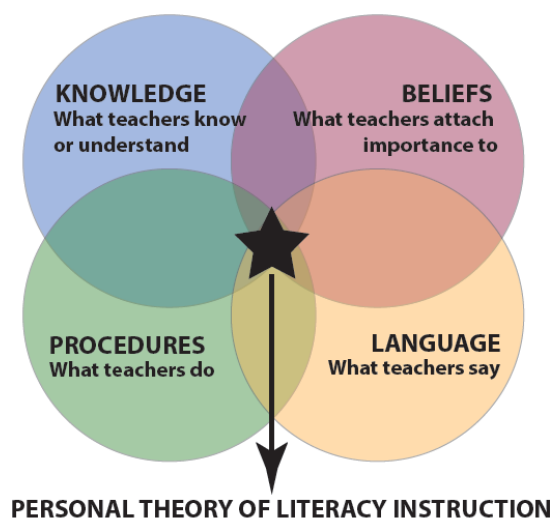
Note. Four components of a personal theory of literacy instruction (Stouffer, 2015, 2016). This figure shows the four components of a personal theory of literacy instruction which are the foundation of a profile of exemplary primary literacy teachers.

A graphic representation of Stouffer's (2016) personal theory of literacy instruction as part of his profile of exemplary primary literacy teachers is presented in Figure 2. This figure shows the components of a personal theory of literacy instruction which Stouffer (2015, 2016) identified as the basis of a profile of exemplary primary literacy teachers.

Stouffer (2016) used an analogy of a painter's palette to describe exemplary primary literacy teachers' teaching as "individual hues drawing from a range of effective procedures, knowledge, and beliefs" (p. 34). Stouffer (2015, 2016) outlined common characteristics of exemplary primary literacy teachers regarding teacher procedures, teacher knowledge, and teacher beliefs. Stouffer (2015, 2016) outlined these common characteristics but emphasized there were "degrees of individuality reflected within their

own personal theories of literacy instruction, which grow and change over time"
(Stouffer, 2016, p. 34).

Exemplary primary literacy teachers used specific actions and procedures. There
was evidence that exemplary primary literacy teachers were intentional and purposeful in
balancing whole texts and isolated skills in reading and writing. These teachers made
intentional efforts to connect literacy skills to other subjects. These teachers differentiated
between reading or writing for a broad purpose versus learning a skill or component of
the reading process or writing process, and this differentiation was clearly communicated
to students. Exemplary primary literacy teachers promoted student skills of self-
regulation, particularly in self-monitoring, self-correcting, and independently initiating
literacy tasks. The activities selected by these teachers promoted active engagement and
were of high interest to students. Teachers gave deliberate and explicit instruction in
reading and writing and valued large amounts of time and opportunities for students to
practice. Extensive modeling was a key procedure of exemplary primary literacy
teachers. These teachers were able to use formative assessments to observe student
reading and writing behaviors and use these assessments and observations to plan
instruction. Exemplary primary literacy teachers asked deeper questions beyond literal
comprehension. These teachers understood reading and writing as reciprocal processes
and explicitly instructed students to use knowledge in writing to help them in reading and
vice versa. These teachers maintained "instructional density" (Stouffer, 2016, p. 35) and
provided both small and whole group instruction. Scaffolding student work and varying
the levels and kinds of support as student competencies grew were also teaching
procedures of exemplary primary literacy teachers (Stouffer, 2016). These teachers also

provided students ample time to read texts matched to their instructional reading levels and emphasized the role of meaning in reading and writing (Stouffer, 2016). These teachers were able to use a large repertoire of teaching methods and were able to flexibly alternate their teaching approach to accommodate the needs of individual students (Stouffer, 2016).

Stouffer's (2016) profile of exemplary primary literacy teachers included specifics about the knowledge these teachers possess. Stouffer (2016) described exemplary literacy teachers as, "having an awareness of the underlying purpose of their instructional activities" (Stouffer, 2016, p. 36). These teachers were aware of a typical sequence of development in reading and writing and were able to use it to guide instruction. Teachers used a variety of instructional methods and "diagnostic viewpoints" (Stouffer, 2016, p. 10). Exemplary primary literacy teachers knew how to formally and informally assess students and match their teaching decisions to what they observed students doing in the acts of reading and writing; these teachers made better in-the-moment teaching decisions. Furthermore, exemplary primary literacy teachers possessed "meta-cognitive self-awareness [that] was foundation to their purposeful teaching (Stouffer, 2016, p. 10).

The third component Stouffer's (2015) work identified was the beliefs of exemplary primary literacy teachers. Teachers set high expectations of students and themselves and were "highly positive and [had] encouraging attitudes towards children" (Stouffer, 2016, p. 43). These teachers saw themselves as active learners engaged in continuous inquiry and learning. Not only did these teachers support student self-regulation and independence, they were able to employ these same strategies themselves

with regard to their own teaching. Engaging in reflection about practice and understanding was identified as a common trait of exemplary primary literacy teacher beliefs (Stouffer, 2016).

The ELPD Model

The context of this study is a shared professional learning experience, the ELPD model of early literacy professional learning offered through a state training center. In the 1-year professional learning experience for this specific model, teachers attend a series of graduate courses that provide both theory and a practicum where they work with, collect, and report data on individual students who are in the emergent stages of reading. After completion of the 1-year professional learning experiences, teachers return to their classrooms to apply their learning from the training to individual, small group, and whole group reading instruction. The ELPD model is grounded in the Reading Recovery® model of teacher training; therefore, an explanation of Reading Recovery® and its teacher training model is described. Specific components of the yearlong training and their relation to the Reading Recovery® training model are also described. While Reading Recovery® is not the professional development model being studied, nor is the current study examining the effectiveness or lack thereof in the Reading Recovery® training model, a review of literature related to the context of the ELPD model is necessary.

Reading Recovery®

Reading Recovery® is an early, short-term literacy intervention that arose from the work of Clay (1991, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2016). In her work observing young children as they learned to read and write, Clay (2001) argued the importance of observation of

children during the acts of reading and writing as what she called an unusual lens. Clay

(2015) developed *The Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* and the

Reading Recovery® intervention as a preventive measure for early literacy failure. The

Reading Recovery® intervention uses teaching procedures based on literacy processing

theory (Clay, 1991, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2016). Using data from *The Observation Survey of*

Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2015) and normed stanines, students in first grade are

ranked and selected based on the lowest achieving students. These students receive a

daily, 30-minute individual lesson with a highly trained Reading Recovery® teacher for

an average of 12-20 weeks to supplement sound classroom literacy instruction. Reading

Recovery® teachers are trained in administering, analyzing, and interpreting running

records using leveled texts (Clay, 2015). From these running records and the resulting

analysis and interpretation, teachers plan an individual sequence of lessons addressing

student needs (Clay, 2015, 2016). Part of the initial training and ongoing professional

development include model lessons and shared teaching demonstrations behind a one-

way glass. These observations and collegial discussions of teaching allow teachers to

reflect on their theory and pedagogy with relation to different learners' needs within the

context of live teaching.

Reading Recovery® lessons follow a common structure and framework. Each

lesson encompasses rereading of familiar texts, independent reading of the prior lesson's

new text while the teacher administers a running record, letter and word work in

isolation, composing and writing a story or message, reconstructing a cut up sentence

from the written story or message, and a book introduction and cold reading of a new text

(Clay, 2016). Each of these lesson activities is used in the ELPD model of professional

learning and were considered in the development of the teacher survey to answer the research questions as part of the current study's quantitative data collection and methodology. Each common element in the ELPD model of professional learning is reviewed and discussed in a later section.

As a community of practice, Reading Recovery® follows a highly organized structure. University trainers lead yearlong postgraduate training for Reading Recovery® teachers who then work in their individual schools and districts to train Reading Recovery® teachers (RRCNA, 2018). Teachers who complete Reading Recovery® training attend four graduate level courses through a certified university training center and participate in yearly ongoing professional development in literacy to maintain certification as Reading Recovery® teachers. Reading Recovery® operates on a set of standards and guidelines which promote effective implementation of the intervention and regulate the implementation of the intervention to maximize outcomes for students (RRCNA, 2018).

Research on Reading Recovery® supported its effectiveness. The What Works Clearinghouse (2013) reported "Reading Recovery® was found to have positive effects on general reading achievement and potentially positive effects on alphabetics, reading fluency, and comprehension for beginning readers" (p. 1). Further research supported the findings of the What Works Clearinghouse (May et al., 2016). The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and the Center for Research on Education and Social Policy (CRESP) at the University of Delaware worked collaboratively to evaluate Reading Recovery®.

The evaluation revealed that students who participated in Reading Recovery®

significantly outperformed students in the control group on measures of overall reading, reading comprehension and decoding. These effects were similarly large for English language learners and students attending rural schools, which were the student subgroups of priority interest for the i3 scale-up grant program (May et al., 2016, p. 2). The effectiveness of Reading Recovery® is not the focus of the current study, but research on the intervention's effectiveness is applicable to the context of the study, the EPLD model of professional learning, because it is based on the Reading Recovery® intervention.

Transferability of Reading Recovery® teaching procedures and strategies has also been a part of ongoing research. Lipp and Helfrich (2016) discussed how primary classroom teachers could use tenants of Reading Recovery® theory and strategies in small group reading lessons in their classrooms. Lipp and Helfrich identified four overarching ideas from Reading Recovery® to be used in small group guided reading lessons. "Through increased attention to fluency, supportive book introductions, flexible, specific prompting, and careful observations, classroom teachers can provide powerful teaching within guided reading lessons" (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016, p. 645). In designing the current study, the work of Lipp and Helfrich provided support for constructs to be studied within the ELPD model. The constructs to be studied within the ELPD model include focusing on fluency through familiar reading, providing supportive book introductions, using skillful and effective teaching prompts, and observing and analyzing student reading behaviors in real acts of reading and writing, in addition to other concepts and lesson procedures, are reviewed as part of the literature on commonalities in the ELPD model and Reading Recovery® training.

Commonalities in the ELPD model and Reading Recovery®

As discussed, the ELPD model as the context of this current study is based on the Reading Recovery® training model. Data collected for Research Question 1, "What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition," and Research Question 3, "What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy," focus on survey questions which identify specific concepts and lesson procedures. These specific concepts and lesson procedures include

- Familiar reading

- Reciprocity of reading and writing

- The role of close observation

- Book introductions

- The role of conversation in oral language development

- Problem-solving in writing

- Word work in isolation

- Taking words apart in continuous text

- Responsive teaching

- The use of continuous text

Each of these concepts and lesson procedures is part of the literature review of the Reading Recovery® training model and was included in the study's methodology to answer Research Questions 1 and 3. Each of these concepts and lesson procedures will be briefly explained and reviewed.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about the practice of familiar reading, its

importance, how it supports students learning to read and write, and how it can be used in classroom instruction. Familiar reading is the rereading of a book the child has read before. Familiar reading is a successful read for students which boosts their confidence and sense of control. More importantly, this activity "provides the child with repeated opportunities to pull together information from language, the meaning of the story and print" (Clay, 2016, p. 111). Each rereading provides the student the opportunity to orchestrate processing of this information (Clay, 2016). Although the story is familiar, the student can discover new things about print as familiarity with the story "allows attention to shift to features of print or the story not previously attended to" (Clay, 2016, p. 112). High volumes of successful reading are important, and familiar reading provides opportunities for practice. "Massive practice with text reading also builds a network of links between letter sequences and sound sequences, between what is seen and what is heard" (Clay, 2016, p. 112).

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about the reciprocity of reading and writing, how to use this reciprocity to support student literacy learning, and how it can be used in classroom instruction. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes, meaning these processes are "two different ways of learning about the same thing-the written code used to record oral language" (Clay, 2016, p. 77). Often, theorists, researchers, and teachers discuss reading or writing, rarely giving attention to the idea that students are learning two closely related processes at the same time. Many times, instruction is separated into writing instruction and reading instruction without considering how the knowledge in one process can help support the construction of knowledge in the other process. Clay (2016) stated,

Many aspects of processing needed in early reading are practiced in another form

in early writing. Writing, like reading, involves paying close attention to the

learning of letter features and symbols, and to clusters of letters that occur

together. Writing involves searching with the eyes to find visual forms and

patterns in left-to-right sequence and linking new input with what is already

known about the language you speak. Writing also involves the child listening to

his own speech to find out which sounds he needs to write, then fining the letter

forms with which to record those sounds. (p. 77)

In early literacy learning, reading and writing share a common ground; many processes

used to accurately read text are practiced in slower form during the process of composing

and writing a sentence or short story. Students' writing vocabulary, the words they can

write on their own, is also a source for the student to draw up when reading text.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about systematic observation, administering

and interpreting running records as one form of systematic observation, collecting

observations across a wide range of reading and writing activities, and applying

systematic observation more effectively in their classroom instruction.

There must be times when the teacher stops teaching and becomes an observer, a

time when she must drop all her presuppositions about a child, when she listens

very carefully and records very precisely what that particular child can in fact do.

(Clay, 2016, p. 12)

Observation of students and their behaviors while reading, writing, and speaking

act as a source of information for the teacher. These detailed observations provide

feedback on instruction and provide insight into what children can do and need to learn to

do next. "Direct observation in research about young learners is not only acceptable but has a complementary but has a role to play alongside other research and assessment approaches" (Clay, 2015, p. 4). Observation of children in the acts of problem-solving in reading and writing provides a useful source of knowledge for classroom practice especially for young students up to age eight, when new learning is taking place and when the learning is complex, as it is with reading and writing (Clay, 2015). Observations help teachers attune to individual differences and emerging competencies of students. By carefully and systematically recording observations, teachers can note how student competencies change over time. This record of change over time is a powerful assessment tool (Clay, 2015). Assessments often look at learning after the instruction takes place, whereas detailed observation allows for a window into learning while the learning is taking place. Systematic assessment is often prevalent in education, yet systematic observation is undervalued (Clay, 2015). Systematic observations share common characteristics with reliable and valid measurements; both provide standardization in the task, the administration, the scoring and analysis, and the interpretation. Clay (2015) further argued for observation of student responses focused on their "competencies and confusions, strengths and weaknesses, evidence of processing and strategic activities, [and] evidence of what the child can already control" (p. 7). Taking a running record of a child while reading a text is a "neutral observation task, capable of use in any system of reading, and recording progress on whatever gradient of text difficulty has been adopted by the education system" (Clay, 2015, p. 10). The running record gives a written record of systematic observations while a student is reading text. Systematic observation should also include a wide range of contexts in

reading and writing across time. Teachers must detail their systematic observations in daily lesson records.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn the importance of varying the book introduction as a scaffold for students, how to write effective book introduction tailored to the problem-solving students need to learn how to do, and how book introductions can be used in classroom instruction, particularly small group reading instruction. Book introductions are a teaching move to support students as they read a cold text, meaning a text that has not been previously read. The teacher orally "orients the child to the story before he reads it" (Clay, 2016, p. 115). In a sense, the teacher is helping the child become acclimated to the new text by providing a sense of the whole story before reading the text on their own while not providing details of every event in the story. Students view the illustrations, and the teacher and student discuss the sense of the story. The book introduction from the teacher helps to make the student familiar with "the story, the plot, words and phrases of language that he might have never heard, unfamiliar names, and new vocabulary or concepts" (Clay, 2016, p. 115). It is important to note that teachers must carefully consider what work the student needs to learn to do more efficiently and not fully provide this information in the book instruction. The book introduction determines what problem-solving the teacher will leave for the child. Because each student is unique, book introductions should be tailored to student needs. The book introduction is a scaffold the teacher provides for students before reading a novel text.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about oral language as a foundation to learning to read and write and how to use conversations to support student oral language development. Oral language is a resource for literacy learning and serves as a beneficiary

for young children learning to read and write (Clay, 2001, 2016). As students and

teachers interact with conversations in reading books and composing and writing stories,

the students benefit from the support of more capable experts to help them connect their

spoken language and knowledge of the world to the visible symbols in print which

convey messages in texts (Clay, 2001). Just as reading and writing are complex processes

in literacy learning, oral language is a complex process. Complexity of sentence structure

and increased vocabulary play an important part in the development of literacy

development and oral language development. Clay (2001) posited,

> If we harness the established power of children's oral language to literacy
>
> learning from the beginning so that literacy knowledge and oral language
>
> processing power move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that
>
> will surely be more powerful. (p. 95)

Teachers and students have conversations about their experiences, stories, and written

messages, focusing on the act of conveying meaning to each other. Conversations about

books students have read and stories students have written provide pathways and

opportunities to extend student oral languages.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about teaching problem-solving in writing as a

part of the reciprocity of reading and writing and how to support students becoming

flexible problem solvers in writing in their classrooms. As students engage in the act of

writing sentences or short stories, they need flexible ways of problem-solving. This

flexibility in problem-solving in writing is supportive of student ability to gain flexibility

in problem-solving in reading, as reading and writing are reciprocal processes (Clay,

2001, 2016). Students can problem solve words in various ways. Some words are known

because they are part of a student's writing vocabulary. These words can be used with analogy to problem solve new words. In this way, using known words to get to problem solve unknown words is a problem-solving strategy. Some words can be analyzed through sound analysis, which is another method of problem-solving in writing. Because of the orthographic nature of the English language, sometimes "the teacher acts as the authority when she demonstrates particular features of printed English (the orthography) that a child could not be expected to work out for himself" (Clay, 2016, p. 87).

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about the foundational principals and importance of word work in isolation, how to support students constructing and deconstructing words, and how to effectively apply word work to their classroom instruction. Students need to learn how to construct and deconstruct words as part of an effective literacy processing system, but decoding words in isolation is not sufficient in and of itself (Clay, 2001, 2016). Teachers use their close observations and knowledge about the demands of text along a gradient of difficulty to support students decoding words in isolation with magnetic letters or other kinesthetic tactile modes. Word work is easier when the teacher begins with words the students know well, so students learn how words work (Clay, 2016). "Manipulating letters when breaking up words, constructing words, substituting letters and checking the sound sequence carefully are important activities" (Clay, 2016, p. 164). Teachers show students to break words letter by letter, using inflectional endings and onset and rime breaks in early learning (Clay, 2016). Once the child gains control of these procedures, the teacher works to support students to solve words in isolation by substituting an initial letter, changing the onset and retaining the rime, retaining the onset and changing the rime, and solving by analogy (Clay, 2016).

Kaye (2006) studied proficient readers and found that these students use many ways of taking words apart to solve new words. Good readers in Kaye's study did not sound out words letter by letter but always worked in a left-to-right sequence using larger chunks. These proficient readers solved words in a variety of flexible ways. This is the aim of word work in isolation, to teach students flexibility in problem-solving words.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about the connections of word work in isolation and taking words apart in continuous text, how to support students constructing and deconstructing words in a variety of leveled texts, and how to use problem-solving in continuous text in their classroom instruction. "To be able to work on words in isolation is not enough; the reading and writer must be able to handle those words flexibly in continuous texts" (Clay, 2016, p. 155). The books students read provide an authentic opportunity to apply problem-solving at the word level with words they are likely to encounter in everyday classroom tasks. As a goal, instruction should allow for the reader to "be able to take words apart, on the run, while reading unexpected known words, partially familiar words still being learning and new, unknown words" (Clay, 2016, p. 146). When students encounter a word to be problem solved in text, they have a real-world motivation to engage in taking words apart to get the message of the story. Students must learn to take words apart flexibly and efficiently in text, so their brain is freed up to attend to the meaning of the story.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about how to increase the responsiveness of instruction based on ongoing observation and analysis of student behaviors. Another part of the ELPD model's professional learning is focused on responsive teaching and how to teach responsively in their classroom instruction. Responsive teaching involves adjusting

teaching decisions in the moment based on ongoing observation and analysis of student behaviors (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). CPRE and CRESP at the University of Delaware conducted a research study on Reading Recovery® and identified two instructional strengths correlated with the intervention's effectiveness, deliberateness, and instructional dexterity (May et al., 2016). Responsive teaching is closely related to the idea of instructional dexterity. Instructional dexterity is "the flexible application of deep skill" (May et al., 2016, p. 91) and is evidenced in the act of teaching. Instructional dexterity also encompasses a "set of attitudes and dispositions that facilitate the development of instructional strength" (May et al., 2016, p. 91). According to the report, instructional dexterity is characterized by

- supportive rapport that continually pushes the student toward maximal growth;
- in-the-moment decision-making that draws on both prior understandings and real-time observations;
- judicious use of language; and
- a sense of urgency that is evident in the pace of the lesson and the efficiency of instructional moves (May et al., 2016, p. 95).

Being able to use observations within the act of teaching, making effective in-the-moment decisions, and adjusting teaching moves are important parts responsive teaching and instructional dexterity. A strong positive rapport and a sense of urgency to move students through their changing zones of proximal development are also part of responsive teaching and instructional dexterity.

Teachers in the ELPD model learn about the importance of using continuous text

to observe and address student application of reading and writing skills in problem-solving words. These teachers also discuss how to use these observations in continuous text to support students in their classroom instruction. "Most written language occurs as continuous text, so the focal task for the learner is to problem-solve the messages of continuous text" (Clay, 2016, p. 6). Reading continuous text gives children the message that reading is an act of meaning, the foundation for literal and inferential comprehension in subsequent years of schooling. Reading continuous text supports engagement and enjoyment as "most young children engage with books at the level of the story, not with isolated words" (Clay, 2016, p. 110). The reading of continuous texts allows teachers to use running records as formative assessment to see how students are using strategic activities in an authentic text versus only in isolation. When practiced only in isolation, the application of skills is not guaranteed (Clay, 2001, 2016). Clay (2001) stated,

> The goals of literacy instruction are clearly not to produce readers and writers of words one at a time but rather to read words interconnected, in phrases, in language structures and across discourse. Words are placed together in studied ways by authors intending to communicate fine differences. (p. 106)

In summary, the context of the current study, the ELPD model of professional learning, is based on research from the Reading Recovery® model of training. In focusing the learning from the professional learning experience and in designing the methodology for data collection, the current study addresses 10 specific concepts and lesson procedures from the ELPD model. These 10 specific concepts and lesson procedures are familiar reading, the reciprocity of reading and writing, the role of close observation, book introductions, the role of conversation in oral language development,

problem-solving in writing, word work in isolation, taking words apart in continuous text, responsive teaching, and the use of continuous text. Each of these concepts and lesson procedures were explained and reviewed as part of this literature review.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy as a construct is grounded in Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy. Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1986) described reciprocal determinism as the interactions of the person, their behavior, and their environment which shape their development (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1997) posited, "It is one and the same person who does the strategic thinking about how to manage the environment and later evaluates the adequacy of his knowledge, thinking skills, capabilities, and action strategies" (p. 5). Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as, "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Self-esteem and self-efficacy are not the same concepts, according to Bandura (1997). Self-esteem is "concerned with judgements of self-worth" (Bandura, 1997, p. 11), while self-efficacy is "concerned with judgements of personal capability" (Bandura, 1997, p. 11).

A person perceiving themselves to be capable of accomplishing a task or reaching a certain level of performance is dependent on their past experiences, the situation, and their knowledge and skills related to a task. Bandura (1997) posited individuals with high levels of self-efficacy have greater motivation, are more open to new ideas, and persist in the face of challenge. They are more likely to use the challenge to grow in their own development and understanding.

In education, a teacher's belief that they can impact student learning despite

influences beyond the teacher's control is described as teacher efficacy (Eun, 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher efficacy is closely related to self-efficacy and is the teacher's perception (Eun, 2011). This perception is based on teacher beliefs that they can make an impact on student learning. Fairbanks et al. (2010) argued that both teacher self-knowledge and a sense of agency hold as much importance to teacher effectiveness as professional knowledge. Bandura (1997) stated, "The task of creating learning environments conducive to development of cognitive competencies rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers" (p. 240). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy are able to persist when faced with instructional challenges associated with students having learning difficulties (Eun, 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) Teachers with a high sense of efficacy see change as part of their own development and growth in working to implement new teaching practices (Guskey, 1988). While professional knowledge is critical and teachers must be well-prepared to meet instructional challenges and complexity, efficacy is also an important factor. Fairbanks et al. argued that both teacher self-knowledge and a sense of agency are important when considering teacher effectiveness.

Teacher Sense of Efficacy and Existing Research

The field of education acknowledged that teacher sense of efficacy can improve and develop through professional learning and experience (Gallagher, 2007). Other research supported changes in practices as a result of professional development in teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy (Cheung & Hui, 2011; Guskey, 1988). Another study looked at professional development to build content knowledge and inquiry-based instruction with science teachers (Lakshmanan et al., 2010). Professional

development helped teachers increase their content knowledge and use of inquiry-based instruction as well as building self-efficacy (Lakshmanan et al., 2010). Butts's (2016) work looked at the relationship between teacher efficacy and the impact of professional development on CCSS. This study focused on middle and high school math teachers and found that "resources, consistency in expectations and assessment, and follow-up professional development are the most pressing needs to increase their sense of teacher efficacy" (Butts, 2016, p. iii).

In considering the concept of teacher efficacy, Schaich (2016) stated, "there is not a large body of research that is literacy content-specific" (p. v). Schaich conducted a study to look at the impact preservice preparation courses and the experience of student teaching had on preservice teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. Schaich's quantitative and qualitative findings found a small increase in self-efficacy of preservice teachers as a result of the student teaching experience. Schaich posited, "if student teachers experience repeated successes under the guidance of a strong supervising teacher, their self-efficacy can increase dramatically" (p. 68). These findings support the role of success and support from an expert play in teacher efficacy.

Estes (2005) is another researcher who studied self-efficacy for teaching reading. Estes posited that "to date, no literature has addressed this specific topic" (p. 35). Estes conducted research about self-efficacy for teaching reading and developed a measure for examining teacher self-efficacy in the areas of reading. The Efficacy Scale for Teachers of Reading (EST-R) was developed and used as instrumentation in Estes's study. Estes found teachers in the study reported a high sense of efficacy for teaching reading. The sense of efficacy was higher based on years of experience teaching reading, for those

currently teaching reading, and for those who had attended reading professional development within the last 5 years (Estes, 2005).

Conclusion

Despite the body of research supporting effective professional learning, questions remain about the impact of collaborative professional learning in early literacy; the weight and importance of collaborative features; and how the collaborative features interact to promote changes in teacher knowledge, teacher actions, teacher self-efficacy, and ultimately transformed instructional practice (Kennedy 2016; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Kennedy (2016) argued that most research on professional development focuses on effective characteristics rather than focusing on the content, design, and context. Kennedy also stated,

> We need to replace our current conception of "good" PD as compromising a collection of particular design features with a conception that is based on more nuanced understanding of what teachers do, what motivates them, and how they learn and grow. (p. 974)

Gallagher (2016) argued those designing or selecting professional development need to consider how to help teachers envision what it would look like to teach differently and provide them with supports to help teachers bring those practices into the classroom. This study sought to address this need cited in research by providing further insight about the collaborative professional learning in early literacy impacting teacher knowledge, teacher actions, and teacher self-efficacy that promote the transfer of professional learning into instructional literacy practices. How do these specific collaborative features of professional learning experiences work individually or in concert to support the transfer

of learning to result in changed instructional practices? This study looks at specific collaborative features of professional learning within the context of a yearlong professional learning experience, the ELPD. The features of this professional learning experience examined within this study include a conceptual input, model lessons and teaching demonstrations, coaching, video self-analysis, collegial discussion, inquiry stance, shared curriculum materials, and self-reflection. This study addressed Kennedy's call for a conception that is based on "more nuanced understanding of what teachers do, what motivates them, and how they learn and grow" (p. 974) by looking at the extent of, how, and why the professional learning is transferred to classroom practice.

Summary of Chapter 2

The review of literature for this study related to five major themes that contributed to the development of the study's conceptual framework. These themes are the theoretical framework, professional development, early literacy and literacy acquisition, the ELPD model, and teacher efficacy. The literature review discussed the theories behind the development of the study, including andragogy, sociocultural learning theory, situated learning theory, and transformational learning theory. Research on professional learning provided information about the effective characteristics of professional development, gaps in the existing research, the transfer of learning for adult learners, and features of professional learning that support the transfer of learning. Literature reviewed for early literacy acquisition included a review of the theoretical and historical perspectives of literacy acquisition; best practices in early literacy; professional standards for primary classroom teachers; and a profile of exemplary primary teachers' procedures, knowledge, and beliefs. The literature review included research related to the

ELPD model of professional learning, the context of the study. Finally, efficacy, as a

construct related to the study, was reviewed. Chapter 3 describes methodology, data

collection and analysis, the role of the researcher, and the efforts to ensure validity and

reliability of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 serves to explain the study's methodology, an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This chapter is organized for clarity into the following sections: the purpose of the study and research questions, the context and participants, participant selection, the role of the researcher, the research design and rationale, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, data analysis, and threats to validity. The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodology.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Five overarching research questions within the context of a collaborative professional learning model informed this study.

1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?

2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?

3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?

4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?

5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching

reading?

Description of Context and Participants

The research was conducted using participants from 65 elementary schools in 10 training sites in the southeastern part of the United States. Table 1 shows information about the training sites and participant schools.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Participant Teaching Assignments

Training site	Number of schools with participants	Grade bands of schools represented	Rural or urban	Title I status
A	8	100% 4K-5	88% Urban 12% -Rural	100% Title I Schools
B	5	60% K-5 20% 4k-5 20% 4K-2	80% Urban 20% Rural	100% Title I Schools
C	9	100% K-5	100% Rural	34% Title I Schools 66% Non-Title I Schools
D	5	20% 4K-5 80% 5K-5	100% Urban	60% Title I Schools 40% Non-Title I Schools
E	5	20% 4K-3 20% 4K-5 20% 4K-8 40% 4K-6	20% Urban 80% Rural	80% Title I Schools 20% Non-Title I Schools
F	7	100% K-5	100% Urban	43% Title I Schools 67% Non-Title I Schools
G	5	80% 4K-4 20% K-6	40% Urban 60% Rural	40% Title I Schools 60% Non-Title I Schools
H	7	86% 4K-5 14% K-5	67% Urban 43% Rural	43% Title I Schools 67% Non-Title I Schools
I	9	100% K-5	50% Urban 50% Rural	34% Title I Schools 66% Non-Title I Schools
J	5	100% 4K-5	40% Urban 60% Rural	100% Title I Schools

Table 1 shows information about participant schools in the study. The training

sites have hosted a specific professional learning model, the ELPD model, through a consortium of schools and districts served by the STATE University Early Literacy Assessment and Training Center. Through this state training center, the ELPD model was offered through a 1-year series of graduate courses, both a theory-based course and a practicum. After completing the yearlong courses, the teachers returned to regular classroom assignments and applied theoretical understandings gained in the theory and practicum courses to whole group and small group reading instruction.

The participants for this research study were teachers who completed the 1-year series of courses. The total population included 218 teachers. The demographics of these participants included a range of racial and ethnic demography and a range of teaching experiences from 3 years to more than 20 years of teaching experience.

Participant Selection Logic

The research study included participants who have completed the ELPD model provided through STATE University's Early Literacy Assessment and Training Center. The population represented teachers who completed the 1-year coursework. The sample excluded any teacher who participated in coursework I led. A single stage sampling procedure was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sample was not stratified but included all teachers who met the requirement of completing the coursework. The sample number was 218 participants. The participants were identified, contacted, and recruited through emails provided by Reading Recovery® teacher leaders throughout the state who are certified to teach the graduate courses as part of the ELPD model.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was to communicate the purpose of the study, collect both

quantitative and qualitative data through survey instruments and focus group discussions, analyze the data, and present the findings and recommendations gleaned from the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stipulated researchers should "explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values and personal background" (p. 183). Reflexivity includes consideration of both past experiences and how these past experiences influence interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). My past experiences include work as one of 20 Reading Recovery® teacher leaders in the state. I have provided the ELPD professional development training for the last 5 years. To avoid conflict of interest or power differentials, any teacher who participated in courses I led were not included as a participant in the study. I had knowledge of the background, development, and implementation of the ELPD professional development training. Furthermore, I was familiar with the content of the training and the disciplinary language used by participants and others in the Reading Recovery® community of professionals. These past experiences may have shaped interactions, themes, and conclusions from the data. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell, I recorded notes during the research process, reflected on personal experiences and how these personal experiences influenced the interpretation of results, and limited any discussions about personal experiences during interactions with the participants.

Research Design and Rationale

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used. I collected quantitative data first, then worked to explain the quantitative data with qualitative data. In the quantitative phase of the study, survey data were collected from teachers who have completed the ELPD model to identify professional learning topics perceived as having

an impact on theoretical knowledge (Research Question 1), collaborative features from the professional learning experience perceived as having an impact on teaching practices in early literacy (Research Question 3) and the relationship between the professional learning and perceived self-efficacy in teaching young children to read and write (Research Question 5).

The second qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to "understand the data at a more detailed level" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 127). The quantitative data provided general perceptions to answer Research Questions 1, 3, and 5. Using the results of the quantitative data, I collected additional qualitative data to get a more detailed view of how have teacher instructional practices have been influenced by these professional learning topics (Research Question 2) and how collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice (Research Question 4). Figure 3 shows a visual representation of the mixed methods design for the study.

Figure 3

Mixed Methods Design Visual Representation
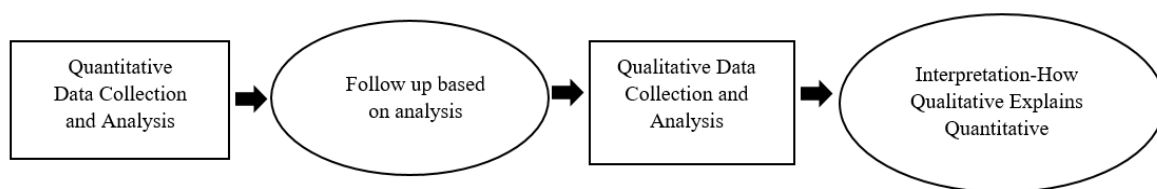
Note. The visual representation shows the mixed methods design used in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 218).

Figure 3 shows a visual representation of the mixed methods design used for the study. The study began with quantitative data collection and analysis, a follow-up based

on the analysis, and then qualitative data collection and analysis. Finally, the interpretation looked at how the qualitative data explained the quantitative data.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation and measurement procedures included both quantitative and qualitative data components. "More insight into a problem is to be gained from mixing or integration of the quantitative and qualitative data" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 213). Use of both types of data "provides a strong understanding of the problem or question than either by itself" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 213).

Quantitative Components

A two-part survey instrument was used to collect quantitative data. I developed the first part of the survey to gather quantitative data to answer Research Questions 1 and 3. It included 20 Likert scale questions using a 5-point scale where 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree and two open-ended questions. Ten of the Likert scale items related to teacher theoretical knowledge and 10 of the Likert scale questions related to the application of learning to classroom practice. The survey items were based on theoretical topics or aspects from research-based studies related to early literacy. It also included survey items related to transfer of learning from research-based studies of professional development. The first part of the survey is included in Appendix A.

To establish construct validity, the survey question items were aligned with the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. The survey items were also aligned to the research reviewed in the literature review. I used a cohort of experts in the field of early literacy, Reading Recovery® teacher leaders in the state who have had

30+ hours of postgraduate courses in early literacy theory, to vet the survey items. These experts helped establish construct validity by ensuring each item measured "the hypothetical construct or concepts" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 153) related to the research questions. These experts provided feedback on the items that might have been ambiguously worded or confusing. I piloted the survey with teachers who participated in the ELPD I led and who were excluded from the population. Piloting the survey ensured clarity of the questions, and adjustments were made based on feedback from the pilot survey respondents.

Two questions on the original piloted survey, Question 16, "Having the coaching support from the teacher leader was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching," and Question 17, "Having the teacher leader demonstrate instructional procedures was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teacher," were very similar in content and were answered the same by every respondent in the pilot. For the study's distributed copy, these questions were reordered and not asked consecutively. The piloted survey was sent to 26 teachers and yielded a response rate of 60%. I considered the internal consistency, or "the degree to which sets of items on an instrument behave in the same way" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 154). This internal consistency was established and quantified by Cronbach's alpha, where a reliability coefficient between 0.7 and 0.9 was considered acceptable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; UCLA Institute for Digital Research and Education, n.d.). The internal consistency was established as 0.801 using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 26, and was considered acceptable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; UCLA Institute for Digital Research and Education, n.d.).

The second part of the quantitative data collection gathered data on teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading using an established survey (Estes, 2005). This study used a developed measure called EST-R (Estes, 2005). EST-R is a survey with questions "designed to measure a teacher's beliefs about his/her ability to teach reading and to effect reading achievement outcomes for his/her students" (Estes, 2005, p. 41). EST-R used a 5-point Likert scale. Responses on the survey were coded numerically using 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=uncertain, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree. Responses to negatively stated questions were scored with the inverse: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly disagree. EST-R is included in Appendix B. Permission for use of EST-R (Estes, 2005) was granted by the Dr. Karen Estes-Sykes and is included in Appendix C. EST-R was originally piloted to determine internal reliability. The internal reliability of the instrument was calculated at $(a=.7043)$ using Cronbach's Index of Internal Consistency (Estes, 2005). The validity of EST-R was established through expert review using education professors from a private university in Texas (Estes, 2005).

The survey also included two questions to collect demographic information about the participants. One question asked participants to select the years of teaching experience they have: 3-8 years, 9-15 years, 16-20 years, or 20+ years. Another question asked participants to identify the grade band they currently teach: K-2, 3-5 or 6-8.

Qualitative Components

The same survey instrument I developed collected qualitative data for Research Questions 2 and 4 using two open-ended questions. I had the items collecting qualitative data vetted by the same cohort of experts in the field of early literacy to establish

construct validity. The survey questions were with teachers who participated in the ELPD professional learning model I led and were excluded from the population. This pilot survey ensured clarity of the survey items, and no adjustments were made based on feedback from the expert review or pilot survey respondents. One of the open-ended items related to the changes in teacher knowledge, and the other open-ended item related to the application of the learning to classroom practice. The open-ended items were based on theoretical topics or aspects from research-based studies related to early literacy and transfer of learning from research-based studies of professional development.

After all data were collected from the survey items, focus group discussions were used to collect additional qualitative data. Upon completion and analysis of the data from the survey, I formed four focus groups that included teachers who completed the coursework and completed the survey instruments. I compiled questions for the focus group discussions based on the quantitative data in the survey and established construct validity by having experts review the questions. These experts included other Reading Recovery® teacher leaders in the state who had 30+ hours of postgraduate courses in early literacy theory. I led the focus groups, to eliminate any potential bias of any trainer being directly involved with participants they trained. As with the survey data collection, any teacher I trained was excluded from the population. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis. To ensure validity of the qualitative data, I used multiple validity procedures, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which included triangulating qualitative data from different sources and clarifying the bias I brought to the study. I used evidence from both the open-ended survey questions and the focus group discussions to build a "coherent justification for

themes" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) which added to the validity of the study. I also clarified inherent bias brought to the study through a narrative of how "interpretation of the findings [were] shaped by [my] background" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). I made efforts to establish qualitative reliability, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell. These efforts included checking the transcripts from the focus discussions to ensure they did not contain blatant mistakes made in transcription. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell, I also made sure there was not a "shift in the meaning of codes during the process of coding" (p. 202). This effort was accomplished by keeping detailed notes and "writing memos about the codes and their definitions" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 202).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Access to the population of teachers who have completed the training was collected through the director of the STATE Reading Recovery® and Early Literacy Training Center. After approval by STATE University IRB process, the participants were recruited through emails using an invitation to participate from the participating training site's Reading Recovery® teacher leader. Information about the purpose of the study, data collection, and how to opt out of the study was provided in the invitation email. A link to the survey was included in the invitation email. Each participating training site's Reading Recovery® teacher leader sent the invitation email out to teachers who have participated in the ELPD professional learning model in their training site. The first survey question allowed participants to give informed consent and proceed to the rest of the survey. The last survey question gave participants the option to participate in focus groups and asked for their name and email information if they agreed to participate via an

external link. The survey window was open for 2 weeks with a reminder at the halfway point and then again with 3 days and 1 day remaining.

Participants for follow-up focus groups were recruited through the survey. The last survey question gave participants the option to participate in focus groups and asked for their name and email information if they agreed to participate via an external link. Participants for focus groups were provided informed consent. Information about the purpose of the study, data collection, and how to opt out of the study was provided. I scheduled four focus group sessions for 30 minutes each on May 18-21, 2020. Participants in the focus groups selected one of the four sessions to attend virtually. The four focus groups were conducted via video conferencing to eliminate excessive travel distances for the participants and myself. Each focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed. Each focus group session was limited to no more than 10 participants. A small number of participants in each focus group session "stimulate[d] group interaction and provide[d] them all with a means to express themselves" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 437). I compiled questions for the focus group discussions based on the quantitative data in the survey and obtained feedback on them from other experts in the field, Reading Recovery® teacher leaders in the state who had 30+ hours of postgraduate courses in early literacy theory. I led the focus groups, to eliminate any potential bias of any trainer being directly involved with participants they trained. As with the survey data collection, any teacher I trained was excluded from the population. The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. To ensure the validity of responses, participants were asked to confirm the transcriptions after I compiled these transcriptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis

The study looked at multiple sources of data and included both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The first step was to complete the quantitative analysis from survey items in Part I, which I wrote. This information answered Research Questions 1 and 3. The participation rate from the survey response was calculated and included the numbers and percentages, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 156). Information about the grade bands the participants currently teach and the years of teaching experience they have was also calculated and included. Next, I compiled the survey responses on the Likert scale items for a descriptive analysis. This descriptive analysis indicated the mean, standard deviations, and range of the scores on the survey. The descriptive analysis also provided analysis of the frequency of the responses for each category of questions. Responses that are rated 1 or 2 on the Likert scale as agree or strongly agree were considered to indicate a positive impact on teacher theoretical knowledge. For the purposes of this study, responses of 1 or 2 were considered positive, responses of 3 were considered neutral, and responses of 4 or 5 were considered negative with little to no impact.

In considering the quantitative data from EST-R (Estes, 2005), I used the quantitative data to answer Research Question 5, which looked at the relationship between professional learning and teacher self-efficacy in teaching reading. The learning variable was represented by each participant's total score on Part 1 of the survey I created. Teacher self-efficacy in teaching reading, the second variable, was represented by each participant's score on EST-R (Estes, 2005).

After collecting responses from the two-part survey, Spearman's correlation was

used to answer Research Question 5 (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). This type of test is

appropriate for determining the strength and direction of the association between two

ordinal variables, such as two variables developed through the Likert scale (Laerd

Statistics, n.d.). In order to use the Spearman's correlation, variables must be

quantitative and correspond the ordinal, interval, or ratio measurement scales (Laerd

Statistics, n.d.). Through the use of Likert scales for both variables, both of these

conditions were satisfied. The calculation of the Spearman correlation coefficient, R_s,

was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between the two

variables. This value was calculated using IBM's SPSS for Windows Version 26. The p

value was also calculated to determine statistical significance. For statistical

significance, $p<0.05$ was used (Laerd Statistics, n.d.).

Qualitative data were also analyzed from the survey's open-ended questions. The

qualitative data were used to "tell the multiple stories that have emerged" (Fitzpatrick et

al, 2011, p. 446). I looked for "patterns or themes, developing hypotheses form these"

(Fitzpatrick et al, 2011, p. 446). The first step involved organizing and preparing the data

by aggregating out responses to the open-ended questions on the survey. The responses

were categorized based on which research question they addressed. I compiled notes of

general observations from the first reading of the responses. Next, I coded the data by

"bracketing chunks" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). Then, I generated a category or

code for each chunk by "writing a word representing a category in the margins"

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). Using these categories and codes, I generated

themes from this qualitative data analysis. While coding themes, I developed a list of

codes, code labels, and descriptions of the codes in a codebook, as suggested by

Crestwell and Crestwell (2018), to facilitate data analysis and increase the reliability of the findings. I also used member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings from the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I prepared the themes and findings from the qualitative findings in the survey and shared these via email with experts in the literacy field as a means to strengthen validity. This procedure gave experts in the field an opportunity to comment on the findings and themes, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Additional qualitative data from the focus group discussions were analyzed. I arranged for focus group discussions to be recorded and transcribed so the data could be analyzed. I again used Creswell and Creswell's (2018) qualitative data analysis steps and procedures. I first read the responses for a general sense of the perceptions. Then I used coding procedures to bracket off chunks of the text and assigned a code or category to that chunk (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using these codes, I generated themes that were compiled and recorded. I also used member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings from the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data analysis plan was aligned to the five research questions. Table 2 shows an alignment of the research question, the data source, and the data analysis.

Table 2

Data Analysis Plan

Research question	Data source	Analysis
1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?	Researcher-created survey Part 1, Questions 1-10 Researcher-created survey Part 1, Question 11 Focus group responses	*Quantitative*: descriptive statistical analysis *Qualitative:* coded for themes
2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?	Researcher-created survey Part 1, question 11 and 23 Focus group responses	*Qualitative:* coded for themes
3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?	Researcher-created survey Part 1, Questions 12-22 Researcher-created survey Part 1, Question 23 Focus group responses	*Quantitative*: descriptive statistical analysis *Qualitative:* coded for themes
4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?	Researcher-created survey Part 1, Question 23 Focus group responses	*Qualitative:* coded for themes
5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?	Researcher-created survey Part 1, EST-R (Estes, 2005) Focus group responses	*Quantitative*: Spearman's correlation coefficient *Qualitative:* coded for themes

Table 2 shows each research question, the data source, and the plan for data analysis. The data alignment plan was used in compiling and analyzing the data for the study.

Threats to Validity

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the issues related to the selection of the subjects and the period of data collection. The study was limited to a population of participants in a specific professional learning experience who opted to participate in the study. Participants self-reported perceptions, which is a limitation. Other factors, such as personal feelings towards the specific professional learning model, potentially influenced survey responses and responses in the focus group. Participants were assured all responses would be kept confidential, as an attempt to control for this limitation.

Another limiting factor for this study was related to sample size. The sample only included teachers who participated in the professional development model and opted to participate in the survey. The combination of these two requirements impacted the sample size.

While the study examined the theoretical knowledge and collaborative features of the professional learning experience from a specific ELPD model, it did not account for any other trainings or professional development. These factors could have impacted theoretical knowledge and the transfer of learning to classroom instruction and were therefore considered a limitation. This limitation also included any learning, or lack thereof, in preservice training or in subsequent training that could have influenced teacher perceptions and responses during data collection.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this evaluation were "characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries" (Simon, 2011, p. 2). The delimitations were related to the period

for data collection, selection of subjects, and methodology and instrumentation in collecting quantitative and qualitative data.

There was a relatively short time frame to collect data, which limited the scope of the study. The study only considered one window of data collection for both quantitative and qualitative data rather than comparing data collected over multiple years or multiple windows of time.

The study allowed for subjects from the population to choose to participate in the study, which affected the sample size. The research was conducted using participants from 65 elementary schools in 10 districts in the southeastern part of the United States. The districts and elementary schools chosen were the sites that have hosted a specific professional learning model, the ELPD model, through the STATE University Early Literacy Assessment and Training Center. Participants were able to opt in and opt out for both the survey responses and the focus group discussions. There was no historical comparison of teacher perceptions and the transfer of learning from the professional development training model before and after participation in the ELPD model. These options limited the scope and boundaries of the data collected which limited the range of perceptions and responses considered in the data analysis to generalize and code for themes.

I led the focus groups discussions, but any teacher I trained was not included in the population to reduce any potential bias or influence. The focus group discussions allowed for survey responses to be discussed in detailed and specific ways but only included question prompts based on responses across all participants because the survey results were anonymous. This anonymity limited the scope and boundaries of the study.

There was no alignment of focus group participant responses to their own actual responses.

Finally, the selection of instrumentation was considered a delimitation of the study. The first part of a two-part survey as data collection used a new instrument I created rather than one preestablished in the field of early literacy. I vetted the first part of the survey to establish construct validity by having experts in the field of early literacy review the questions for the survey items and focus groups.

The scope of data collection only represented teachers in elementary grades, as these are the grade levels of the population participating in the ELPD model of professional learning. The data collection only gathered information related to professional learning topics and the transfer of professional learning in the areas of literacy, which also limited the scope of the study. There was no random assignment to a treatment and control group based on the survey design.

Ethical Procedures

All survey participants were informed that the responses would be used in a research study and that participation was voluntary. Participants were also informed of the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. The survey was anonymous, and participants were informed of the anonymity. Signed consents were collected via Google form for the focus group participants. All focus group participants were given written information which informed them that they were audio recorded for transcription and requested that names or other identifying information not be used in the discussions. All data collected were stored on a flash drive, and all files were encrypted.

Summary of Methodology

The study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to investigate the transfer of professional learning to impact instructional practices by examining the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Five overarching research questions were addressed in this study.

1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?

2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?

3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?

4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?

5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?

The study used the ELPD training model. Participants who have completed the professional development training model were asked to respond to a two-part survey which contained both Likert items and open-ended questions pertaining to the aspects or topics from the training model which impacted theoretical knowledge of early literacy development and which collaborative features from the professional learning they perceived to have the most impact on their own instructional practice. I developed Part 1

of the survey. The second part of the survey used an established measure, EST-R (Estes, 2005). From the survey respondents, the study solicited participants for focus group discussions to obtain further specificity about the responses and perceptions conveyed in the survey. The data were analyzed separately, with the survey data being analyzed first to serve as the basis for the formulation of the focus group discussion questions. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data were analyzed from the open-ended questions on the survey and the focus groups discussions using thematic coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design allowed me to examine teacher perceptions about needs to be addressed in ELPD as far as increasing teacher theoretical knowledge of early literacy development and increasing the likelihood for there to be a transfer of learning from ELPD to classroom instruction.

Summary of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 described the methodology to collect and analyze data for the study. The data collection and analysis, the role of the researcher, and the efforts to ensure validity and reliability of the study were included. Chapter 4 describes the data collected and analyzed for the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In a global 21st century society, literacy is a necessary foundation for the workforce (Graham et al., 2017). Early literacy plays a foundational role in later school achievement and is associated with positive life outcomes in employment, socioeconomic status, and physical and mental health (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014; Goldhaber, 2016). Teacher quality and expert instruction make a difference for students. Research showed the characteristics of effective professional development and emphasized the importance of coherence, collaboration, and duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). How specific collaborative features in professional learning interact to impact teacher knowledge, beliefs, and actions is imperative to promote the transfer of professional learning into instructional practices (Anderson, 2016). Research found improving the professional knowledge of teachers of reading can impact student performance (Schaich, 2016). Other studies also indicated professional development had a significant effect on student reading, but studies specific to professional development and reading continue to be an area in need of further study (Basma & Savage, 2017). Many studies conducted were specific to one program or intervention or were part of meta-analyses with a wide range of foci and outcomes across different subjects, thus yielding an inaccurate view of professional learning specific to early literacy (Basma & Savage, 2017). Teacher knowledge and improved instructional practices must be addressed to impact literacy levels (Gore et al., 2017; Shanahan, 2018).

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy

and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed method design to investigate these five research questions within the context of a collaborative professional learning model.

1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?

2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?

3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?

4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?

5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?

The research designed collected both quantitative and qualitative data. A two-part survey instrument was used to collect quantitative data. I developed and piloted the first part of the survey to answer Research Questions 1 and 3. It included 20 Likert scale questions related to teacher theoretical knowledge and the application of learning to classroom practice. The survey items were based on theoretical topics or aspects from research-based literacy studies and research-based studies of professional development. The second part of the survey used questions from an established survey measure, EST-R, designed to measure teacher beliefs about their ability to teach reading and impact reading outcomes for students (Estes, 2005). The second part of the survey was used to

answer Research Question 5. The survey also included two questions to collect demographic information about the participants related to their years of teaching experience and the grade band of their teaching assignment. The survey was created in Qualtrics and disseminated via email using an anonymous link.

Qualitative data included two open-ended questions on the survey I created. Further qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions. I used the focus group discussions to investigate how teacher instructional practices have been influenced by the professional learning topics identified in the survey, which addressed Research Questions 1-4. Focus group discussions also provided data on professional learning topics that impacted teacher knowledge, changes to instructional practices as a result of professional learning, and how collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice. These data addressed Research Questions 1-4. Data were collected and analyzed for reporting. This chapter reports the results of quantitative data from statistical analysis and qualitative data from thematic coding. This chapter concludes by presenting a summary of the findings.

Survey Participant Data

Survey data were collected to answer the research questions. The survey was distributed by email to 218 teachers who participated in a specific collaborative professional learning model, the ELPD model. The number of surveys completed in the 2-week window was 143. The participation rate was 66%. Figure 4 shows the years of teaching experience of participants.

Figure 4

Years of Teaching Experience of Survey Participants
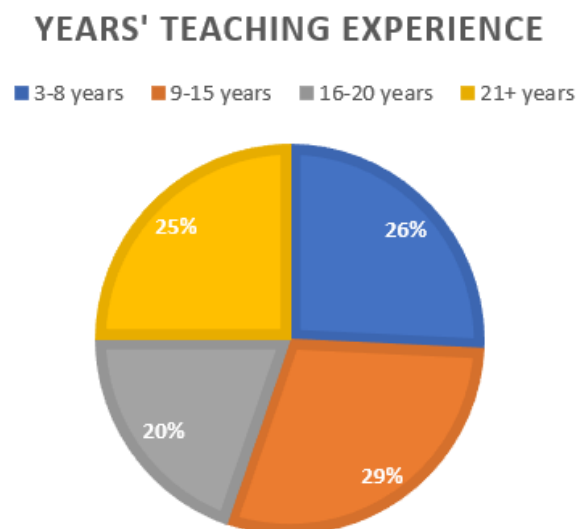
YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE

■ 3-8 years   ■ 9-15 years   ■ 16-20 years   ■ 21+ years

Note. The visual representation shows the years of teaching experiences of the participants.

Figure 4 shows the years of teaching experience for the participants in the survey. When considering years of experience, the survey participants represented a range from 3-8 years to 21+ years. Teachers with 15 years or less made up the majority of the survey participants, with 55% of the participants representing this demographic. Teachers with more than 16 years or more experience made up 45% of the participants. Figure 5 shows the grade bands of the teaching assignment for the participants in the survey.

Figure 5

Teaching Assignments of Survey Participants

GRADE BANDS OF TEACHING ASSIGNMENT FOR
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
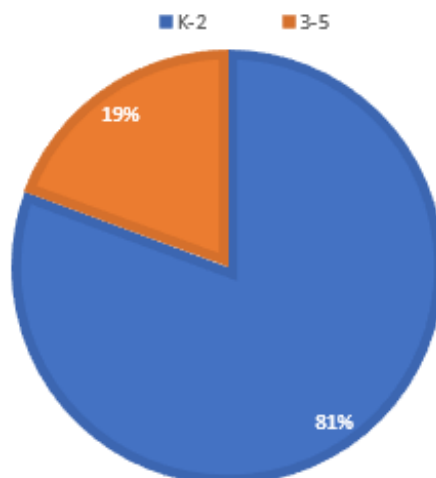
■ K-2   ■ 3-5

19%

81%

Note. The visual representation shows the years of teaching experiences of the

participants.

The grade bands of teaching assignments for the survey participants is represented

in Figure 5. Most of the survey participants worked in the primary or lower grades, K-2.

Upper elementary grades of third through fifth grade comprised nearly one fifth of the

survey participants.

Survey – Quantitative Data Findings

A two-part survey was used to collect quantitative data. I developed and piloted

the first part of the survey containing 20 Likert scale items. The questions used a 5-point

scale where 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree.

The second part of the survey focused on teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching

reading using an established survey, EST-R (Estes, 2005). Part 2 included 19 questions.

Responses on the survey were coded numerically using 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=uncertain, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree. Responses to negatively stated questions were scored with the inverse: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

On Part 1 of the survey, 10 of the questions related to teacher theoretical knowledge and were created based on theoretical topics of aspects from research-based studies related to early literacy. Responses that are rated 1 or 2 on the Likert scale as agree or strongly agree were considered to indicate a positive impact on teacher theoretical knowledge. For the purposes of this study, responses of 1 or 2 were considered positive, responses of 3 were considered neutral, and responses of 4 or 5 were considered negative with little to no impact. Table 3 shows a summary of responses for the 10 questions related to teacher theoretical knowledge from the professional learning topics.

Table 3

Frequency for Quantitative Data for Research Question 1

	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1. The role of **familiar reading** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	106 74.13%	36 25.17%	0 0%	1 0.70%	0 0%
2. The role of **close observation as a formative assessment** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	116 81.12%	27 18.88%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
3. The role of **supporting students to construct meaning through a book introduction** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	120 83.92%	23 16.08%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
4. The role of **reciprocity between reading and writing** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	123 86.62%	18 12.68%	1 0.70%	0 0%	0 0%
5. The role of **conversation in oral language development** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	105 73.94%	36 25.35%	1 0.70%	0 0%	0 0%
6. The role of **ways of problem solving in writing** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	109 76.76%	33 23.24%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
7. The role of **word work in isolation** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	81 57.45%	52 36.88%	5 3.55%	1 0.71%	2 1.42%

(continued)

	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
8. The role of **taking words apart in continuous text** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	120 84.51%	22 15.49%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
9. The role of **responsive teaching** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	104 75.91%	32 23.36%	1 0.73%	0 0%	0 0%
10. The role of **using continuous text to support students' construction of meaning** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	102 74.45%	34 24.87%	1 0.73%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 3 shows the frequency data collected for Research Question 1, using 10 of the questions of the first part of the survey I created. The results of the Likert items pertaining to professional learning indicated an overall positive response to the 10 topics addressed in the survey questions. Most participants responded as strongly agree or agree for all 10 professional learning topics. The role of close observation as a formative assessment, supporting the construction of meaning, the role of reciprocity between reading and writing, and taking words apart in continuous text were topics 80% or more of respondents marked as having an impact on their understanding of how to teach young children to read and write. Word work in isolation was the professional learning topic where participants differed most in reporting. In considering the topic of the role of word work in isolation, 57.45% of participants strongly agreed this topic made an impact on their understandings of how to teach young children to read and write. Figure 6 shows a

graphic representation of the frequency data.

Figure 6

Frequency Data for Professional Learning Topics
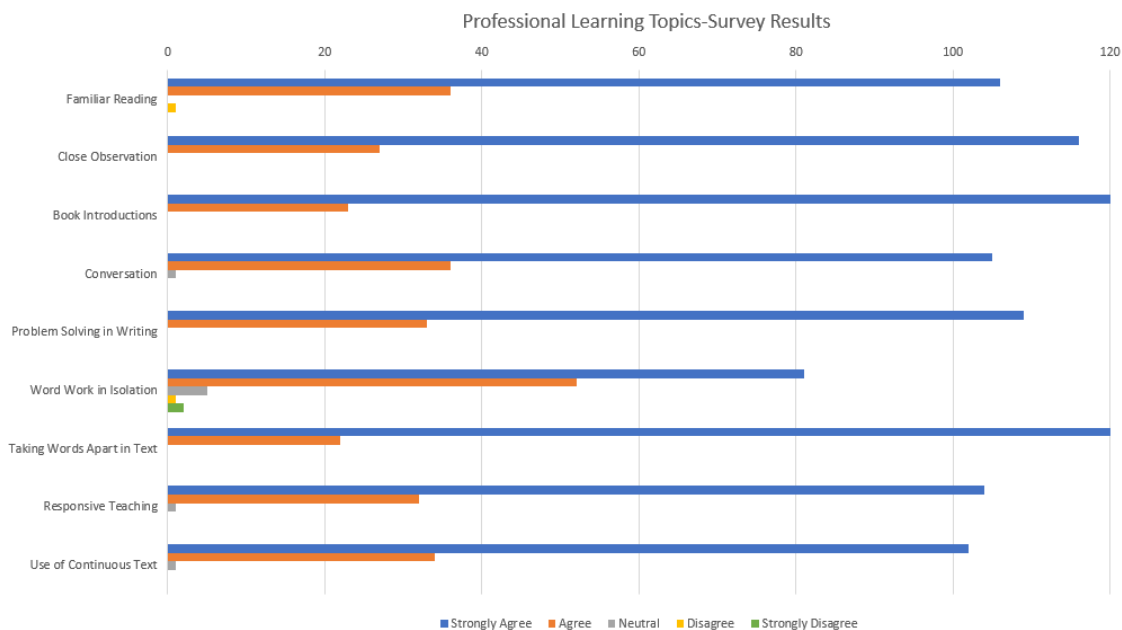
Figure 6 shows a graphic representation of the frequency data for Survey Questions 1-10. The questions in the survey addressed the professional learning topics that impacted teacher knowledge. These survey questions are aligned to Research Question 1.

A descriptive statistical analysis was also created for the 10 questions related to Research Question 1. Table 4 shows a descriptive statistical analysis by question for Survey Questions 1-10 related to Research Question 1.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Results – Professional Learning Topics

Professional learning topic	N	Range	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
1. The role of **familiar reading**	143	3	4.72	0.49	10%
2. The role of **close observation as a formative assessment**	143	1	4.81	0.39	8%
3. The role of **supporting students to construct meaning through a book introduction**	143	1	4.84	0.37	8%
4. The role of **reciprocity between reading and writing**	142	2	4.86	0.37	8%
5. The role of **conversation in oral language development**	142	2	4.73	0.46	10%
6. The role of **ways of problem-solving in writing**	142	1	4.77	0.42	9%
7. The role of **word work in isolation**	141	4	4.48	0.73	16%
8. The role of **taking words apart in continuous text**	142	1	4.85	0.36	7%
9. The role of **responsive teaching**	137	2	4.75	0.45	9%
10. The role of **using continuous text to support students' construction of meaning**	137	2	4.74	0.46	10%

Table 4 shows a descriptive statistical analysis by question for the professional

learning topics examined in Survey Questions 1-10. The mean for all questions was 4.0

or greater, which corresponds to agree as the topic having an impact on participant

understandings of how to teach young children to read and write. Based on the survey

results for these questions, the professional learning topics from the collaborative

professional learning model had a positive impact on participant theoretical knowledge

and understanding. The standard deviation for all questions showed little variability of

most responses relative to the mean (Urdan, 2017). The average variability of all

professional learning topics is 10% of the mean or less. Word work in isolation was the professional learning topic with the highest relative variability. The role of reciprocity between reading and writing and the role of taking words apart in continuous text were the topics with the highest mean and lowest variability, indicating most participants strongly agreed they made an impact on their understanding of how to teach young children to read and write.

Other questions on the survey I created were used to collect data for Research Question 3, "What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?" Specifically, Survey Questions 12-21 were reported as data for Research Question 3. These 10 questions related to the transfer of learning to classroom practice and were created based on research-based studies related to professional learning and learning transfer. Responses that are rated 1 or 2 on the Likert scale as agree or strongly agree were considered to indicate a positive transfer of learning to classroom practice. For the purposes of this study, responses of 1 or 2 were considered positive, responses of 3 were considered neutral, and responses of 4 or 5 were considered negative with little to no impact. Table 5 shows a summary of responses for the 10 questions related to professional learning and learning transfer.

Table 5

Frequency for Quantitative Data for Research Question 3

	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
12. **Viewing model lessons** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	115 83.94%	21 15.33%	1 0.73%	0 0%	0 0%
13. **Having the coaching support from the teacher leader** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	121 88.32%	14 10.22%	2 1.46%	0 0%	0 0%
14. **The discussion after viewing model lessons** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	99 72.79%	35 25.74%	2 1.47%	0 0%	0 0%
15. **Having the teacher leader demonstrate instructional procedures** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	113 82.48%	22 16.06%	2 1.46%	0 0%	0 0%
16. **The collegial nature of the group** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	96 70.07%	35 25.55%	6 4.38%	0 0%	0 0%
17. **The shared experience around a common professional text** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	95 69.34%	37 27.01%	5 3.65%	0 0%	0 0%
18. **The shared experience around a common book set of leveled readers** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	85 62.04%	42 30.66%	10 7.3%	0 0%	0 0%
19. **Videoing and analyzing my own teaching** were features of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	93 67.88%	39 28.47%	5 3.64%	0 0%	0 0%
20. **Reflecting on my own teaching, through writing or discussion,** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	101 73.72%	34 24.82%	2 1.46%	0 0%	0 0%

	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
21. An inquiry cycle involves collecting data, analyzing data, and making next steps teaching decisions. **Engaging with others in an inquiry cycle** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	95 69.34%	36 26.28%	6 4.38%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 5 shows the data collected for Research Question 3, using 10 other

questions of the first part of the survey I created. The results of the Likert items

pertaining to collaborative features of professional learning indicated an overall positive

response to the 10 features addressed in the survey questions. Most participants

responded as strongly agree or agree for all 10 collaborative features as having an impact

on teaching practices. Demonstration of instructional procedures, coaching support, and

viewing model lessons were collaborative features 80% or more of respondents marked

as having an impact on teaching practices as a result of the professional learning. The

discussion after viewing model lessons and reflecting on teaching were collaborative

features more than 70% of respondents marked as having an impact on teaching

practices. The common resource set of leveled readers was the collaborative feature of

professional learning marked as the lowest for strongly agree, with 62.04% of

participants strongly agreeing this feature made an impact on teaching practices as a

result of the professional learning. Figure 7 shows a graphic representation of the

frequency data for Survey Questions 12-21, collaborative features of professional

learning which aligned to Research Question 3.

Figure 7

Frequency Data for Collaborative Features of Professional Learning
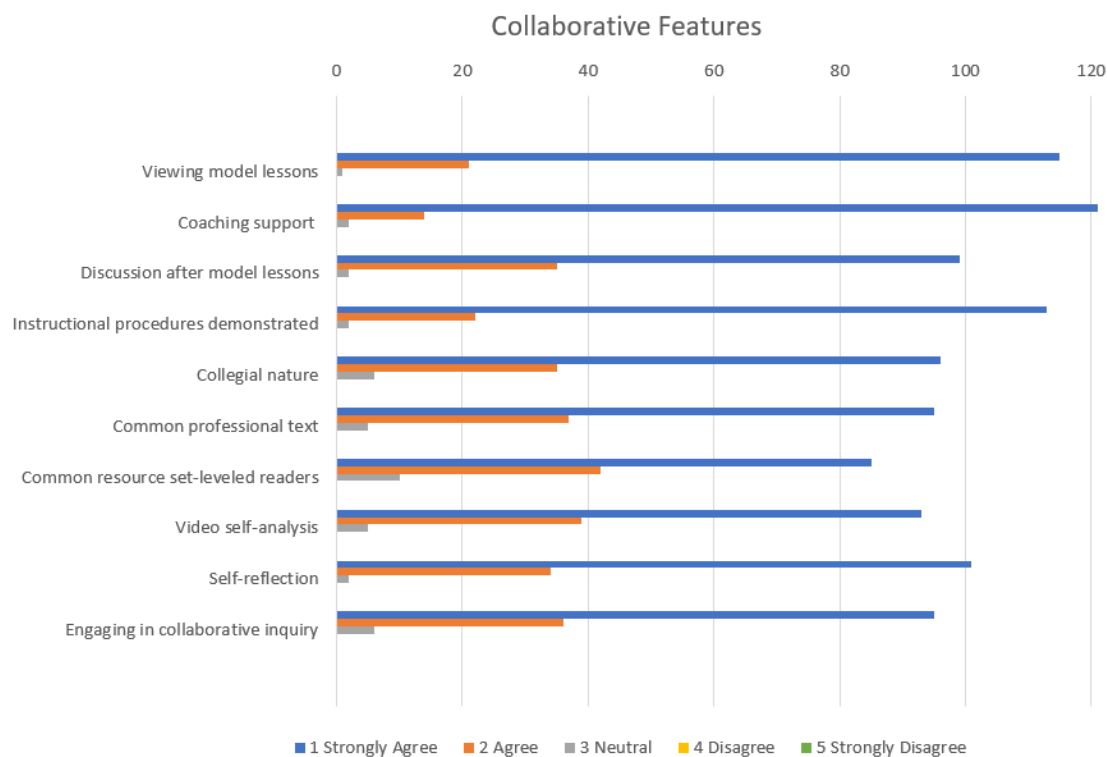
Figure 7 shows a graphic representation of the frequency data for Survey Questions 12-21. The questions in the survey addressed the collaborative features of professional learning which impacted teacher practice and teaching. These survey questions are aligned to Research Question 3.

A descriptive statistical analysis was also created for the 10 questions related to collaborative features of professional learning which align to Research Question 3. Table 6 summarizes the descriptive statistical analysis by question for Survey Questions 12-21 related to Research Question 3.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Results – Collaborative Features

Collaborative feature of professional learning	N	Range	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variance
Viewing model lesson	137	2	4.83	0.39	8%
Coaching support	137	2	4.87	0.38	8%
Discussion after model lessons	136	2	4.71	0.48	10%
Instructional procedures demonstrated	137	2	4.81	0.43	9%
Collegial nature	137	2	4.66	0.56	12%
Common professional text	137	2	4.66	0.55	12%
Common resource set-leveled readers	137	2	4.55	0.63	14%
Video analysis	137	2	4.64	0.55	12%
Self-reflection	137	2	4.72	0.48	10%
Engaging in collaborative inquiry	137	2	4.65	0.56	12%

Table 6 shows a descriptive statistical analysis by question for the collaborative features of professional learning examined in Survey Questions 12-21. The mean for all questions was 4.0 or greater, which corresponds to agree as the topic having an impact on participant teaching practices. Based on the survey results for these questions, the collaborative features embedded in the collaborative professional learning model had a positive impact on participant teaching practices. The average variability of all collaborative features is less than 15% of the mean. The standard deviation for all questions showed little variability of most responses relative to the mean (Urdan, 2017). Use of a common resource, a common set of leveled readers for instruction, was the collaborative feature with the highest variability. The demonstration of instructional procedures by the teacher leader, coaching support, and viewing model lessons were the topics with the highest mean, and thus the topics most participants strongly agreed made

an impact on teaching practices.

The second part of the survey focused on teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading using an established survey, EST-R (Estes, 2005). Responses on the survey were coded numerically 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=uncertain, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree. Response to negatively stated questions were scored with the inverse: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly disagree. Data collected from this survey were related to Research Question 5, "To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?" EST-R yields a minimum score of 19 as the lowest degree of efficacy for teaching reading and a maximum score of 95 as the highest degree of efficacy. Table 7 shows a summary of responses for the 19 questions related to teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading from EST-R (Estes, 2005).

Table 7

Frequency for Quantitative Data for Research Question 5

|	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Uncertain	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
When a student does better than usual in reading, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.	17 12.59%	67 49.63%	35 25.93%	15 11.11%	1 0.74%
When a student is having difficulty with a reading assignment, I often have trouble adjusting it to his / her level.	2 1.48%	11 8.15%	14 10.37%	96 71.11%	12 8.89%
When I really try, I can teach a student how to read.	54 40.91%	56 42.24%	18 13.64%	4 3.03%	0 0%
When the reading grades of my students improve, it has little to do with the methods I have used.	1 0.74%	3 2.22%	2 1.48%	88 65.19%	41 30.37%
If a student quickly masters a new concept in reading, this might be because I knew the necessary steps to teach that concept.	39 29.10%	78 58.21%	12 8.96%	5 3.73%	0 0%
If students have little encouragement to read at home, they are unlikely to respond positively to reading instruction.	7 5.26%	29 21.80%	13 9.77%	69 51.88%	15 11.28%
If a student is a struggling reader, I can usually determine if he / she needs remediation in phonics.	18 13.53%	79 59.40%	25 18.80%	9 6.77%	2 1.50%
If a student did not remember information, I gave in a previous reading lesson, I would not know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	1 0.75%	7 5.26%	10 7.52%	94 70.68%	21 15.79%
If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to redirect him/her.	40 30.08%	90 67.67%	3 2.26%	0 0%	0 0%
If one of my students was assigned to read a passage, I would not be able to accurately assess whether the selection was at the correct level of difficulty.	1 0.75%	4 3.01%	3 2.26%	77 57.89%	48 36.09%
When all factors are considered, I am not a very powerful influence on a student's achievement in reading.	2 1.50%	3 2.26%	0 0%	47 35.34%	81 60.90%

	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Uncertain	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
When the reading skills of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	40 30.08%	84 63.16%	8 6.02%	1 0.75%	0 0%
When a student is reading below grade level, I am usually not able to determine how to remediate in order to improve his/her reading ability.	1 0.76%	2 1.52%	1 0.76%	77 58.33%	51 38.64%
If parents don't read with their children, it makes it difficult for me to teach reading.	3 2.27%	43 32.58%	17 12.88%	59 44.70%	10 7.58%
When a student reads aloud-I can usually determine what strategies to use to improve his / her fluency.	38 28.57%	85 63.91%	6 4.51%	3 2.26%	1 0.75%
If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to remediate to meet the student's needs.	40 30.08%	88 66.17%	5 3.76%	0 0%	0 0%
Even though a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement, I am not limited in what I can accomplish toward teaching a student to read.	60 45.11%	70 52.63%	2 1.50%	1 0.75%	0 0%
Even a teacher with good teaching abilities in reading may not reach many students.	2 1.50%	19 14.29%	26 19.55%	68 51.13%	18 13.53%
When a new student comes to my class, I am able to accurately assess his / her appropriate reading level.	68 51.13%	63 47.37%	2 1.50%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 7 shows the data collected for Research Question 5 using EST-R (Estes, 2005) related to teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading. A minimum score of 19 represented the lowest degree of efficacy for teaching reading and a maximum score of 95 represented the highest degree of efficacy on EST-R (Estes, 2005). EST-R (Estes, 2005) contained questions related to self-efficacy for teaching reading worded positively and negatively. For the positively worded questions, most participants responded agreed. For the negatively worded questions, most participants responded disagree, which is

correlation with a higher degree of self-efficacy for teaching reading. Figure 8 shows a graphic representation of the frequency data for the questions on EST-R worded positively.

Figure 8

Frequency Data for EST-R (Estes, 2005) – Positive Questions
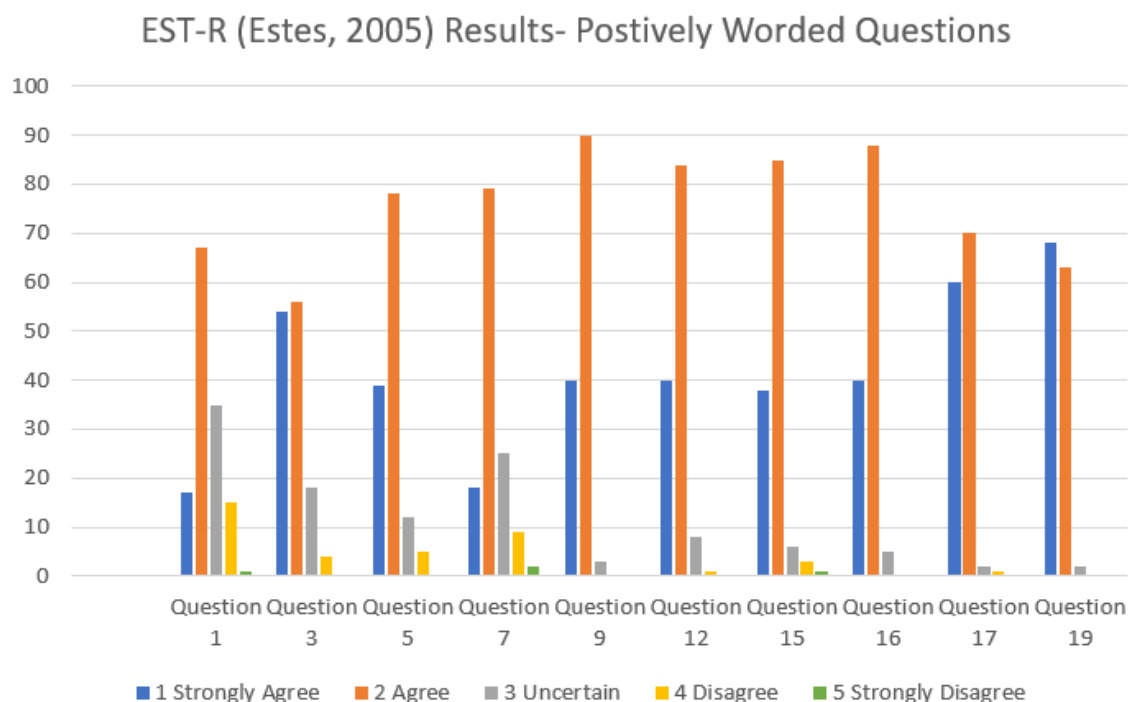
EST-R (Estes, 2005) contained 10 positively worded questions relating to self-efficacy for teaching reading. The frequency data for the survey results for these questions are shown in Figure 8. Most participants responded agree or strongly agree, indicating a higher degree of self-efficacy.

Figure 9 shows a graphic representation of the frequency data for the questions on EST-R worded negatively, which were scored inversely.

Figure 9

Frequency Data for EST-R (Estes, 2005) – Negative Questions

EST-R (Estes, 2005) Results- Negatively Worded Questions
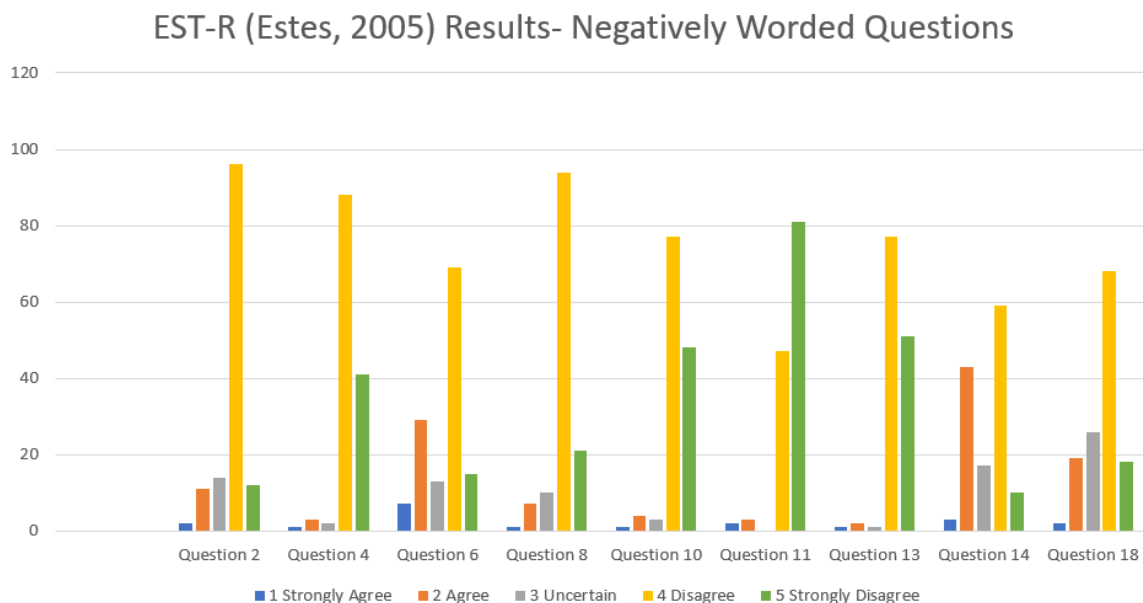
EST-R (Estes, 2005) contained nine negatively worded questions relating to self-efficacy for teaching reading. The frequency data for the survey results for these questions are shown in Figure 9. Most participants responded disagree, indicating a higher degree of self-efficacy.

A descriptive statistical analysis was also created for the second part of the survey measuring teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading. Table 8 shows the mean, standard deviation, and range for the 10 questions related to Research Question 5.

Table 8

Descriptive Analysis for EST-R (Estes, 2005)

N	132
Mean	76.98
Standard Deviation	6.35
Range	26
Coefficient of Variance	8.2%

I performed a descriptive statistical analysis for the second part of the survey, EST-R, used to measure teacher sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading, which aligned to Research Question 5. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are shown in Table 8. In this distribution, standard deviation was 6.35. The smaller the standard deviation, the more likely the data are reliable (Urdan, 2017). The standard deviation here is slightly less than one fourth of the range, being approximately 24% of the range. This suggests that the data are probably reliable, according to Urdan (2017). Figure 10 shows a box and whisker plot for the results of EST-R (2005).

Figure 10

Box and Whisker Plot – EST-R (Estes, 2005) Results
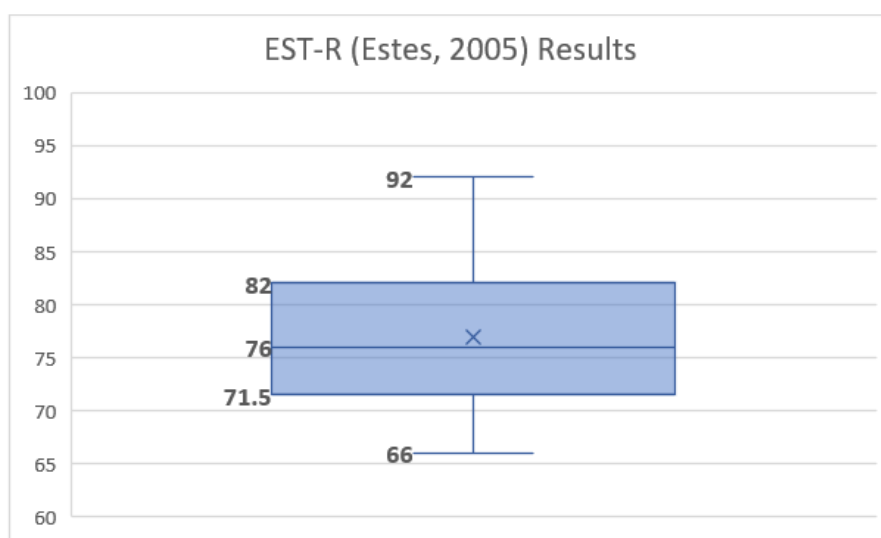
Figure 10 provided a visual representation of the distribution of EST-R (Estes, 2005) results in a box and whisker plot. With the range of EST-R (Estes, 2005) scores between 19, indicating low degree of self-efficacy for teaching reading, and 95, indicating high degree of self-efficacy for teaching reading, the participants in the study had a mean EST-R (Estes, 2005) score of 76.98, indicating a high degree of self-efficacy (Estes, 2005).

With the results of the two-part survey, I used Spearman's correlation to examine the relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). Of the 143 responses collected, 14 surveys were incomplete in either the questions on Part 1 for professional learning or Part 2 for EST-R (Estes, 2005). These incomplete surveys were excluded from this calculation. The number of survey responses used for the calculation was 129. The calculation of the Spearman correlation coefficient, R_s, was used to measure the strength and direction of the association between the variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). Using IBM's SPSS Windows Version 26, I calculated R_s to be 0.369. The correlation value indicates that a correlation exists between professional learning and participant self-efficacy (Urdan, 2017). A p value of 0.000058034 was calculated. Using $p<0.05$, the relationship was found to be statistically significant (Urdan, 2017).

Survey – Qualitative Data Findings

The same survey instrument I developed collected qualitative data for Research Questions 2 and 4 using two open-ended questions. One of the open-ended items related to the changes in teacher knowledge and the application of the learning to classroom practice (Part I, Survey Question 11) and the other open-ended item related to the collaborative features that affected learning transfer and instructional practices (Part I, Survey Question 23). The open-ended items were based on theoretical topics or aspects from research-based studies related to early literacy and transfer of learning from research-based studies of professional development These two questions were included to provide the opportunity to share their personal experiences in more detail and in another format other than the Likert surveys alone. Seventy-five participants responded to both

open-ended question, and 28 participants responded to only one of the open-ended

questions. Table 9 includes a sampling of responses for each open-ended question on Part

1 of the survey I created.

Table 9

Sample Responses to Open-Ended Questions in the Survey

11. Please share ways the professional learning contributed to your understanding of how to teach young children to read and write. (n=92)	23. Please share how your professional learning in the ELPD model has impacted your classroom instruction. *(n=86)*
I have never had a class in teaching young readers/struggling readers. Although I'm a 4th grade teacher, this class shined new light on teaching young readers, and I was able to use these strategies even in a 4th grade class!	During independent reading, I give students a book introduction and then give them a book that is appropriate to their level. When reading with students, I use my running record to help me decide the next book I give them
How to use the MSV cueing system to understand how students read.	The way I introduce books to my students in guided reading has changed to make sure I am teaching new vocabulary. I also use word work in my guided reading to show how the students can problem solve.
It changed my approach and attitude of how young children learn to read and write. As well as the process and materials I use to foster their learning.	I am a better teacher because of the reflective teaching. It allowed me to be vulnerable and open to suggestions.
I learned to show students to apply their reading strategies in continuous text, not just in isolation.	I am more intentional in my book choice and determining my book introduction. I am also more intentional in connecting my word work to the writing I've observed from my students
Breaking down each aspect of teaching a struggling child reading and writing through the processes listed in the prior questions, showed me how each process was like a brick in laying the foundation of reading and writing for the child. An example would be how you do word work in isolation on the white board to spotlight a skill the student needs to understand and strengthen. Then to make that stronger you would take that step and work on it in text and even in the student's writing to make a strong connection for the child apply a skill/strategy to himself/herself when they are reading and writing.	My MAP scores increased significantly by using the strategies from ELPD. I was able to use these strategies in whole group and small group instruction to reach my struggling readers and average readers and writers.
Learning to teach students how to take words apart in continuous text was one of the most useful things when teaching students to read at write. I also feel that the rereading of familiar texts helped while teaching older students as well.	I have revamped how I present reading and writing in my teaching. I structure my small groups differently and when I meet with my students individually for their reading conferences it has become more meaningful and productive. I believe I am reaching more students

11. Please share ways the professional learning contributed to your understanding of how to teach young children to read and write. (n=92)	23. Please share how your professional learning in the ELPD model has impacted your classroom instruction. *(n=86)*
I am better prepared to teach students to read and write through my ELPD coursework. I gained an incredible amount of knowledge from the class. My understanding of how reading and writing are learned increased so much.	The ELPD model impacted my classroom instruction by allowing me to reflect on teaching. The feedback from the teacher leader and peers helped me to see what I can improve on. I also enjoyed seeing strategies from other teachers.
Reading and writing skills are reciprocal and impact every aspect of learning. Learning how to watch for what the child does know how to do and helping them grow from there helped me become a more conscientious teacher.	I strongly reflect on my students- even more so now- as to "why" do I place those students into small groups. "what do I want them to understand?" not just "they need this". I look more strongly into my small group lessons and more

The first part of the survey I created included two-open ended questions to gather more detail on participant learning experiences and application of learning from the ELPD model of professional learning. Table 9 shows a sampling of participant responses.

Using the open-ended survey responses, I began compiling data by reading and rereading the transcribed data. I coded the transcribed document for themes based on both open-ended questions. Table 10 shows the thematic coding of data from the open-ended survey question related to professional learning topics and teacher knowledge.

Table 10

Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Survey Question — Topics and Knowledge

11. Please share ways the professional learning contributed to your understanding of how to teach young children to read and write. (n=92)		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Close observation as formative assessment	25	"I have learned the importance of being a good observer of my students and really looking at what they can do."
		"It prepared me to carefully observe children."
		"Opened my eyes to areas that I needed to pay more attention to and focus on."
		"Learning how to analyze my running records in order to teach each new lesson had a strong impact."
Responsiveness	24	"It prepared me to quickly respond to support and teach them."
		"Instead of just following a scripted guided reading lesson I tailor it to meet the needs of each student."
		"I began to see ways to be a more effective teacher and to be more responsive to their individual needs."
Reciprocity	15	"I now have a better understanding of how to help them make connections between reading and writing."
		"The power of the reciprocity of reading/writing cannot be overstated."
Strategies in continuous text	15	"I learned to show students to apply their reading strategies in continuous text, not just in isolation."
		"Learning to teach students how to take words apart in continuous text was one of the most useful things."
Strengths-based perspective	15	"I found that teaching reading by drawing on the strengths of the students is essential."
		"The pivotal part of this course for me was moving into a growth mindset. Finding what the student knows and building from the known has made a huge difference."
Meaning-making process	10	"Making meaning through both words and pictures."
		"It brought new knowledge how reading is a meaning making process."
		"Led to a deeper understanding of the process."

11. Please share ways the professional learning contributed to your understanding of how to teach young children to read and write. (n=92)		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Foundational skills	8	"progresses from understanding solitary letters, to understanding the concepts of a story."
		"recognizing letters, sounds, making and breaking words apart and incorporating these in both the reading and writing."
		"like a brick in laying the foundation of reading and writing for the child."
Lack of prior knowledge/training	8	"The professional learning I received broke down reading into smaller parts that I had never considered."
		"I have never had a class in teaching struggling readers. Although I'm a 4th grade teacher, this class shined new light on my teaching."
		"Before this training, I feel like I did not have a clear understanding of the best ways to teach children to read and write."

From this thematic coding, there were eight main themes related to professional learning topics influencing teacher instructional practices. Close observation as formative assessment and responsiveness to student needs were the themes reported most frequently.

The theme of close observation was mentioned most frequently in the open-ended survey question. Most participants discussed running records, a form of close observations used as formative assessment, and understanding how to use them in instruction. Participant 15 stated, "Running records also provides such important, ever-changing data so we can identify teaching points and praise." Echoing the idea that children's needs are unique and changing, Participant 120 discussed the importance of observing individual differences, stating, "Learning from each child's uniqueness helps know how to teach them. Close observation of the children we teach…help us make sense of the way children learn." Several participants discussed the role of close

observation and its effect on their knowledge. Participant 97 stated, "It prepared me to carefully observe children and to quickly respond to support and teach them." Increased theoretical knowledge about using close observation as a formative assessment and its impact on understanding was also evidenced in the response from Participant 69 who said, "It opened my eyes to areas that I needed to pay more attention to and focus on."

The theme of responsiveness was another topic of influence on teaching practices according to the analysis of this open-ended survey question. Participant responses included descriptions of how they learned to adjust teaching to individual student needs based on the professional learning topics. Participant 72 discussed having a clear and specific idea of student needs, saying it "helped me to really zero in and be more specific in my response to what the student is using or not using at any given moment." Participant 64 discussed the value of observing closely and responding appropriately. This participant stated, "Learning how to watch for what the child does know how to do and helping them grow from there helped me become a more conscientious teacher." Other participants shared similar statements about knowing how to deliberately and intentionally adjusting instruction after the professional learning. Participant 63 stated, "Now, I am able to teach more responsively."

Participants reported the professional learning around the theme of reciprocity of reading and writing, application of reading strategies to continuous text, and a strengths-based perspective as other topics that influenced instructional practices. In comments related to the theme of reciprocity of reading and writing, Participant 38 commented on how "ELPD helped me understand how reading and writing truly go hand in hand. A lot of times I feel that we try to teach them separate, but that is not how it should be."

Participant 122 remarked, "The ELPD course through STATE University tremendously

impacted my reading instruction…. It brought new knowledge how reading and writing

are so strongly connected." The idea that reciprocity is a topic integral to teacher

understanding of reading skills and the reading process was also echoed by Participant

117, who responded, "If you see the reciprocity between reading and writing that is

where the true magic happens."

The application of how words work and reading strategies to continuous text was

another prevalent theme. Participant 106 stated, "Learning to teach students how to take

words apart in continuous text was one of the most useful things when teaching students

to read at write." The importance of teaching skills and strategies within continuous text

were also highlights mentioned by several participants. Participant 85 said they learned

that "you can actually use the text to help teach all types of components of reading."

Participant 133 said, "I learned to show students to apply their reading strategies in

continuous text, not just in isolation." Participant 15's response mirrored these ideas:

> There were many powerful lessons, such as learning the multiple ways a child can
>
> problem solve while reading; finding ways to prompt and support as they think
>
> through text; understanding the scale of knowing and how that translates to my
>
> classroom, different strategies that I can use when working with children.

The theme of a strengths-based perspective was reported to have an impact.

Participant 56 stated, "The pivotal part of this course for me was moving into a growth

mindset. Finding what the student knows and building from the known has made a huge

difference in student success in both ELA and math." It is interesting to note that this

theme was one this participant found impactful for her understanding in both ELA and

math. Other participants reiterated the importance of a strengths-based perspective. Participant 50 shared, "As educators, we must understand what the students know and work using their knowns." Participant 20 noted that this thematic element was key in their learning: "The key foundation of using the 'known' as the foundation was really essential for me."

Returning to the second open-ended survey question responses, I coded the transcribed document for themes related to how the professional learning impacted classroom instruction and how the collaborative features in the professional learning impacted the transfer of professional learning. Table 11 shows the thematic coding of data from the open-ended survey question related to professional learning transfer and the impact on classroom instruction.

Table 11

Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Survey Question – Changes to Practice

23. Please share how your professional learning in the ELPD model has impacted your classroom instruction. (n=86)		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Varied grouping	11	"purpose to the individual student…not just what a teacher's guide says I should do."
		"I brought what I learned into whole, small and one on one instruction."
		"with individual and small groups of readers."
		"helped me structure my lessons differently."
Responsiveness	8	"Analyzing information provided the instructional goals."
		"assess and analyze my running records in a more structured method to guide my instruction."
		"I am also more intentional in connecting my word work to the writing I've observed from my students."
Teaching for reciprocity	7	"I know how to match the reading and writing to create a link."
		"More reading then writing and writing then reading has been done in my classroom."
Teaching for meaning construction	7	"I look at teaching reading as a meaning making process."
		"I have also learned the importance of giving students books on their level."
Strategy instruction	7	"problems solving, and other strategies with individual and small groups of readers, not just the lowest ones."
		"They need to look for connections between words, word chunks, and letters."

Open-ended questions on the survey collected qualitative data. The thematic coding of data from open-ended Survey Question 23 relating to changes in classroom practice is provided in Table 11.

From this thematic coding, participant responses related to five themes: varied grouping, responsiveness, teaching for reciprocity, teaching for meaning, and strategy instruction. The themes varied grouping and responsiveness were coded most frequently from participant responses.

In considering the theme of varied grouping, participants remarked on changes to classroom practices which involved different grouping structures and different purposes for small group instruction. Participant 54 discussed structuring lessons differently depending on student needs: "I have revamped how I present reading and writing in my teaching. I structure my small groups differently and when I meet with my students individually for their reading conferences, it has become more meaningful and productive." Other participants responded about being able to differentiate lessons by student needs, using whole group, small group, and individual instruction flexibly. Participant 50 responded about knowing how to better balance whole group, small group, and individual instruction to reach all levels of learner needs. Participant 106 stated,

> I now understand how important it is to spend a little bit of "roaming" during the
>
> beginning of each 9 weeks to see where my students are in their new groups based
>
> off of F&P's – but then can be switched into strategy groups if need be to work on
>
> specific skills students need.

Participant 81 mentioned changes to instruction which included altering "the way I have set up my one-on-one lessons with my classroom students as well as my small groups. It has…helped me plan more meaningful lessons."

The second most prevalent theme was responsiveness. Participants talked about using running records as data to drive instruction, saying, "when reading with students, I

use my running record to help me decide the next book I give them" (Participant 124).

Other changes to instruction were reported around data analysis and instructional

planning. "Goal setting, progressing monitoring, and giving students what they needed"

was reported by Participant 100 as changes to classroom practice based on the

collaborative professional learning. Participant 116 reported, "Analyzing information

provided the instructional goals" which changed classroom practice and instruction after

the collaborative professional learning model. Intentionality in responding to student

needs from observation and assessment was evident in several comments. Participant 67

stated, "I am more intentional in my book choice and determining my book introduction.

I am also more intentional in connecting my word work to the writing I've observed from

my students."

Question 23 also collected data on collaborative features which supported

participant transfer of professional learning. Table 12 shows themes coded from this

survey question related to the collaborative features that supported learning transfer for

participants.

Table 12

Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Survey Question – Collaborative Features

Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Conversations	21	"That hard work of constructive criticism changed my practice." "Working with others provided additional insight on ways to reach the reader." "As a group, we learned together and from each other every time we met." "learned so much from…the feedback that they provided for me after watching me teach. It was so informative!"
Shared teaching demonstrations	20	"Observation is one the best ways I learn." "Watching the behind the glass lessons & discussing them after most impacted my learning." Observing teaches teach behind the glass was very helpful." Model lessons and seeing other educators teach their lessons was very helpful.
Teacher leader support (modeling/ coaching)	12	"Being able to visually see it done versus just being talked about gives much greater understanding." "Watching the TL showed me how to improve."
Reflection	12	"impacted my classroom instruction by allowing me to reflect on teaching" "I strongly reflect on my students- even more so now- as to 'why' do I place those students into small groups."
Authentic experience with students	10	"could only have been learned by planning/learning with a child on an individualized program." "actually use things I saw, researched, and learned daily in my classroom. I have never had other PD that was long lasting and worthwhile."
Video self-analysis	9	"recording my own teaching in order to analyze my teaching is one of the strongest teaching tools." "My classroom instruction has been enhanced by my knowledge gained from the videos."

Open-ended questions on the survey collected qualitative data. The thematic coding of data from open-ended Survey Question 23, relating to collaborative features that supported participant transfer of professional learning, is provided in Table 12. These themes were conversations, observing live lessons, reflection, teacher leader support, authentic experience with students, and video self-analysis. Of these themes, two were reported with the most frequency. These two themes were conversations and observing live lessons.

Conversations were mentioned 21 times, while observing shared teaching demonstrations were mentioned 20 times as collaborative features that helped participants transfer their professional learning and make changes to classroom practice. Often, these responses were combined or overlapped. Participant 128 explained,

> My teacher leader modeled a thoughtfulness and a depth of knowledge after which I continue to strive. Watching lessons enabled me to see behaviors of my student and myself of which I was unaware. That hard work of constructive criticism changed my practice.

These comments provide insight into the value and importance of watching demonstration lessons as a mirror to oneself and how constructive feedback shifts professional practice. Another participant commented similarly about using the modeled lessons and conversations as a mirror to one's own teaching. Participant 43 said, "Observing teachers teach behind the glass was very helpful. They usually had similar issues that I also had while teaching. Discussing the 'problems' and coming up with ways to help a child was life changing!" While the importance of conversations focused on feedback about teaching were repeated throughout the responses, professional dialogue

and the "collective contributions of professionals coming together" was also important according to most of the participants (Participant 120). This participant further explained, "our fellow professionals help us make sense of the way children learn." Conversations on feedback of teaching and observing and discussing model lessons were two important collaborative features that impacted learning transfer and changes in classroom practice.

It is relevant to note that while the open-ended question asked for ways the professional learning contributed to participant understanding in relation to professional learning topics, learning transfer, and collaborative features that impact learning transfer, there were a few comments related to the theme of efficacy. While efficacy was not identified in the survey questions as a topic for understanding and is not a specific professional learning topic set out in the collaborative professional learning model, some participants noted it as having an impact on their understanding of how to teach children to read and write. In considering the responses related to self-efficacy for teaching reading, the theme of confidence emerged. Table 13 displays the theme and frequency for self-efficacy from the survey's open-ended question.

Table 13

Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Survey Question –Self-Efficacy

Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Confidence	7	"I know I can teach children to read and write-and I understand why."
		"I feel like an early interventionist now."
		"I'm not afraid to ask for help."
		"I also have a group of people that I can go to and trust now with questions."
		"I know I can teach children to read and write now."
		"I could take the training again and be totally challenged."

The theme and frequency for self-efficacy from the survey's open-ended question are displayed in Table 13. Confidence was a theme that emerged. Participant 63 said,

> Prior to this training, I felt I could teach children to read and write more or less. Now, I am able to teach more responsively, and I know I can teach children to read and write-and I understand why. I could take the training again and be totally challenged, but nonetheless it was one of the most powerful professional development opportunities of my 21-year career.

Another participant, 114, also commented on a strong sense of efficacy by stating, "I now feel like I can help any child learn how to read. This course changed my teaching life."

 Focus Group Participant Data

Focus group discussions were used to collect additional qualitative data. I formed four focus groups from survey participants and conducted the discussions using a virtual meeting platform, Zoom. These participants voluntarily elected to participate in the focus groups and were contacted through information provided in the final question of the survey. Focus group discussions were scheduled and held May 18-21, 2020 after school using a Zoom meeting. The virtual meeting platform eliminated travel for the participants and me. The Zoom platform also allowed data collection to continue despite school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. These school closures also allowed for more

flexibility in participation because most end-of-year events were cancelled in the state. There were 17 respondents contacted via the emails they opted to provide in the external link of the survey, and 17 Zoom meeting invitations for focus group discussions were sent. There was a total of 10 focus group participants over the 4 meeting days. The following number of participants were present for each day: May 18, three participants; May 19, three participants; May 20, two participants; and May 21, two participants. Figure 11 shows the years of teaching experience of participants.

Figure 11

Years of Teaching Experience of Focus Group Participants

Years' Teaching Experience of Focus Group Participants

10%

40%

50%

■ 3-8 years ■ 9-15 years ■ 21+ years
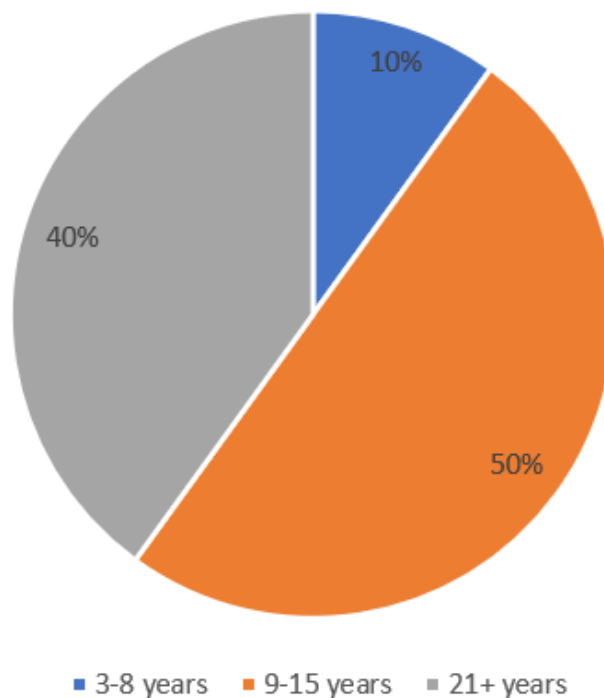
Note. The visual representation shows the years of teaching experience of the participants.

Figure 11 shows the years of teaching experience for the participants in the survey. Half of the participants in the focus group discussions had between 6 and 15 years of teaching experience. Participants with more than 20 years of experience made up the next largest portion, 30%. One focus group member had between 3 and 8 years of experience. Figure 12 shows the grade bands of the teaching assignments for the participants in the survey.

Figure 12

Teaching Assignments of Focus Group Participants

Grade Bands of Teaching Assignment for Focus Group Participants
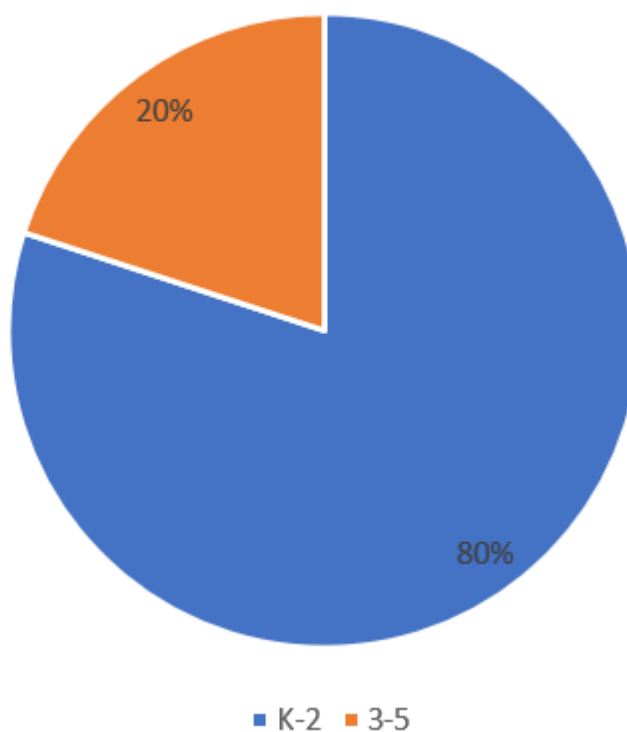
Note. The visual representation shows the grade bands of teaching assignments of the participants.

The grade bands of teaching assignments for the survey participants is represented in Figure 12. The majority, 80%, of focus group participants represented the grade bands of K-2. Two focus group participants, 20%, were assigned in to teach in third through fifth grades.

Focus Group – Qualitative Data Findings

Focus group discussions were held May 18-21, 2020 after school using a Zoom meeting. The focus group discussions were semi-structured. Before starting, I introduced myself and thanked each participant for their time. I explained the purpose of the study and reviewed the tenants of the informed consent documentation each participant filled out prior to the focus group discussion in a Google form. I created six focus group questions based on the survey responses and research questions. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis through the Zoom platform using my personal laptop. Questions for the focus group discussions were created based on the quantitative data in the survey and aligned to the research questions. The focus group questions were created after examining the topics and collaborative features rated similarly on the survey Likert scale questions, common phrases, words, and themes from the open-ended questions on the survey and questions on EST-R that were rated similarly. Questions for the focus group discussions included

1. What topics did you learn about that most helped you understand how to teach reading and writing?

2. How did your teaching change because of these topics?

3. What kinds of collaboration with others in the training model made the biggest impact on your learning?

4. What kinds of collaboration with others helped you connect what you learned to your teaching?

5. How did your learning influence your beliefs about yourself as a reading teacher?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your professional learning or collaboration in the ELPD model?

The participants were given the opportunity to discuss their personal experiences and perceptions in the focus group discussions.

After focus group discussions, I began compiling data by reading and rereading the transcribed data. I coded the transcribed document for themes based on each focus group question. Table 14 summarizes the themes and frequency for the first focus group question.

Table 14

Thematic Coding of Focus Group Data- Question 1

FG Question 1: What topics did you learn about that most helped you understand how to teach reading and writing?		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Close observation as formative assessment	9	"Running records."
		"breaking it down and figuring out what the problem was."
		"what they can read and what they can write charts, just that was a huge part because it was eye opening too."
Lack of prior knowledge/training	9	"I never learned how to teach children to read."
		"I really hadn't had the professional development. We just really hadn't."
		I was upset with myself. I felt like "Why did I not already know these things?"
		"I will say that going through the course (laughing) I kind of realized like "Oh my gosh I think I've been teaching reading completely wrong."
Responsiveness	4	"More responsive in my teaching."
		"As a classroom teacher, I had my leveled baskets and my guided reading plan, but I didn't know how important it was to choose books that targeted skills that my students needed, not just a level."
Reciprocity	2	"taking all that word work…using that in my writing instruction."
		"bringing the word work from the reading into the writing and all of that."
Theory of Literacy Processing	2	"The theory behind learning to read."
		"these are the steps…to really help the students."
		"how it all fits together."

Table 14 outlined the thematic coding of focus group data compiled from Focus

Group Question 1. In answering this question, participants shared thoughts around close

observation as a formative assessment. Participant 2 shared that "being able to hear and notate the strategies the students were using, to know what I was looking for, to know what I was listening for" were topics that resulted in increased understanding of how to teach reading and writing. Participant 1 described the role of running records as part of close observation: "The thing that impacted me the most was learning how to analyze the data...to really look at a running record and understand what it was telling me so that I could then plan in my instruction."

Another theme that emerged in the discussions around Focus Group Question 1 became the feelings of having a lack of prior knowledge or training for teaching reading. As a teacher in a fourth-grade classroom, Participant 6 talked about realizing she had never learned how to teach children how to read. She discussed that she had taught them comprehension skills and strategies. Another participant discussed the shifts in the expectations for kindergarten students in recent years towards expectations of leaving kindergarten reading at higher levels, a shift for which she did not feel prepared. She stated, "

> It's just been such a shift and I didn't have classes that really, I don't think really laid it all out for me in this way. Certainly not in my undergraduate work and even the trainings I did professionally I didn't either. (Participant 5)

The second focus group question focused on changes in practices as a result of the professional learning. The second focus group question was, "How did your teaching change because of these topics?" Table 15 summarizes the themes and frequency for the second focus group question.

Table 15

Thematic Coding of Focus Group Data – Question 2

FG Question 2: How did your teaching change because of these topics?		
Theme	Frequency	Sample Quotes
Responsiveness	13	"the on the run and knowing."
		"learning not to be quiet and not speak to give them time to have a productive struggle."
		"I didn't focus as much on "you need to learn what this letter looks like" before we moved to the next step."
		"more individualized per student."
		"less teacher talk. Listen to the child and guide the child."
		"I wanted to have the opportunity to dig deeper."
Varied grouping	5	"rethink how I did my small groups in my classroom."
		"made me rethink how I work individually with my students within my classroom."
		"apply it to your guided reading groups."
Strategy instruction	5	"knowing more about the reading strategies and how to help each child."
		"really used the strategies for word work, for decoding."
		"starting from what they know."
Reciprocity	3	"a big piece that changed me was the reading and writing together."
		"with their reading in their writing and putting word work into it, which was really just eye opening."
		"changed everything about how I teach reading and writing all together."

Table 15 outlined the thematic coding of focus group data compiled from Focus Group Question 2. In answering this question, participants shared thoughts around responsiveness most frequently. Being more responsive to student needs was a change in practice as a result of the professional learning topics. Participant 2 shared,

Learning to use those prompts, like I said, it's that whole responsive piece. You know, the on the run and knowing…and learning how to prompt the student to think about what they're doing, to reflect on what they're doing to make some suggestions that will support them. Also, it was learning how to be quiet and not speak to give them time to have a productive struggle.

Participant 4's discussion centered on having a toolbox for teaching students: "You've got to find the right tool for them. I think that's a lot of what this was showing me-all the different tools and then finding the one that works for them." Participant 5 also explained being responsive to the individual as a changed instructional practice by sharing how she is more responsive to the "intervention they need, the small group work, even the whole group stuff. Just knowing the loose background of how they develop their understandings."

The third focus group question focused on collaborative features that impacted professional learning. The third focus group question was, "What kinds of collaboration with others in the training model made the biggest impact on your learning?" Table 16 summarizes the themes and frequency for the third focus group question.

Table 16

Thematic Coding of Focus Group Data – Question 3

FG Question 3: What kinds of collaboration with others in the training model made the biggest impact on your learning?		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Conversations	13	"being in a community where you can go to someone."
		"enter into a conversation with my colleagues."
		"Having discussions while someone was teaching and after."
		"we could just talk reading for hours all day all the time."
		"We got to bounce those ideas back and forth and that was really nice to be able to have."
		"to come back and discuss all of that as a whole group."
Shared teaching demonstrations	13	"behind the glass instruction, watching the behind the glass lessons."
		"Definitely behind the glass changed a lot for me."
		"to see the way each teacher attacked things differently."
		"expose us to other people that have, you know, been teaching for a while and just listening to their thought processes."
		"we are openly able to watch each other."
		"Teach and then critique each other and it's okay."
Teacher leader support (modeling/ coaching)	2	"her observing lessons."
		"I was trained by NAME and she just had a way with words and how to share with us."

Table 16 outlined the thematic coding of focus group data compiled from Focus Group Question 3. In answering this question, participants shared insights about conversations and shared teaching demonstrations as collaborative features that supported their professional learning. Participants shared ideas about the joint problem-solving they had with colleagues concerning their learning and in working with students. Participant 2 talked about having common language and common perspectives: "Being able to enter into a conversation with my colleagues and discuss what I'm seeing, maybe what they've tried or haven't tried, like when they've seen the same behavior…has been really rewarding." Some participants spoke about going through the ELPD model with other peers. Participant 6 said, "When we worked with the students or were preparing for behind the glass or if we were trying something in our class that didn't work, we were able to collaborate and talk."

Conversations about feedback from teaching was also mentioned in many comments about another collaborative feature, shared teaching demonstrations. In discussing viewing and shared teaching demonstrations, Participant 8 shared, "you remember some of the things they shared, or you can think of a student that maybe you had in the past 'oh yeah they did that' and, 'oh, I wish I had known to do this.'" Participant 9 described the conversations around the shared teaching demonstrations as a "wonderful opportunity to learn more about the student and the teaching." She went on to state,

> It helped us also I think to say 'Okay, what can I personally take away from every
>
> single session?' because there were things that you saw that you were like 'Oh
>
> I'm doing that too. I think I'm doing a good job on it' and there were things you

saw that you thought 'Oh, I really should add that into my lessons as well.'

Focus Group Question 4 also related to the collaborative features that supported participants in transferring their professional learning to instruction. Focus Group Question 4 was, "What kinds of collaboration with others helped you connect what you learned to your teaching?" Table 17 summarizes the themes and frequency for the fourth focus group question.

Table 17

Thematic Coding of Focus Group Data – Question 4

FG Question 4: What kinds of collaboration with others helped you connect what you learned to your teaching?		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Conversations	14	"to be able to visit some of the ideas with my colleagues."
		"discuss how the things that happened within that lesson would relate to what we had learned."
		"take what we learned and discuss it and how to use it."
		"being able to talk to other teachers and work through these new struggles that you're seeing."
		"community of teachers to feel like you're going to grow and learn from each other."
Authentic experiences with students	5	"the best way to make it real for yourself."
		"you're actually working with kids the whole time you are learning."
Shared teaching demonstrations	2	"discuss how the things that happened within that lesson."
		"taking what you see people do behind the glass and taking it and applying it to your first grader or my own students."

Table 17 outlined the thematic coding of focus group data compiled from Focus

Group Question 4. For this question, participants also most often reported conversations

as the collaborative feature that helped connect their professional learning to their

teaching. Participants discussed more formal conversations within the structure of the

meeting times and also informal conversations outside of the structured training sessions.

Participant 4 discussed the how the discussions after shared teaching demonstrations

helped transfer professional learning. Participant 4 said,

> After the behind the glass, we would discuss how the things that happened within that lesson would relate to what we had learned and then how we would use that within our lessons with students. Then I could go back to my classroom the next day and I could use it.

In talking about taking the training with other teachers they knew or taught with, several participants mentioned the natural way conversations among those in the training model would spread to others, thus intensifying their transfer of professional learning. Participant 9 stated,

> For me, the year I went through the training, actually one of my first-grade team members was also in the training class, which was incredible. It was a wonderful opportunity to really talk about things we had learned and then the next day bring it back into our classrooms. We were literally right across the hall from each other. And then it was a nice opportunity, as well, because we have such a close relationship with our literacy coach. We would also bring things back from class on Thursday evenings into our Friday morning meetings with our first-grade team and with our literacy coach. I think that was just a positive opportunity that I was very, very grateful to have.

> The fifth focus group question was, "How did you learning influence your beliefs about yourself as a reading teacher?" Question 5 was created to gather additional data to consider as part of the study's exploration of self-efficacy for teaching reading. Table 18 shows the themes and frequency for the fifth focus group question.

Table 18

Thematic Coding of Focus Group Data – Question 5

FG Question 5: How did your learning influence your beliefs about yourself as a reading teacher?		
Theme	Frequency	Sample quotes
Confidence	20	"helps me be more confident talking with parents."
		"felt a lot more confident."
		"now I was like "Oh I know how to help! I know how to help! I know what I can do here!"
		"I have put a lot more tools in my toolbox about how I can teach them."
		It's more of "Hey this is what I have that I can do. I'm ready to help this kid."
		"This is what I need to do to help build them as readers and give them the confidence they need."
		"I still pay tribute to ELPD for what I know and I'm more confident.
Professionalism	4	"My belief now is there's not a child that enters my door that I should say "They're not ready." Everybody is ready."
		"I find myself advocating really heavily right now for reason."
		"I could say things that were valuable about that child and I could advocate for that child now because I knew what was going on."

Table 18 outlined the thematic coding of focus group data compiled from Focus Group Question 5. For this question, two main themes emerged: confidence and professionalism. Confidence was the most frequently reported influence on participant self-efficacy for teaching reading. Upon reflecting about their teaching of reading prior to

the training, these teachers felt guilty or somewhat upset with themselves. Participant 10

said, "I look back to my first- and second-year teaching and think, 'Oh, those poor

babies, you know?' I just feel bad (laughing). I guess we just survived together. But I

definitely feel much more equipped able to teach now." Participant 6's comments echo

these feelings of being more equipped:

> So, I felt like no matter what age or what grade level, the learning from that class
>
> is so beneficial for me and now I have, like you guys were saying, that toolkit. It's
>
> more of "Hey this is what I have that I can do. I'm ready to help this kid."

Participant 5, a kindergarten teacher, worked with a former student during her time in the

training. In the initial assessments, he scored in the lower stanines, and she discussed

feeling a sense of responsibility. But after working with him in the training model and

teaching for accelerated growth, Participant 5 shared,

> I needed to know I could do that. Not just to know that I could, but you know,
>
> what to do, really what to do. And no if I don't know exactly what to do, I know
>
> who to go talk to now to figure out what to do. There's something about that. I
>
> don't think some of the other teachers who haven't gone through the trainings
>
> have that. They just bring him to the SIT team, and they are just like "I don't
>
> know what to do." I honestly have my toolkit now. It's full and there's something
>
> to be said for having a full toolkit.

The final focus group question was an open-ended question to give each

participant an opportunity to share anything else about professional learning or

collaboration that may not have emerged in the survey or the focus group discussions.

The final focus group question was, "Is there anything else you would like to share about

your professional learning or collaboration in the ELPD model?" Participants in each

session of focus groups shared some additional information when asked this question; but

in each case, the comments fit with one of the other focus group questions. These

responses were coded in with the focus group question with which they aligned. For

example, many of the comments for this question were about the lack of prior knowledge

or training for teaching reading, which were coded in with Focus Group Question 1 about

the professional learning topics.

Significant Findings

For complete analysis of all data findings, I merged data from the Likert scale

survey questions, the open-ended survey questions, and the focus group discussions and

aligned these data to each research question. This merged data analysis was used to

identify important findings from the study.

Research Question 1

This research question was, "What professional learning topics do teachers

perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?"

Data from the first part of the survey I created, questions 1-10, open-ended Question 23,

and the thematic coding from the focus groups discussions were used to answer this

research question. Table 19 shows the data used to answer this research question.

Table 19

Merged Data and Analysis – Research Question 1

Survey data findings-quantitative		Survey data themes and frequency – qualitative		Focus group discussion themes and frequency – qualitative	
Close observation as formative assessment	81% strongly agree	Close observation as formative assessment	25	Close observation as formative assessment	9
		Responsiveness	24		
Reciprocity	87% strongly agree	Reciprocity	15	Lack of prior knowledge/training	9
		Strategies in continuous text	15		
Construction of meaning in text	84% strongly agree	Strengths-based perspective	15	Responsiveness	4
		Lack of prior knowledge/training	9		
Taking words apart strategies in continuous text	85%	Foundational skills	8	Reciprocity	2
		Meaning-making process	8		

Table 19 showed the merged data and analysis for Research Question 1. Looking at data from all three sources, close observation as formative assessment and reciprocity were topics identified in all data sources as topics having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition. There were three other topics identified across two of the three data sources: responsiveness, reading as a constructive meaning making process, and lack of prior knowledge/training. These additional three topics were also identified as topics having an impact. Figure 13 shows a visual representation of the commonalities found in the merged data that were used to answer Research Question 1.

Figure 13

Merged Data Analysis – Research Question 1
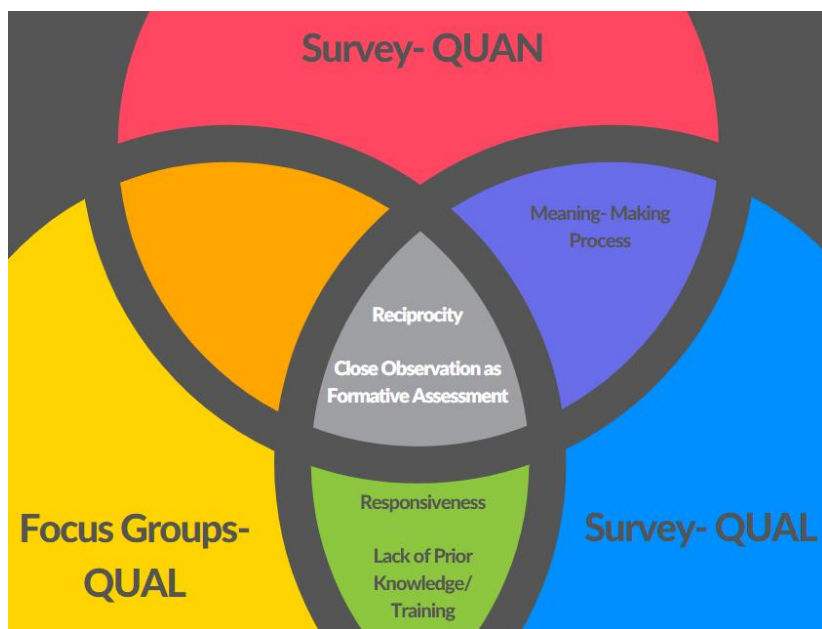
Note. This figure shows the visual representation of the merged data analysis for Research Question 1, "What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understands of early literacy acquistion?"

Figure 13 shows a visual representation of the merged data to identify professional learning topics having an impact on teacher theoretical understandings of teaching reading. As supported by data from this study, close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing are two professional learning topics that have an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition. Participants identified understanding close observation, through running records and observing students in authentic reading and writing tasks, as a key topic they learned in the ELPD model impacting their knowledge and understanding of teaching reading. Participants also identified reciprocity, how to use it to support student literacy learning, and how it can be used in classroom instruction as topics from the professional learning

that impacted teacher knowledge. Participants described reading and writing as two processes that support learning in the other, using writing as an instructional place to practice the processes students were learning in reading. Participants also discussed an understanding of using the known vocabularies of students to support growth in reading and writing.

Research Question 2

This research question was, "How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?" Data from the first part of the survey I created, open-ended Questions 11 and 23, and the thematic coding from the focus group discussions were used to answer this research question. Table 20 shows the data used to answer this research question.

Table 20

Merged Data and Analysis – Research Question 2

Survey data themes and frequency – qualitative		Focus group discussion themes and frequency – qualitative	
Varied grouping	11	Responsiveness	9
Responsiveness	8		
Teaching for reciprocity	7	Reciprocity	9
Teaching for meaning	7	Varied grouping	4
Strategies instruction		Strategy instruction	2

Table 19 showed the merged data and analysis for Research Question 2. Looking at data from all three sources, there were four main instructional practices influenced by the professional learning topics. These four main instructional practices were varied grouping, responsiveness, teaching for reciprocity, and strategy instruction. Figure 14

shows a visual representation of the commonalities found in the merged data that were used to answer Research Question 2.

Figure 14

Merged Data Analysis – Research Question 2
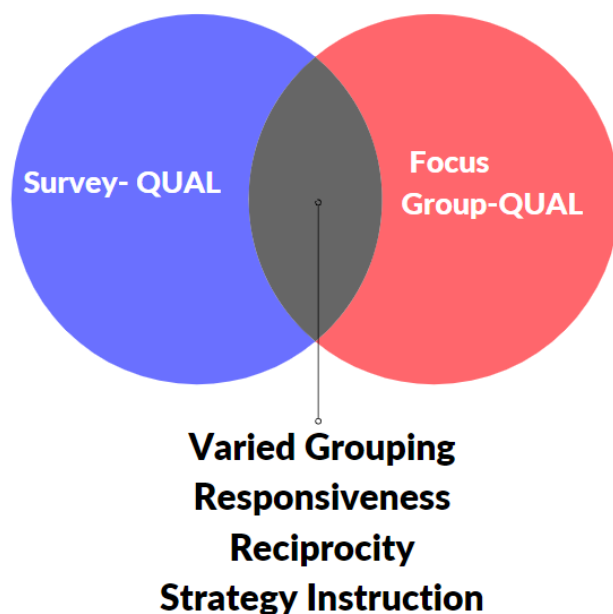
Note. This figure shows the visual representation of the merged data analysis for Research Question 2, "How have teachers instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?"

Figure 14 shows a visual representation of the merged data to identify instructional practices influenced by the professional learning topics in the ELPD model. As supported by data from this study, four changed instructional practices were identified: varied grouping, responsiveness, reciprocity, and strategy instruction. Participants identified changes made in their instructional groupings to reflect a balance of whole group, small group, and individual instruction. They also identified being more responsive to individual needs in reading as a change to their instructional practices.

Participants reported changes to reading and writing instruction in whole group, small group, and individual lessons. Instruction focused on reading and writing as reciprocal processes was identified as a change. Participants also identified strategy instruction, focusing on teaching, and supporting students to use reading strategies in continuous text as changes to instructional practices.

Research Question 3

This research question was, "What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?" Data from the first part of the survey I created, Likert scale questions 12-22, open-ended Question 23, and the thematic coding from the focus groups discussions were used to answer this research question. Table 21 shows the data used to answer this research question.

Table 21

Merged Data and Analysis – Research Question 3

Survey data findings – quantitative		Survey data themes and frequency – qualitative		Focus group discussion themes and frequency – qualitative	
Teacher leader coaching support	88% strongly agree	Conversations	21	Conversations	13
		Shared teaching demonstrations	20		
Shared teaching demonstrations	84% strongly agree	Teacher leader support (coaching/modeling)	12	Shared teaching demonstrations	13
		Authentic experiences with students	15		
Teacher leader-demonstrated procedures	82% strongly agree	Reflection	12	Teacher leader support (coaching/modeling)	2
Discussions	73% strongly agree	Lack of prior knowledge/training	10		
Reflection	73% strongly agree	Video self-analysis	9		

Table 21 showed the merged data and analysis for Research Question 3. Looking at data from all three sources, there were three collaborative features of professional learning perceived as having an impact on teaching practices. These three collaborative features were discussions and conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, and teacher leader support through coaching and modeling. Figure 15 shows a visual representation of the commonalities found in the merged data that were used to answer Research Question 3.

Figure 15

Merged Data Analysis – Research Question 3
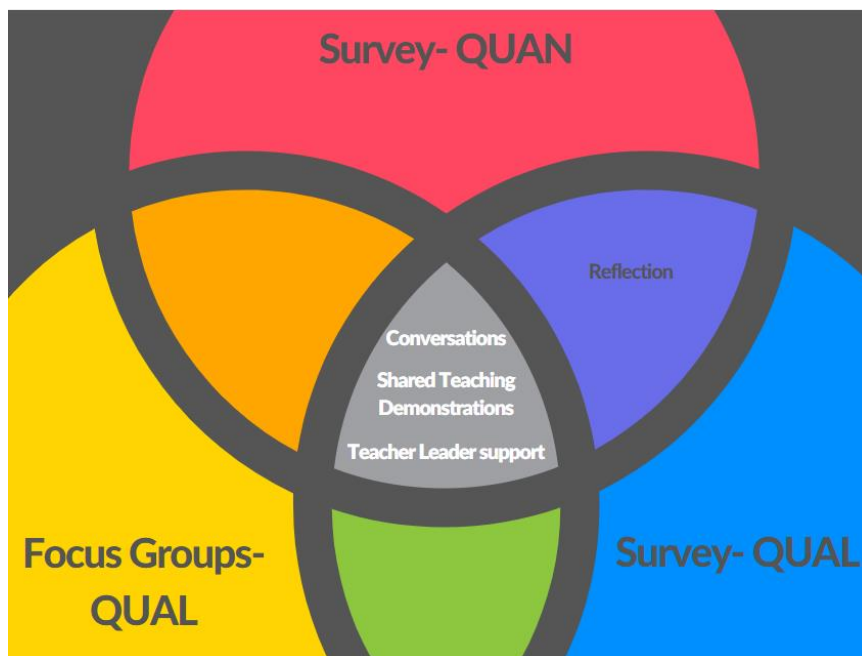
Note. This figure shows the visual representation of the merged data analysis for Research Question 3, "What collaborative features do teacher perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?"

Figure 15 shows a visual representation of the merged data to identify collaborative features of professional learning teachers perceived as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy. As supported by data from this study, discussions and conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, and teacher leader support through coaching and modeling are three collaborative features participants perceived as impacting their teaching practices in literacy. Participants identified discussions and conversations with the teacher leader, other participants in the training, and colleagues outside of the training as impactful. Participants reported talking about student behaviors, data collected and analyzed, and feedback on teaching as specific foci for these

conversations and discussions. Participants also identified shared teaching demonstrations as a collaborative feature impacting teaching practices. Participants reported reflecting on aspects of their own teaching and behaviors of their own students, both current and past, during the viewing of live lessons. Often, the live lessons were the impetus of the conversations they identified as impacting their teaching practice. Having the teacher leader as a support for coaching and modeling of instruction was the third collaborative feature. Participants also discussed teaching in front of the teacher leader, having the teacher leader demonstrate instruction, and reflective dialogue with the teacher leader as impactful collaborative features.

Research Question 4

This research question was, "How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?" Data from the first part of the survey I created, open-ended Question 23, and the thematic coding from the focus groups discussions were used to answer this research question. Table 22 shows the data used to answer this research question.

Table 22

Merged Data and Analysis – Research Question 4

Survey data themes and frequency – qualitative		Focus group discussion themes and frequency – qualitative	
Conversations	21	Conversations	14
Shared teaching demonstrations	20	Authentic experiences with students	5
Teacher leader support (modeling/coaching)	12		
Reflection	12		
Authentic experiences with students	10	Shared teaching demonstrations	2
Video self-analysis	9		

Table 22 showed the merged data and analysis for Research Question 4. Looking at data from both sources, there were three collaborative features of professional learning affecting the transfer of professional learning. These collaborative features were conversations, authentic experiences with students, and shared teaching demonstrations. Figure 16 shows a visual representation of the commonalities found in the merged data that were used to answer Research Question 4.

Figure 16

Merged Data Analysis – Research Question 4
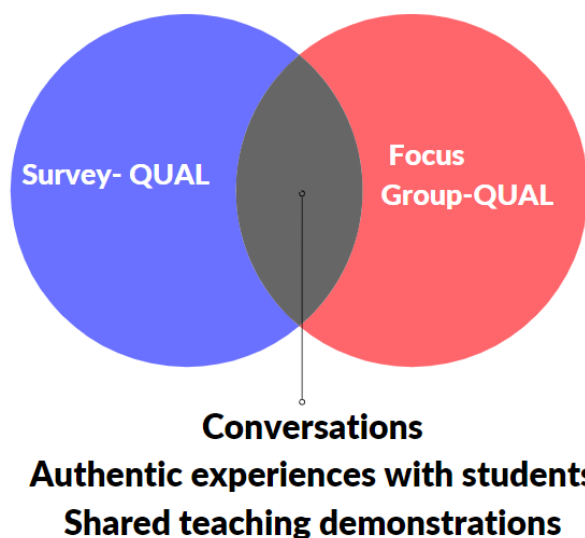
Note. This figure shows the visual representation of the merged data analysis for Research Question 4, "How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?"

Figure 16 shows a visual representation of the merged data to how collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of learning and impact instructional practices. As supported by data from this study, there are three ways collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of learning. Participants talked about how conversations based on observations of student behaviors, instructional decision-making, and feedback on teaching impacted their transfer of learning back to classroom practice. Being able to talk with others, within and outside of the professional learning model, made a difference in how they carried what they learned back to their classrooms. Having authentic experiences teaching students while

participating in the professional learning model was also an element that supported the learning transfer. Working with students grounded the professional learning in an experience parallel to what occurred in daily classroom instruction and made the professional learning real and applicable. Shared teaching demonstrations was also a pathway for helping participants transfer their learning. Participants reported having a demonstration, usually with accompanying discussions, as providing a view of what instruction should look like around the professional learning topics. Watching others teach and reflecting on and discussing what was seen supported the transfer of professional learning.

Research Question 5

This research question was, "To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?" Data from the second part of the survey, EST-R, the open-ended survey questions I created, Questions 11 and 23, and the thematic coding from the focus groups discussions were used to answer this research question. Table 23 shows the data used to answer this research question.

Table 23

Merged Data and Analysis – Research Question 5

Survey data findings – quantitative		Survey data themes and frequency – qualitative		Focus group discussion themes and frequency – qualitative	
EST-R (Estes, 2005)	76.98 mean score	Confidence	7	Confidence	20
Spearman correlation coefficient, Rs=0.369	Correlation between professional learning and self-efficacy			Professionalism	4
	Statistically significant relationship (*p*<0.05)				

Table 23 showed the merged data and analysis for Research Question 5. Looking at data from all three sources, there was a relationship between the professional learning and teacher self-efficacy for teaching reading. The mean score on EST-R (Estes, 2005) was 78.98. Calculation of Spearman's correlation coefficient, Rs=0.369, showed a moderate correlation between the professional learning and self-efficacy (Urdan, 2017). A *p* value less than 0.05 was calculated, and the relationship was found to be statistically significant (Urdan, 2017). Participants reported feeling a greater sense of confidence and feeling equipped to teach reading as a result of their professional learning. Participants often reported a sense of "I wish I'd known then what I know now" in reflecting back on their teaching prior to the professional learning.

Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 described the data collected and analyzed for the study. Chapter 5

interprets the quantitative and qualitative data for each research question. Chapter 5 also

includes a summary of the research questions and data collected and a summary of

significant findings. Chapter 5 includes theoretical implications from the findings and

practical implications from the findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations

for practice, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Five overarching research questions within the context of a collaborative professional learning model informed the study.

1. What professional learning topics do teachers perceive as having an impact on theoretical understandings of early literacy acquisition?

2. How have teacher instructional practices been influenced by these professional learning topics?

3. What collaborative features of professional learning do teachers perceive as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy?

4. How do collaborative features of professional learning affect teacher transfer of professional learning and impact instructional practice?

5. To what extent is there a statistically significant relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading?

This chapter is organized for clarity into the following sections: data collection, summary of significant findings, implications for practice, theoretical implications, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Data Collection

The study used the ELPD training model. Participants who completed the professional development training model were asked to respond to a two-part survey of both Likert items and open-ended questions. The survey questions focused on professional learning topics which impacted theoretical knowledge of early literacy development and collaborative features from the professional learning perceived to have an impact on the transfer of professional learning and changes to classroom practices. I developed Part 1 of the survey, containing both Likert items and open-ended questions. The second part of the survey used an established measure, EST-R, to explore the relationship between early literacy professional learning and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading (Estes, 2005). Survey participants were recruited for focus group discussions using an external link on the final question of the survey. The data sources were analyzed separately, with the survey data being analyzed first to serve as the basis for the formulation of the focus group discussion questions. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data were analyzed from the open-ended questions on the survey and the focus groups discussions using thematic coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, all data were merged, analyzed, and aligned to the research questions to complete this study and answer the five research questions.

Summary of Significant Findings

For complete analysis of all data findings, I merged data from the Likert scale survey questions, the open-ended survey questions, and the focus group discussions and aligned these data to each research question. This merged data analysis was used to

identify important findings from the study. Research Question 1 looked at professional learning topics perceived as having an impact on participant knowledge and theoretical understanding. Close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing are two professional learning topics from the ELPD model that have an impact on theoretical understanding of early literacy acquisition. Research Question 2 looked at how learning from the topics influenced instructional practice. Four changed instructional practices were identified: varied grouping, responsiveness, reciprocity, and strategy instruction. Research Question 3 looked at collaborative features of professional learning perceived as having an impact on teaching practices in literacy. Discussions and conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, and teacher leader support through coaching and modeling are three collaborative features participants perceived as impacting their teaching practices in literacy. Research Question 4 examined how collaborative features of professional learning impacted both participant transfer of professional learning and changes to instructional practices. There were three collaborative features of professional learning affecting the transfer of professional learning. These collaborative features were conversations, authentic experiences with students, and shared teaching demonstrations. The final research question looked at the relationship between professional learning in early literacy and teacher sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading. Calculation of Spearman's correlation coefficient, $R_s=0.369$ with $p<0.05$, showed a correlation between the professional learning and self-efficacy, resulting in a statistically significant relationship. Participants reported feeling a greater sense of confidence and feeling equipped to teach reading as a result of their professional learning. Figure 17 shows a summary of significant findings from the study.

Figure 17

Significant Findings from the Study
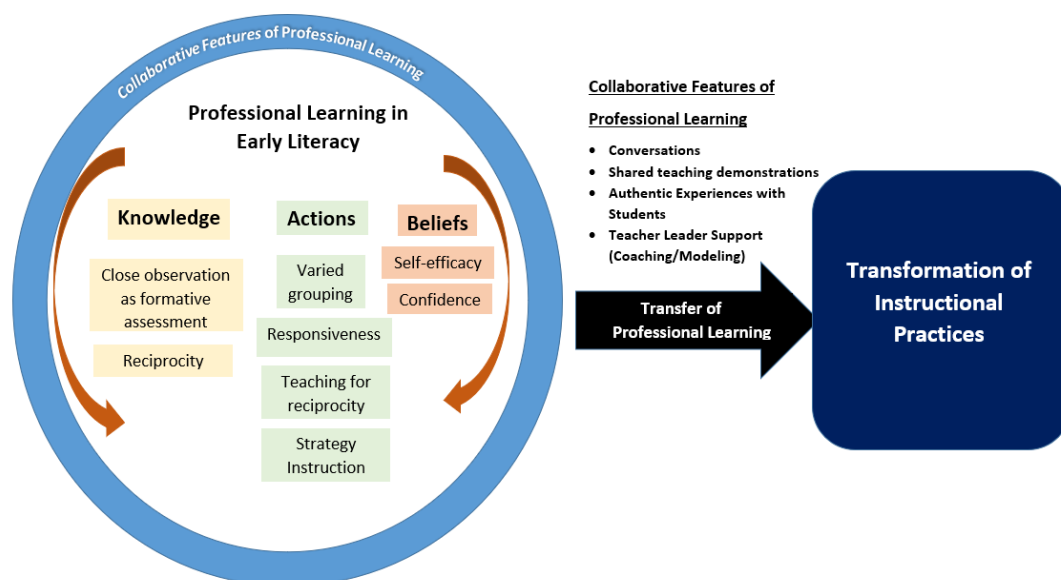
Note. This figure shows the visual representation of the merged data analysis and significant findings from the study.

Figure 17 shows a summary of significant findings for the study. The visual representation shows the findings for the impact of professional learning in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and beliefs. It also shows the collaborative features identified in the study that supported learning transfer and changes to instructional practices. The research results confirmed the conceptual framework. Professional learning impacts teacher knowledge, actions, and sense of efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Estes, 2005; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015). The findings of this research provided specificity in each area. In terms of knowledge, participants identified two main topics as impactful topics from professional learning: close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing. In terms of actions, participants identified the use of varied grouping, teaching responsively, teaching for

reciprocity, and strategy instruction as changes to classroom practices as a result of collaborative professional learning in early literacy. Concerning teacher beliefs, participants identified confidence and a sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading as a result of collaborative professional learning in early literacy. Research also supported the role of collaboration in professional learning and its role in changes to teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy; but gaps existed in examining just how the collaborative features interact, either individually or in concert (Anderson, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Estes, 2005; Kennedy, 2016; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015). The findings of this research provided specificity in what collaborative features of professional learning in early literacy supported the transfer of learning and changes to classroom practices. These collaborative features identified in this research were conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, authentic experiences with students, and teacher leader support in the form of coaching and modeling. While the original conceptual framework undergirding the study was confirmed, the significant results displayed in Figure 17 provide specificity in terms of teacher knowledge, actions, and beliefs and in identifying specific collaborative features to support ongoing research in the field of early literacy learning and professional learning.

Theoretical Implications from Findings

This current study was framed by adult learning theory and sociocultural learning theory, and the findings and results align with and support ideas from each theoretical framework. The study looked at the impact of collaborative professional learning and how professional learning is transferred and applied. Participant perceptions of collaborative features of the ELPD model were collected as data and analyzed. The

findings suggested four main collaborative features that impacted classroom practices and supported participants in the transfer of their professional learning: conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, support from the teacher leader, and authentic experiences with students.

Sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) posited learning as a social process fostered through interactions with others. As participants in the study discussed the changes to their knowledge and teaching actions as a result of the professional learning, they identified four collaborative features. Each collaborative feature supported interactions with others. Shared teaching demonstrations and having conversations and discussions with others were significant findings in the research. Both these collaborative features position learners in situations that stretch their learning in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) with interactions with others. Having authentic experiences with real students is also a collaborative feature that created a basis for their learning. Participants could watch, discuss, analyze, question, and problem solve issues about their own students they worked with in the training or in their classrooms and were involved with others in these same actions around other participants' students. Having a teacher leader support participants in the training, through modeling and coaching, was another collaborative feature supporting sociocultural learning theory. The support of the teacher leader, as a more knowledgeable other, helped facilitate participant knowledge, actions, and beliefs (Vygotsky, 1978). Participants reported the discussion with the group and individually with the teacher leader supporting their understandings and new learning. Vygotsky (1978) posited learning happening first through collaboration with others and then becoming integrated into one's mental structures for understanding. The conversations,

shared teaching demonstrations, and authentic experiences with students provide the collaborative structures to initiate new learning. As each teacher assimilated new knowledge and teaching actions to use with their students, they were able to integrate the new learning into individual understandings.

Knowles (1980) also discussed tenants of adult learning including a need to solve real-world problems and be involved in real-world tasks that allow exploration and discovery to apply new learning. Authentic experiences with students, as reported in the study, allowed participants these conditions described by Knowles (1980) in his theory of andragogy. Often, the authentic experiences with students were the basis of the other three main collaborative features reported as impactful: conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, and support from the teacher leader. Each participant brought a varied background of previous experiences to the professional learning which was central in the way they approached new learning. In discussing how the professional learning impacted their beliefs and sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading, participants discussed some ways they taught reading prior to the professional learning were changed and shaped by their authentic experiences with students in the training.

Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is also supported by the findings of this study. In this theory of adult learning, a community of learners provides support and understanding of information and ideas. Learning is embedded and contextual. The novice takes part in a community working towards expertise. Lave and Wenger (1991) stated the community's shared experience is supported by discussions within the community of learners. The findings of this study support Lave and Wenger's theory. The context of the ELPD model was a shared experience for participants supporting their

new learning. Shared teaching demonstrations and authentic experiences with students created a shared experience for participants to discuss what they were seeing in lessons of other participants, in reflecting on their own lessons, and in student behaviors and data. The interactions with and support from the teacher leader were part of the novice group working toward expertise in teaching reading. These shared experiences were the basis of conversations which participants reported as impacting the transfer of the professional learning and their changes to classroom practice.

Transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) also grounded the study, and the results and findings align to this theory. Mezirow (1997) described learning as, "the process of affecting change in a frame of reference" (p. 5). The collaborative features reported as impactful in the study created frames of reference for the participants. Mezirow (1997) stated, "We learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others to arrive at a common understanding that holds until new evidence or arguments present themselves" (p. 7). Shared teaching demonstrations and authentic experiences with students allowed participants to analyze related experiences of others. The analysis of related experiences helped participants arrive at new understandings which impacted the transfer of professional learning and instructional practices. Mezirow (1997) explained learners face a situation or dilemma that does not fit their current way of understanding and are faced with adjusting their way of thinking. Reflection in the context of collaborative dialogue leads to transformational learning where the learner can think critically and apply new knowledge to other situations and occurrences (Mezirow, 1997). Participants viewed live lessons and discussed new learning with others in the training and outside the training. Participants discussed how their frame of reference for

understanding often did not fit with the new learning. Through collaborative discussions and support from the teacher leader, they adjusted ways of thinking and applied new learning with the students with whom they worked. The changes to instructional practices, or the teacher actions, identified in the study were varied groupings, responsiveness, teaching for reciprocity, and strategy instruction. These changed actions reported by participants suggest assimilation of the professional learning (Mezirow, 1997). Participants were able to think critically and apply their knowledge to other situations and contexts, such as their classroom instruction (Mezirow, 1997). The changes to teaching actions participants described align to the transformational learning described in Mezirow's (1978, 1997) research.

Practical Implications from Findings

Literacy is part of a necessary foundation for academic, workforce, and quality of life success (Graham et al., 2017). Teacher quality and expert instruction influence student outcomes. While research supports the importance of coherence, collaboration, and duration, gaps existed in past literatures concerning how specific collaborative features in professional learning interact to impact teacher knowledge, beliefs, and actions to promote the transfer of professional learning into instructional practices (Anderson, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Specific to the field of literacy, improving the professional knowledge of teachers of reading can impact student performance (Schaich, 2016). Studies specific to professional development and reading continue to be an area in need of further study (Basma & Savage, 2017). Teacher knowledge and improved instructional practices must be addressed to impact literacy levels (Gore et al., 2017; Shanahan, 2018). The current study

aligns with and supports existing literature related to professional learning; learning transfer; and teacher knowledge, actions, and beliefs.

Teacher Knowledge

The current study identified two professional learning topics participants reported as having an impact on theoretical understanding of early literacy acquisition. These topics included close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing. Madda et al. (2019) identified a variation of the amount of teacher control and support based on student needs and strategy instruction as critical components of effective literacy instruction. Morrow et al. (2019) stated the crucial aspect of the teacher's role and the need for teachers to possess a wide range of understanding of theory and strategies. Based on the results of the study, participants reported two main professional learning topics, close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing. Close observation or observing and documenting student behaviors within the act of authentic reading and writing tasks provided participants a basis for varying the amount of teacher control and support dependent on student needs. The findings of the study also indicated changes to teacher actions based on the professional learning which included varied groupings, responsiveness, teaching for reciprocity, and strategy instruction. Each of these changed actions align to best practices in the field of early literacy and are supportive of past literature (Madda et al., 2019; Morrow et al., 2019). The ILA (2018) standards, the basis for preparing highly qualified professionals and high expectations for students, outlined standards for foundational knowledge, assessment and evaluation, and professional learning and leadership that the current study's findings align with and support. ILA found the

importance of literacy teachers who demonstrate knowledge of theory, concepts, and instructional approaches to support literacy development. The reported professional learning topics and changes to classroom practice support ILA's findings. Participants reported having a greater understanding of reading theories and were able to offer students varied groupings, responsive instruction, and strategy instruction as a result of their professional learning. ILA also stated the importance of different kinds of assessments and how to use a variety of data sources for drawing conclusions based on individual needs. In the current study, close observation as a formative assessment was reported as a professional learning topic impacting teacher knowledge, and varied groupings and responsiveness to individual needs were reported as changes in teacher actions as a result of the professional learning. Participants also reported changes to their actions and beliefs based on reflecting on their practices (Mezirow, 1991; Morgan & Bates, 2017; Schön, 1987; Taylor, 2016). Through conversations and shared teaching demonstrations, participants reported thinking about their own teaching with students and how to best adjust instruction to meet their needs (Abe et al., 2012; Beck et al., 2015: Gersten et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fullen, 2012; Lyons, 1994; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015; Williams, 2013). In terms of confidence and degree of self-efficacy for teaching reading, participants reported they gained a sense of being equipped to handle a wide range of needs and were more likely to advocate for effective literacy instruction in their teaching assignments (Estes, 2005; Eun, 2011; Fairbanks et al., 2010, Gallagher, 2007; ILA, 2018; Schaich, 2016; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

The current study supports existing literature from Stouffer's (2015) profile of exemplary primary literacy teacher knowledge. Stouffer (2015, 2016) outlined common

characteristics of exemplary primary literacy teacher knowledge, procedures, and beliefs. Stouffer (2016) described exemplary literacy teachers as "having an awareness of the underlying purpose of their instructional activities" (p. 36) and knowing how to formally and informally assess students and match their teaching decisions to what they observed students doing in the acts of reading and writing. These components of teacher knowledge align with the findings of the current study. Participants reported knowing more about theories of reading, close observation as a formative assessment, and making decisions for prompting based on what they were able to observe.

Teacher Actions

With regard to teacher actions and collaborative features that supported the transfer of professional learning reported, the study aligns with ideas in the literature about learning transfer. Foley and Kaiser's (2013) concepts of near transfer and far transfer were reaffirmed based on the findings in the study. Near transfer occurs when the knowledge and concepts learned are used in the same context (Foley & Kaiser, 2013). Participants reported the authentic experiences with students as a collaborative feature that influenced their learning and changes to teaching practices. Often, the authentic experiences with students were the impetus for other collaborative features identified as influencing learning and changes to classroom practice, including conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, and support from the teacher leader in terms of modeling or coaching (Anderson, 2016; Beck et al., 2015; Chien, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; DeMonte, 2013; Eisenberg & Medrich, 2013; Estyn, 2014; Kraft et al., 2018; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Stouffer, 2015; Todd, 2017).

Deliberateness and instructional dexterity were two important concepts from the

work of May et al. (2016) in studies done through CPRE and CRESP at the University of
Delaware relating to teacher actions. Responsive teaching is closely related to the idea of
instructional dexterity and defined as being able to flexibly apply deep skill in the act of
teaching. Being able to use close observations as a formative assessment within the act of
teaching, making effective in-the-moment decisions, and adjusting teaching moves are
important parts of responsive teaching and instructional dexterity that tie to the findings
of the current study.

Procedurally, Stouffer's (2015) research supported balancing whole texts and
skills, promoting the child's use of reading and writing strategies, and using formative
assessments to observe student reading and writing behaviors as a basis for further
instruction as actions of an exemplary literacy teacher. The current study found close
observation as formative assessment and strategy instruction as knowledge and actions
influenced by professional learning. Exemplary primary literacy teachers understood
reading and writing as reciprocal processes and explicitly instructed students to use
knowledge in writing to help them in reading and vice versa (Stouffer, 2015). Reciprocity
as a professional learning topic influencing teacher knowledge and teaching for
reciprocity as an action resulting in changes to instructional practice were key findings in
the current study. Stouffer's (2015) research emphasized the importance of both small
and whole group instruction as a part of maintaining "instructional density" (p. 35).
Scaffolding student work and varying the levels and kinds of support as student
competencies grew and using a variety of methods to adjust instructional approaches to
meet individual needs were two main actions of exemplary primary literacy teachers
(Stouffer, 2016). These actions were also supported in the findings from the current study

as teachers reported varied groupings, responsiveness, teaching for reciprocity, and teaching for strategies as actions influenced by professional learning.

The current study expands on Stouffer's (2015) research by identifying collaborative features that influenced professional learning and the transfer of professional learning. Participants reported conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, support from the teacher leader, and shared authentic experiences with students as collaborative features that supported professional learning and helped transfer the learning to changed classroom practices. The study informs the current field of professional learning by identifying specific collaborative features to support changes in teacher knowledge, actions, and beliefs.

Teacher Beliefs

In considering the teacher beliefs identified in Stouffer's (2015) work, exemplary primary literacy teachers employed strategies of self-regulation and independence in their own teaching. Participants in this study reported confidence and self-efficacy for teaching reading as a result of their professional learning.

The findings of the current study also affirm and expand upon the literature regarding teacher self-efficacy for teaching reading. Gaps exist in the literature on teacher efficacy specific to literacy (Schaich, 2016). Schaich's (2016) study on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers as a result of student teaching experiences found the role of success and support from an expert as crucial to increasing teacher efficacy. The current study's findings align with Schaich's finding in that participants reported the support from the teacher leader, through coaching and modeling, as a collaborative feature that supported the transfer or professional learning to classroom practices. The current study expands the

limited literature in the field about self-efficacy for teaching early literacy.

Estes (2005) studied self-efficacy for teaching reading and found a higher sense of self-efficacy based on years of teaching reading, for those currently teaching reading, and for those who attended reading professional development within the last 5 years. While the current study did not disaggregate participant responses based on these demographics specifically, the current study used a common professional learning model and found participants reported a high degree of self-efficacy on EST-R (Estes, 2005) and increased confidence based on their professional learning. There was a statistically significant relationship between professional learning and participant self-efficacy for teaching reading. The current findings support past literature from Estes.

Professional Learning

The current study aligns with and supports current literature regarding professional learning. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified a content focus, use of active learning, a job-embedded context, modeling of effective teaching, and support from a coach or expert as elements of effective professional development. Each of these elements was affirmed in the current study as participants reported the use of conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, teacher leader support, and authentic experiences with students as collaborative features that supported the transfer of professional learning and influenced changes to instruction. Other research on critical collaborative structures for professional learning identified collaborative learning communities or PLCs with collegial dialogue around teaching practices and experiences as ways to impact teacher knowledge, instructional applications of learning, and increases in student achievement (Abe et al., 2012; Gersten et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fullen,

2012; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Williams, 2013). The importance of conversations and shared teaching demonstrations and authentic experiences with students were key findings in the current study which align with current literature.

The current study also expands on current research in the field with regard to professional learning and collaborative elements. Anderson (2016) called for further research about how collaborative features in professional learning interact, in concert or individually, to help teachers transfer their professional learning, leading to a transformation of instructional practices. Basma and Savage (2017) argued the literature on reading professional development needs further study. The current study identified four specific collaborative features supporting professional learning in early literacy and the transfer of professional learning. Participants talked about how conversations based on observations of student behaviors and shared teaching demonstrations influenced their transfer of learning back to classroom practice. Being able to talk with others, within and outside of the professional learning model, helped them assimilate new learning and adjust their teaching. Watching the lessons of others and then reflecting and discussing observations also supported professional learning in literacy and the changes to practices in this content area. Having authentic experiences with students while participating in the training also helped them transfer their professional learning.

The findings provide the STATE Reading Recovery® and Early Literacy Training Center an opportunity to discuss and review the ELPD model, looking at the role of the conversations, shared teaching demonstrations, authentic experiences with students, and the teacher leader's coaching and modeling support as collaborative features to help participants improve their transfer of learning to classroom practice.

These findings also provide a model for other state literacy models and universities to use in planning and implementing collaborative professional learning in early literacy. Content courses that focus on early literacy acquisition should consider emphasizing the role of close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing as topics important for teacher understanding based on the findings in this study. Providing opportunities for shared teaching demonstrations, conversations around such observed instruction, and authentic experiences with students are also important considerations for other state literacy training models and universities offering preservice and postgraduate coursework in early literacy. While teachers often work with cooperating teachers during their student teaching practicums and may encounter coaching support in some schools, these findings suggest practitioners benefit from specific coaching and modeling from those more knowledgeable others as they are refining their own instruction and should work closely with partner districts to provide these types of collaborative support. Districts may also benefit from the findings of this study. Professional learning in the area of early literacy should also consider the role of close observation as a formative assessment, how that formative assessment data can be used to implement targeted instruction for early literacy learning, and how reading and writing work as reciprocal processes. Based on the findings of this study, these topics were impactful for participant understanding and knowledge of early literacy acquisition. Furthermore, as districts work to provide job-embedded professional learning for teachers, the findings of this study offer specific kinds of collaboration that impact classroom practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings from this research study, there are recommendations for practice for both schools and districts as well as teacher preparation programs. The findings suggested professional learning topics of close observation as formative assessment and the reciprocity of reading and writing as knowledge areas where teachers could find benefit in early literacy. These needs are supported by other literature in the field (ILA, 2018; Madda et al., 2019; Morrow et al., 2019; Stouffer, 2015). While most ongoing professional development and teacher preparation programs focus on formal and informal assessments and their uses, the use of systematic and close observation of students in reading and writing acts is recommended to improve teacher knowledge in early literacy. Reading and writing as reciprocal processes and how learning in one area is supported by learning in the other area is also another area important to improving teacher knowledge and theoretical understanding of early literacy acquisition. While ongoing professional development and teacher preparation generally focus on teaching reading and teaching writing, helping practitioners explicitly connect these reciprocal processes is another recommendation from the current study.

The research findings suggested professional learning in early literacy influenced specific teaching actions. Participants adjusted classroom practice that included varied grouping, teaching responsively to individual needs, teaching for the reciprocity of reading and writing, and including strategy instruction in reading. The effectiveness and importance of these teaching actions are supported by other literature in the field (ILA, 2018; Madda et al., 2019; Morrow et al., 2019; Stouffer, 2015). These changed actions suggest schools and districts could offer ongoing support for teachers in the use of these

actions to increase student achievement. As areas where participants saw the need for changes, it is critical teachers understand and implement teaching practices that offer differentiation, respond to student individual needs, support learning in reading by connecting it to writing and vice versa, and emphasize reading and writing strategies in addition to skills (ILA, 2018; Madda et al., 2019; Morrow et al., 2019; Stouffer, 2015). Based on the research findings, I recommend teacher preparation programs ensure candidates have experiences with varied teaching practicums that allow exposure and experience with these specific four elements.

The research findings suggested professional learning and collaboration in early literacy support teacher confidence and self-efficacy for teaching reading. Participants discussed not having a sound foundation for teaching reading and a lack of prior knowledge and training for teaching reading before the ELPD model. As a result of professional learning, their confidence for teaching reading grew. Other research suggested the importance of experiences which are associated with a higher sense self-efficacy including practicum experiences and professional development (Estes, 2005; Schaich, 2016). I recommend schools and districts offer a variety of opportunities for professional learning in the area of early literacy and support collaborative features that support the transfer of learning.

There are also recommendations for practice based on the findings from the research study around collaborative features that support professional learning, the transfer of learning, and changes to classroom practices. This research study expanded on current research in the field around the characteristics for effective professional development and the importance of collaboration in adult learning (Abe et al., 2012;

Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Gersten et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fullen, 2012; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Williams, 2013). This research study identified four collaborative features of ELPD supporting professional learning, the transfer of learning, and changes to classroom practices. Based on the research findings, I recommend schools and districts and teacher preparation programs leverage the kinds of collaboration from this study's findings to support professional learning and the transfer of professional learning in early literacy. Conversations and shared teaching demonstrations influence professional learning and are recommended as part of all professional learning in the area of early literacy. Having support from a more knowledgeable other who can support and model for teachers is important and recommended. Providing opportunities to work with students in the context of professional learning in literacy is also recommended. I recommend schools and districts help teachers see different examples of sound teaching practices and provide teachers with supports to implement those practices in classrooms.

Limitations

My study was limited to the context of one collaborative professional learning model in early literacy. The population was limited to teachers representing kindergarten through fifth grades and represented the area of literacy professional learning only. Given that my research was limited to one state and based on one collaborative training model in early literacy, the generalizations and findings could be different in different contexts or geographical locations in the country. The study did not differentiate perceptions by the grade level of teaching assignments or years of experience, which limits the generalization of findings.

Recommendations for Further Research

Gaps in research exist in the areas of professional learning in the area of literacy and in examining just how collaborative features interact to support professional learning and transformation classroom instruction (Anderson, 2016; Kennedy, 2016; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Replication of this study is recommended and should include data disaggregated by specific teaching grade bands and years of teaching experience to provide more broadly applicable generalizations. Further research is recommended to continue to study how teacher knowledge, actions, and beliefs are influenced by professional learning. Pre- and post-data collection are recommended in looking at the influence of professional learning in early literacy. I also recommend further research to observe and quantify changes to classroom practices through case study and observations. This current study collected teacher perceptions of changes to classroom practices only.

Summary

This research study examined the impact of a collaborative professional learning model in early literacy on teacher knowledge, actions, and efficacy and how learning transfer results in changes to instructional practices. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions. This chapter included a summary of the research questions and data collected and a summary of significant findings. The theoretical implications from the findings and practical implications from the findings were also included in this chapter. The chapter concluded with recommendations for practice, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

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Appendix A

Part 1 of Survey

Early Literacy Professional Learning Survey

This survey is designed to help gain better understanding of the professional learning topics that impact teachers' understandings of how to teach young children to read and write. It is also designed to help gain a better understanding of the impact of collaborative professional learning in early literacy and how learning transfer results in changes in instructional practices.

Please consider your experiences in the Early Literacy Professional Development model. Indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate response on the form provided.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Your answers on the survey instruments will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

Question	Response
I agree to participate in the study by completing the following two-part survey. I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time. I understand my answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.	I will participate in the study by completing the survey. I will not participate in the study.
1. The role of **familiar reading** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
2. The role of **close observation as a formative assessment** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
3. The role of **supporting students to construct meaning through a**	Strongly agree Agree

book introduction was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
4. The role of **reciprocity between reading and writing** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
5. The role of **conversation in oral language development** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
6. The role of **ways of problem solving in writing** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
7. The role of **word work in isolation** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
8. The role of **taking words apart in continuous text** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
9. The role of **responsive teaching** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

10. The role of **using continuous text to support students' construction of meaning** was one topic that had a significant impact on my understandings of how to teach young children to read and write.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
11. Please share ways the professional learning contributed to your understanding of how to teach young children to read and write.	Open ended
12. **Viewing model lessons** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
13. **Having the coaching support from the teacher leader** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
14. **The discussion after viewing model lessons** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
15. **Having the teacher leader demonstrate instructional procedures** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
16. **The collegial nature of the group** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
17. **The shared experience around a**	Strongly agree

common professional text was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
18. **The shared experience around a common book set of leveled readers** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
19. **Videoing and analyzing my own teaching** were one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
20. **Reflecting on my own teaching, through writing or discussion,** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
21. An inquiry cycle involves collecting data, analyzing data, and making next steps teaching decisions. **Engaging with others in an inquiry cycle** was one feature of my professional learning that had a significant impact on my teaching.	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree
22. Please share how your professional learning in the ELPD model has impacted your classroom instruction.	Open-ended

Appendix B

Part 2 of Survey ETS-R (Estes, 2005)

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain better understanding of the kinds of things that influence reading teachers. Please indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate response on the form provided. Do not write on this document. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name. Thank you.

1. When a student does better than usual in reading, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

2. When a student is having difficulty with a reading assignment, I often have trouble adjusting it to his / her level.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3. When I really try, I can teach a student how to read.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

4. When the reading grades of my students improve, it has little to do with the methods I have used.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5. If a student quickly masters a new concept in reading, this might be because I knew the necessary steps to teach that concept.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6. If students have little encouragement to read at home, they are unlikely to respond positively to reading instruction.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7. If a student is a struggling reader, I can usually determine if he / she needs remediation in phonics.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

8. If a student did not remember information, I gave in a previous reading lesson, I would not know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

9. If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to redirect him/her.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

10. If one of my students was assigned to read a passage, I would not be able to accurately assess whether the selection was at the correct level of difficulty.

      Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

11. When all factors are considered, I am not a very powerful influence on a student's

achievement in reading.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

12. When the reading skills of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

13. When a student is reading below grade level, I am usually not able to determine how to remediate in order to improve his/her reading ability.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

14. If parents don't read with their children, it makes it difficult for me to teach reading.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

15. When a student reads aloud-I can usually determine what strategies to use to improve his / her fluency.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

16. If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to remediate to meet the student's needs.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

17. Even though a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement, I am not limited in what I can accomplish toward teaching a student to read.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

18. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities in reading may not reach many students.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

19. When a new student comes to my class, I am able to accurately assess his / her appropriate reading level.
       Strongly agree   Agree   Uncertain   Disagree   Strongly disagree

20. Please indicate which of the following represents the years of teaching experience you currently have.
     3-8 years
     9-15 years
     16-20 years
     21+ years

21. Please indicate the following grade band which represents your teaching assignment
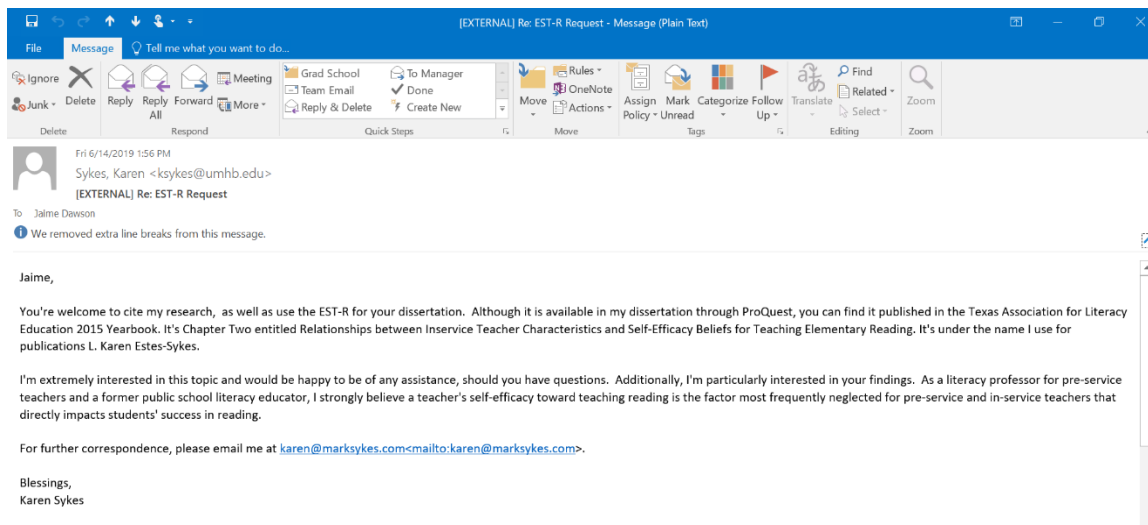   K-2
     3-5
     6-8

Appendix C

Permission to Use the ETS-R (Estes, 2005)

Fri 6/14/2019 1:56 PM
Sykes, Karen <ksykes@umhb.edu>
[EXTERNAL] Re: EST-R Request

To   Jaime Dawson

We removed extra line breaks from this message.

Jaime,

You're welcome to cite my research, as well as use the EST-R for your dissertation. Although it is available in my dissertation through ProQuest, you can find it published in the Texas Association for Literacy Education 2015 Yearbook. It's Chapter Two entitled Relationships between Inservice Teacher Characteristics and Self-Efficacy Beliefs for Teaching Elementary Reading. It's under the name I use for publications L. Karen Estes-Sykes.

I'm extremely interested in this topic and would be happy to be of any assistance, should you have questions. Additionally, I'm particularly interested in your findings. As a literacy professor for pre-service teachers and a former public school literacy educator, I strongly believe a teacher's self-efficacy toward teaching reading is the factor most frequently neglected for pre-service and in-service teachers that directly impacts students' success in reading.

For further correspondence, please email me at karen@marksykes.com<mailto:karen@marksykes.com>.

Blessings,
Karen Sykes