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Primary Grade Teachers' Perspectives on Early Literacy Intervention Programs in Urban Title I Schools

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Walden University
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Abstract

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EdS, Walden University, 2017

MS, Walden University, 2015

BS, Augusta State University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Developing a strong foundation in literacy is an essential component of students' overall academic success. However, first through third grade students in urban Title I schools located in the southeastern region of the United States continued to show limited progress on state literacy assessments. The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore teachers' perspectives on their experiences with literacy intervention programs. The conceptual framework was based on Senge's learning organizations and systems thinking theory. Research questions explored literacy intervention program effectiveness and supports teachers needed for ongoing implementation with fidelity. Data from semistructured interviews with 13 primary grade teachers were collected and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify codes, patterns, and categories. Findings revealed two meta-themes, identified as effectiveness and supports, and five subthemes: (a) personal feelings of responsibility to address needs of struggling readers by using different strategies, (b) continuously establishing a clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of literacy intervention programs, (c) recognizing the need for in-depth professional learning to support teachers' implementation of best practices for literacy interventions with fidelity, (d) implementing strategies for hands-on learning, and (e) identifying needed supports for individual students. This study contributes to the field of early childhood literacy education intervention practices and furthers understanding of professional learning in literacy. Findings contribute to positive social change in that school leaders can make informed decisions and provide on-going, in-depth professional learning and support for teacher development to effectively implement literacy intervention programs for students during their primary grade foundational years.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all of the educators who worked so tirelessly during the 2019-2021 global pandemic. Educators who worked their hardest to make the best of a situation that was out of any of their control. Some lives were lost, others' lives will never be the same. Many educators traveled through uncharted territories to meet the needs of every student.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my Lord and savior Jesus Christ who I know without His guidance, achieving this milestone would not have been possible. I would like to thank Walden University as the institution in which I have acquired my Masters, Specialists and now Doctoral degree and am very satisfied with the level of education that they have provided. Thank you, Dr Yarosz, for all of the phone calls and the guidance throughout this process, Dr Mary Barbara Trube for serving as the second chair member of this research and being the wind beneath my wings to push me to my desired goals. Also, Dr Charlotte Redden as my University Research Reviewer, your revision suggestions made me a better writer, a better scholar. I would also like to acknowledge my husband who has supported me tremendously through all of my schooling. He has done more than I could ever ask for him to do. He sacrificed his own goals for me to get to this place and I cannot thank him enough for his love and support. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my daughter Madison, my motivation to succeed, I hope that one day she will understand the magnitude of desire and dedication that this achievement required, and I thank her for letting her mommy work instead of taking her to practice sometimes. I am forever indebted to each and every one of those that have been mentioned.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Despite the initiation of a variety of intervention programs for students enrolled in primary grade classrooms in urban Title I schools located in the southeastern region of the United States, students have continued to show limited progress in areas of literacy on state assessments, according to the school district's state-reported data sources. Austin et al. (2017) found that although primary grade teachers have attempted to rectify the limited literacy proficiencies of their students, they are often not effective in doing so. Austin et al. recognized that there is little known about primary grade teachers' perspectives about early literacy intervention programs. Researchers suggested that studies are needed to explore primary grade teachers' perspectives on early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Wanzek et al., 2018). Positive social change will occur when teachers implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity and their students develop early literacy skills. Findings from this study may engender positive social change by enhancing teachers' awareness about effective implementation of early literacy intervention programs.

In Chapter 1, I present the background, problem statement, and purpose of this study. I also identify the conceptual framework that I used to guide the research questions and methodology of this basic qualitative study. I address the significance of the study,

my assumptions, key words and phrases, and the study's limitations, and scope and delimitations. I conclude with a summary of Chapter 1.

Background

Early literacy instruction during primary grades is an important aspect of education (Grøver, 2016; Snow & Matthews, 2016). Every primary grade student is expected to have gained sufficient foundational literacy skills by the end of third grade (Snow & Matthews, 2016). According to Snow and Matthews (2016), any student who has not obtained the necessary skills in literacy by third grade is at risk for school failure. Early literacy intervention programs focus on skills that students need to be successful throughout their school careers (Chiang et al., 2017; National Institute for Literacy, 2009). The basic framework of literacy is centered around phonological awareness, vocabulary, letter knowledge, fluency, and reading and listening comprehension (Lepola et al., 2016). Due to the importance of these foundational skills, researchers have created early literacy intervention programs for teachers to provide instruction that will have long term positive effects on students with challenges in early literacy (Cassidy et al., 2016; Chiang et al., 2017).

Wanzek et al. (2018) suggested interventions that can positively impact primary grade students' gains in literacy skills include general classroom supports, phonics interventions, direct instruction in phonics and comprehension, and interventions in fluency. However, Liebfreund and Amendum (2017) found that some early literacy intervention programs are not as effective as they are intended to be and recommended further studies to discover why these programs are ineffective. Grøver (2016) and

Wanzek et al. found intervention programs positively impact students' outcomes on literacy assessments, when teachers have professional development in the specific literacy programs that have been adopted by their schools. Grøver suggested that early literacy intervention programs contribute to student success in literacy when teachers are knowledgeable and proficient in implementing the interventions. Grøver identified that teachers were not successful in implementing interventions when they did not have sufficient understanding of the curriculum they were using. Moreover, when practitioners have limited understanding about how to implement early literacy intervention programs, they should participate in professional learning related to the specific early literacy intervention program they are putting into practice (Jefferson et al., 2017). Wanzek et al. confirmed that professional learning is essential for teachers to change their instruction and make early literacy interventions part of their repertoires and ongoing practices.

Researchers have identified a gap in the literature on practice regarding primary grade teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to effectively implement early literacy intervention programs that will result in positive literacy outcomes for students (Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017; Wanzek et al., 2018). Liebfreund and Amendum (2017) suggested that examining the effects of teachers' advanced degrees in reading, years of experience, core instruction, and other factors is important to determine influences on teachers' practices while providing literacy interventions. According to Austin et al. (2017) little is known about how interventions are being implemented in schools today; therefore, further studies are needed to "provide insight into how interventions are being used in practice" (p. 208). Grøver (2016)

suggested that there are multiple perspectives about reading intervention which "may be crucial in supporting research–practice partnerships and building an understanding of the components of an intervention that may change instructional practices in the intended direction" (p. 111). Wanzek et al. (2018) emphasized that, "Future research is needed to enhance our understanding of intensive interventions" (p. 621). As a response to the need for research, in this basic qualitative study I addressed primary grade teachers' perspectives of early literacy intervention programs, the supports that they have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that they need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

Problem Statement

Students enrolled in primary grades in urban Title I schools located in the southeastern region of the United States have demonstrated limited progress in areas of literacy on state assessments given to third-grade students over the past several years, according to the school district's state-reported data sources, despite teachers' interventions to rectify their students' limited literacy proficiencies. For example, local data revealed that out of 2,424 third grade students who took the state's Milestones Standardized Test during the 2016-2017 academic year, 48.6% of students scored on the level of *beginning learners* in the area of literacy, according to the district under study's state-reported data sources. With the use of the same data sources, during 2017-2018 there was a slight increase to 48.8 %; and in 2018-2019 academic year the percentage of third graders scoring at the level of *beginning learners* in literacy rose to 50.4%. There was no state assessment given to third grade students during the 2019-2020 academic

year due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, local data were collected that revealed half of the third-grade students were performing below level in English Language Arts. In the district that is the setting of the study, primary grade students are below level in literacy and teachers are charged with providing early literacy intervention as published in the district-wide school improvement plans for 2017-2020.

Researchers found that little is known about primary grade teachers' perspectives about their practices in effectively implementing literacy intervention programs (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Wanzek et al., 2018). Wanzek et al. (2018) indicated that when teachers implement early literacy interventions there are positive gains in reading performance for struggling readers. However, Austin et al. (2017) found that many teachers may not be providing literacy intervention programs with fidelity, which results in students not receiving the levels of academic support they need to meet grade-level expectations. Grøver (2016) suggested that the entire literacy intervention implementation process depends on how practitioners collaboratively make sense of and frame interventions; for literacy intervention programs to be effective, there needs to be shared understanding and ownership of the process by teachers and specialists. Early literacy intervention programs are designed to provide effective tools for teachers to use that increase student success in literacy skills; however, there is little evidence on whether primary grade teachers in an urban district in the southeastern United States know how to implement literacy intervention programs effectively with fidelity (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Wanzek et al., 2018). Therefore, the problem that I sought to address in this basic qualitative study with interviews was a lack of knowledge

of primary grade teachers' perspectives of early literacy intervention programs, the supports that they have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that they need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers on early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Researchers found that early literacy intervention programs are not as effective as they are intended to be and recommended further studies to investigate why literacy programs are not effective and what is needed to support teachers (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Wanzek et al., 2018).

Research Questions

I sought to conduct a basic qualitative study with interviews to answer the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I chose for this study was based on Senge's (1990) systems thinking and learning organization theories. The relevant constructs of this conceptual framework are as follows: (a) personal mastery, (b) mental models, (c) shared vision, and (d) team learning. This study was grounded by the constructs of this theory which guide the problem statement, purpose, and the significance of the study. The overall concept of Senge's learning organization is systems thinking which connects to teachers' understandings of their perspectives about supports they need to implement early literacy intervention programs systematically and effectively.

According to Senge (1990), systems thinking supports an organizations' abilities to comprehend, address the whole, and examine the interrelationship between the parts. Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening ideas, insights, and skills, and considered a lifelong discipline (Senge, 1990). Mental models are assumptions and generalizations that influence how we understand the world (Senge, 1990). Shared vision occurs when people excel and learn because they want to become more knowledgeable and skillful. Shared vision includes identifying personal visions and translating those visions into shared visions (Senge, 1990). Team learning builds on personal mastery and shared vision which requires dialogue, suspension of assumptions, and genuine thinking together (Senge, 1990).

These concepts were applied to this study where personal mastery includes the commitment to personal truth to assure continual professional growth of primary grade teachers in literacy intervention programs. Mental models are how teachers see and

understand themselves, their own teaching practices, and their students. Shared vision

and team learning are the two elements of the conceptual framework that involve

collaboration, implementation, and reflection on teacher practices and their effects on the

organization as a whole.

I designed the RQs for this study to explore the perspectives of primary grade

teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received

to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers

need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. I

used Senge's systems thinking and learning organization theories to design the interview

questions and protocol. This conceptual framework guided my research methodology and

data analysis. The conceptual framework is presented in more detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I sought to conduct a basic qualitative research study and address two research

questions through individual interviews via video conference technology. Qualitative

research interviews are used to produce enough data to capture people's perspectives

(Taylor et al., 2015). I used a purposeful sampling method to recruit volunteers for this

study and aimed to establish a balanced representation of primary grade teachers (see

Creswell, 2015). The pool of volunteers was made up of primary grade teachers with two

or more years of experience in literacy intervention programs from three different urban

Title I schools in the southeastern region of the United States in a district within which I

am not affiliated. I audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed interviews to identify

emerging themes (see Creswell, 2015). Thematic analysis was used to answer the RQ's

by revealing primary grade teachers' perspectives on early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

Definitions

Definitions of the following terms are provided to support readers' understanding of the study as a whole.

Early Literacy Intervention Programs: Programs that provide interventions that systematically and explicitly promote the early-literacy development of children *(Guo et al., 2016).*

Fidelity: The implementation of the interventions in the way that it was designed without modifications or adaptations that cannot be justified by research (Snyder et al., 2015; Unrau et al., 2018).

Learning Organizations: Organizations where people continually expand their capacities to create the results they desire to achieve. In learning organizations new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspirations are set free, and people are continually learning how to learn together (Senge, 1990, p.3).

Literacy: The ability to identify, comprehend, explain, create, converse, and process through the use of contexts that are written or in print (Butterfield & Kindle, 2017).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): A term that can be used interchangeably with Response to Intervention (RTI). MTSS is one mechanism for efficient delivery of a

core curriculum and evidence-based practices that are designed to meet the needs of all students (Adamson et al., 2019; Austin et al., 2017).

Ongoing Implementation: A way any program is put into practice and delivered on a continuous basis (Durlak & Durlak, 2015).

Perspective: The way an educator views their educational experiences and then conceptualize their positions in educating and gaining knowledge (Phajane, 2019).

Support: Tools that teachers find helpful in overcoming barriers to attaining full implementation (Leonard et al., 2019)

Self-efficacy: An individual's perception of his or her ability to influence events in the surrounding environment (Clark, 2020).

Systems Thinking: A conceptual framework that helps practitioners envision how to enact change in a learning organization (Senge, 1990).

Assumptions

There were a few assumptions regarding this study that were believed to be true. The first assumption was that teachers in the district where the study was conducted would be willing to volunteer and consent to participate in this study. Second, I assumed that the primary grade teachers would be truthful in the perspectives they provided to answer the interview questions. My third assumption was that each participant would fully cooperate with the expectations required by the institutional review board for the interview which took place during the coronavirus pandemic and would provide relevant information that benefited the study. Lastly, I assumed that the interview questions would generate sufficient data which addressed the research questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the research was 13 primary grade teachers from three Title I schools serving primary grade students in an urban district in the southeastern region of the United States. The focus of the study was on perspectives of primary grade teachers on early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. This study was delimited to include three urban Title I schools serving primary grade students. It was delimited to 13 primary grade teachers with a minimum of 2 years of experience in implementing early literacy intervention programs. Teachers from grade levels other than primary grades were not invited to participate; likewise, teachers from suburban or rural districts were not included in this study. Transferability was enhanced by providing sufficient descriptions of the setting, rich descriptions of the participants, background information, the use of triangulation and the context of the phenomenon being investigated to allow the reader to have a better understanding of the problem (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

Limitations

Participants were limited to 13 primary grade teachers from three campuses in one urban title I district in the southeastern region of the United States. Gaining a pool of volunteers involved my use of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was used so that participants were intentionally selected based on their experiences and familiarity with concepts under investigation (see Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling

allowed me to recruit a pool of participants from urban Title I primary grade schools who understand early literacy intervention programs. I sought to determine if primary grade teachers' responses would potentially reveal their perspectives about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Participants selected were majority female and this may be a limitation because it narrows the population sample to a specific gender, which may limit the possibility of transferability to other contexts outside of the context of female primary grade teachers. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), identifying assumptions and limitations is necessary for any study relying on information from informants as the basis for data analysis and the presentation of findings.

In exploring the possibility of biases, I remained mindful of my own position on the topic to assure that I remained objective, I kept a reflexive journal during the research process and the interviews. Ravitch and Carl (2019) shared that bias exists in all research, understanding and confronting the values and beliefs that underlie the decisions and approaches within the research is vital. Questions were reviewed to determine alignment to the study prior to conducting the experiment by an early childhood expert, and adjustments were made as needed based on needs for clarity prior to interviews. Transcript validation was conducted with the participants to assure that what was transcribed was accurate for all participants after the interviews had been completed.

Other measures that were taken to check biases were, I provided clear explanations and information of the interview process to the participants prior to beginning the interview. Throughout interviews I balanced establishing a rapport and maintaining a neutral stance in my responses to their questions avoiding imposing my own opinion on their responses (see Laureate Education, 2016), that the questions were meaningful, and open-ended that allowed participants to expand on their responses without being led to a desired conclusion. The findings were not generalizable to other locations due to the sample size only representing a single geographical area in the southeastern region in the United States; however, they may be transferable due to the rich descriptions and other practices of transferability that were put into place (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Significance

Researchers have suggested a correlation between early literacy intervention programs, student success, and progress in reading skills (Austin et al., 2017). Researchers of early literacy intervention studies have found that implementing interventions with fidelity results in children's positive literacy gains (Bingham et al., 2016). Although various researchers investigated the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs, these same researchers have suggested that a gap in the literature on practice exists (e.g., Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Paige, 2018; Wanzek et al., 2018). Therefore, I sought to explore primary grade teachers' perspectives of early literacy intervention programs, the supports that they have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that they need for ongoing

implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The implications of positive social change could include a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on implementing early literacy intervention programs effectively so that supports teachers may need are received.

Austin et al. (2017) found that although primary grade teachers have attempted to rectify the limited literacy proficiencies of their students, they are often not effective in doing so. Austin et al., Grøver (2016), and Wanzek et al. (2016) recommended that further studies are needed to investigate teachers' uses of literacy intervention programs. The significance of this basic qualitative study with interviews is in addressing the perspectives of primary grade teachers' understanding of implementing early literacy intervention programs effectively, and with fidelity. This study may add to the body of research on early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools in the southeastern region of the United States. Findings from this study have the potential to impact positive social change when teachers implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity and their students develop early literacy skills.

Summary

Chapter 1 described a basic qualitative study with interviews to explore teachers' perspectives of early literacy intervention programs, the supports that they have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that they need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The background, problem statement, purpose, nature, significance, rationale, and research questions of the study were presented. The conceptual framework and methodology were

introduced. The studies' assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations were given. Chapter 2 contains a review of the conceptual framework based on Senge's (1990) system's thinking theory and an overview and synthesis of the current literature on early literacy intervention programs. Chapter 2 concludes by addressing the gap in research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 contains the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework, and the literature review related to the variables of the study. I obtained literature from appropriate peer-reviewed journals from the past 5 years and seminal literature. I discuss perspectives, teacher supports, and teacher self-efficacy in this chapter. The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The literature review is the foundation of the study. I investigated relevant literature regarding concepts pertinent to early literacy intervention programs for struggling readers. I sought to address gaps in the literature on practice regarding primary grade teachers' perspectives on early literacy intervention programs.

Literature Search Strategy

I based the literature review search strategy on the following two RQs:

RQ1: What are primary teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

I searched several databases to obtain current literacy on topics included in the literature review. I conducted a literature review using Walden University's online database, which included a wide-range of peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, articles,

and studies. I explored articles from Walden University Library, Education Source, SAGE, Google Scholar, Education Search Complete, Taylor & Francis, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Source, Business Source Complete, and Science Direct to find literature related to primary grade teachers' perspectives regarding early literacy intervention programs, supports they receive and supports they need to implement the early literacy interventions with fidelity. Within the databases, I used various key words and phrases to find the most recent articles. The key words and phrases I used were *literacy intervention programs*, *literacy education, literacy interventions*, *reading interventions for struggling readers*, *effective reading interventions*, *early literacy interventions*, *reading interventions*, *reading interventions for elementary students*, *teacher perspectives on literacy intervention programs*, *teacher attitudes*, *reading programs*, *literacy campaign*, *self-efficacy*, *literacy interventions and COVID 19*, *systems thinking and literacy*, *teacher supports*, and *professional development on literacy programs*. The literature search generated 78 peer-reviewed journals, books, and studies published since 2015.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounds this basic qualitative study is Senge's (1990) learning organization and systems thinking theory. Senge's theory can be defined as a collaborative learning process among educators to increase teacher effectiveness through intentional analysis of their implementation of various practices. The theory suggests that teachers should analyze their actions while taking into consideration various

assumptions and personal views they may have when effectively implementing a practice.

Learning Organization and Systems Thinking Theory

According to the learning organization and systems thinking theory, each district, school, and classroom should be represented by a team of educators working together for the ultimate purpose of learning (Senge, 1990). Senge (1990) proposed that changes in actions and structures lead to major improvements in organizations. The following subsections include an overview of Senge's five disciplines and a summary of three studies where Senge's theory was applied.

Five Disciplines

The learning organization and systems thinking theory states that in order for members of a learning organization to obtain the results they want; they must progress through the five stages that make up the theory (Senge, 1990). Those five disciplines are as follows: personal mastery, mental models, shared visions, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge, 1990). Researchers have found that educators become lifelong learners through the discipline of personal mastery when they work in schools that have established a systems thinking and learning organization (Luhn, 2016; Nissilä, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006; Senge et al., 2014). Within the discipline of mental models, teachers become aware of their own assumptions and the impact that their assumptions have on the learning organization. Through the discipline of shared visions, teachers collaborate as they begin to align their vision with the visions of others (Luhn, 2016; Nissilä, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006; Senge, 1990). In the discipline of establishing team

learning, teachers collaborate to identify concerns, collect data, analyze results, and develop solutions to the team members' concerns. The final step is the discipline of systems thinking, which encompasses all other disciplines into a holistic theory so that the educators understand that one discipline is not successful without the other (Luhn, 2016; Nissilä, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006; Senge, 1990).

Studies Applying Senge's Theory

Researchers have applied the systems thinking approach in many studies. For example, Zulauf (2007) conducted a study to gain insight on how people learn to think systematically using Senge's (1990) systems thinking theory. His findings supported the conclusion that people can learn to think systematically to both understand how an organization works and to understand how one contributes to the results. Thornton et al. (2004) also conducted a study on the benefits of systems thinking and concluded that student achievement can become enormous when systems thinking becomes an integral part of the instructional process. In addition, Luhn (2016) conducted a study on the needs of a learning organization, as defined by Senge, concluding that common vision, opportunities for development, and communication are all elements needed to see consistent success in an organization. Moreover, using a mixed-methods approach, Hesbol (2019) gathered data on the efficacy of principals and their perceptions of the school as a learning organization. Hesbol concluded that future research is needed in teacher efficacy, which could improve teaching and learning. Researchers have revealed the benefits of a systems thinking approach in education and the effects it has had on student success (Hesbol, 2019; Luhn, 2016; Thornton et al., 2004; Zulauf, 2007).

Through the various studies mentioned, it was evident that the systems thinking approach to an organization had a positive impact on the organization's overall success.

To bridge the gap in the literature on practice, I sought to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Gaining knowledge and understanding of primary grade teachers' perspectives can help me discover their learning organization environment and approaches to implementing early literacy intervention programs that may lead to student success. The foundations of this knowledge and understanding begin in the literature review.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

This section includes current literature on early literacy intervention programs, including interventions that are used in primary grades in urban Title I. I discuss the foundational elements and characteristics of early literacy intervention programs and practices. Specific literature on current research-based interventions and practices used worldwide is also reviewed. Research-based early literacy intervention programs are a promising approach to addressing the gaps in students' literacy levels (Auletto & Sableski, 2018). Yet, quantitative, and qualitative research indicates that more research is needed on understanding teachers' best practices in identifying students' needs for interventions, the tiered level at which their teachers should begin interventions, and the intensity required for the instruction provided (Foorman et al., 2018). I end this section

by presenting literature about teachers' perspectives, supports teachers receive, and teachers' self-efficacy in providing literacy interventions.

Early Literacy Intervention Programs

Early literacy intervention programs are designed with student success in mind. Such programs provide the foundation for the educational success of students, especially those students who are considered to be struggling readers (Auletto & Sableski, 2018; Young et al., 2015). There is solid evidence that ongoing early literacy interventions are an effective way to assist students in primary grade with their struggles, which is especially important to young readers (Coyne et al., 2018; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand what types of early literacy intervention programs are available and how successful they are when teachers implement them. In this section, I review current research on early literacy interventions, which are often implemented within a multitiered system of support and intensified based on students 'progress once implemented (see Auletto & Sableski, 2018; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017).

Multitiered Systems of Supports

Ongoing early interventions may be offered through a three-tiered system known as response to intervention (RTI; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). This is also referred to as a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) approach. With this approach to intervention, the more a student struggles, the more intense interventions become. When interventions become more intense, some of the qualities of the intervention that change are the frequency or duration of the intervention, group size, increase in expertise of intervention

instructors, and type of instruction provided (Al Otaiba et al., 2016; Auletto & Sableski, 2018; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Establishing an understanding of the MTSS process and what it entails is an important preliminary step when considering best practices for implementing early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Multitiered systems of early literacy interventions and reading instruction are widely used in U.S. schools (Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017).

Although multitiered systems are being implemented, there are still large numbers of students who do not respond adequately to these various interventions (Baker et al., 2015; Filderman et al., 2018). Research on MTSS has shown that not all teachers understand which students should receive tiered supports, what supports are evidence-based or best practice, or that tiered supports are always part of a multitiered model such as RTI (Nagro et al., 2019). Nagro et al. (2019) found that teachers have difficulty identifying research-based intensive interventions, appropriate modifications to instructional delivery, and additional supports to combine with instruction. As such, more research is necessary to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers on early literacy intervention programs, the support teachers need to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

Interactive Approach

Lee and Scanlon (2015) focused on examining the effectiveness of interactive early literacy interventions. Researchers found that students who were identified as at-risk spellers were more successful when an interactive strategies approach was used in

their intervention program (Lee & Scanlon, 2015). When kindergartners receive

interventions that include an interactive approach, they score higher on reading

inventories in first grade (Lee & Scanlon, 2015).

Balanced Approach

Snyder and Golightly (2017) suggested a balanced approach to reading

interventions where phonics and a sight word intervention implemented concurrently can

increase student's decoding, word identification, sight-word recognition and reading

comprehension abilities. A balanced approach to early literacy intervention has

contributed positively to student growth in some way (Snyder & Golightly, 2017). It is

important to note that the following early literacy intervention programs do not present a

comprehensive list; these are diverse types of early literacy intervention programs that

contribute to students' successes in areas of early literacy in the United States and other

countries (Lepola et al., 2016; Wheldall et al., 2017).

Reading Recovery. A variety of early literacy intervention programs can be

selected by districts to implement in schools. These intervention programs are often

adopted by the districts and used as a tool to address the struggling readers. One current

intervention program being implemented is the reading recovery intervention (RR)

program. D'Agostino and Harmey (2016) conducted a quantitative study on the effect

size of RR across various countries, finding that RR was in the top 10% of early literacy

intervention programs in terms of positive impact. Research based interventions are

identified by district leaders with the goals of addressing academic needs and are

implemented by teachers. Some researchers such as D'Agostino and Harmey reported

that RR is an effective intervention, while others argue that RR is both expensive and occupies a large instructional space across districts (Paige, 2018). Although RR has shown great success, the amount that is spent on various interventions can often times lead to consideration of alternative options. RR is based on a preventative approach to reading difficulties and focuses on all components of early literacy including oral language and reading comprehension (Chapman & Tunmer, 2016; Lepola et al., 2016; Paige, 2018; Savage & Cloutier, 2017). Whatever intervention is selected by the district, must be one that teachers can rely on to address the current challenges identified in struggling readers.

MiniLit Early Literacy Intervention Program. Another balanced literacy approach to early literacy intervention is the MiniLit Early Literacy Intervention Program (MLELIP), which was designed to address student difficulties in the mechanics of reading (Wheldall et al., 2017). Considering alternative approaches that compare to the previously mentioned RR's success was found to be a necessity to see student progress. Wheldall et al. (2017) suggested that students who completed MLELIP made significant gains on measures of word reading, phonological awareness, word reading, spelling, sight words, and decoding. Small group instruction using evidence-based research programs such as the MLELIP may be more effective and cost-effective than RR (Lepola et al., 2016; Wheldall et al., 2017). Balanced literacy approaches are important aspects of literacy intervention programs. If being able to identify this type of intervention and saving funds that have been allotted to pay for the intervention is necessary, MLELIP would be considered an ideal solution.

Technology-Based Interventions. Some researchers have a technological approach to offering early literacy interventions that they believe will offer a balanced literacy approach (O'Callaghan et al., 2016; Schechter et al., 2015). Technology-based interventions can be both effective and convenient for consistent use. O'Callaghan et al. (2016) and Schechter et al. (2015) agreed that as students' progress through primary grades, a system should be in place to assist teachers with interventions to close gaps in the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, having a progressive system that is designed to give immediate and accurate feedback to students regarding their progress in targeted skills is needed (O'Callaghan et al., 2016; Schechter et al., 2015; Wohlwend, 2015). Understanding both the benefits of technology-based interventions as well as the insufficiencies of these interventions will assist in determining their levels of effectiveness.

O'Brien et al. (2019) assessed the effectiveness of three technology-based interventions that included fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The specific applications used in the study were *SeeWord Reading*, which focused on phonemes, rime, and word level reading, *Grapholearn*, which focused on fluency, and *Grapholearn-Rime*, which focused on vocabulary and sentence-level comprehension (O'Brien et al., 2019). These applications combined provided support to struggling readers as well as an opportunity for students to only use those applications that supported students' needs. O'Brian et al. found the use of technology-based programs had benefits by addressing individualized student needs allowing students to progress through the programs based on how successful they were with each

application. Addressing students' individual needs with an interactive student-centered platform was identified as an effective attribute of technology-based interventions.

According to O'Brien et al. (2019) technology-based interventions are used as a more hands-off approach for teachers. O'Brien et al. investigated efficacy of tablet-based applications for the purpose of supplementing early English literacy intervention with primary Grades 1and 2 children, and found that overall, technology-based approaches can be instrumental as a bridge between the laboratory and the classroom. It provides teachers the opportunity to differentiate student needs. Researchers have suggested that the best way to increase student success in literacy can be through computer-based programs because teachers may not be as familiar with the areas of student knowledge that they are lacking due to the various scaffolding that takes place in the previous grade levels before getting to them (O'Callaghan et al., 2016; Schechter et al., 2015). However, O'Brien et al. concluded that there are concerns with the advent of widespread use of technology for reading and suggested a need for a more differentiated approach in the use of early literacy intervention programs. Establishing a more differentiated practice that involves the use of technology-based interventions could provide the supports teachers need to implement more effective strategies.

Early Literacy Intervention Programs in Urban Title I Schools

The greatest academic risk factor in urban areas is reading failure (Beach et al., 2018; Council et al., 2019). To address these reading failures, many different practices have been put in place. According to Council et al. (2019) technology interventions are often used in urban elementary schools to address literacy gaps. Reading RACES (RR)

and Culturally Engaging Stories are repeated reading interventions delivered through computer software to monitor student gains in fluency, and comprehension specifically in urban schools (Council et al., 2019). These programs were designed specifically to address struggling readers' needs. Through these interventions, effects were shown to be positive on reading fluency and comprehension of students in second grade that were involved in this study (Council et al., 2019). Computer based software programs once again are viewed as an effective resource to address struggling reader needs.

The effectiveness of RR was also examined in a study where Telesman et al. (2019) explored first grade students who showed reading risks. With a focus on oral reading fluency and comprehension, the computer delivered intervention took place in an urban elementary school setting. An intervention built on those foundational elements has shown to provide success in student' positive academic gains. Researchers' findings indicated RR could effectively be used to improve reading fluency and comprehension scores (Telesman et al., 2019). The questions remain for further research about the supporting elements of the interventions' success.

Aside from the interventions mentioned, there are a variety of other research based early literacy interventions that have also shown successful, and still some students fail to respond adequately to them (Austin et al., 2017; Horowitz-Kraus & Finucane, 2016). Those research-based interventions include programs such as: IReady, Corrective Reading, Reading Mastery, Growing Readers, Benchmark Literacy, and many other interventions not mentioned. These various programs are based on the five components of literacy: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension

(Austin et al., 2017; Horowitz-Kraus & Finucane, 2016). Research programs based on the five components have shown to be the most effective programs. Some researchers suggest due to the inadequate results, that further research should also explore other factors that may also contribute to the reliability of early literacy intervention program practices (Austin et al., 2017; Horowitz-Kraus & Finucane, 2016). Some factors to consider are the characteristics of effective early literacy intervention programs and how they are used to impact literacy.

Characteristics of Effective Early Literacy Intervention Programs

Researchers have suggested that the characteristics of effective early literacy intervention programs include a systematic use of core reading's essential components such as literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary (Foorman et al., 2018; Lepola et al., 2016; Savage et al., 2018). These components are also part of a balanced literacy approach in core reading (Foorman et al., 2018). Tracey (2017) suggested that deepening urban teachers' understanding of the reading process in general, will better equip teachers to facilitate students' reading development through diagnosis and intervention if difficulties in reading are discovered. The following section provides an overview of essential characteristics of effective early literacy interventions that include fluency and phonemic awareness.

Fluency

Fluency in reading is identified as the ability to read texts with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody with the ultimate aim of extracting meaning in reading (Hudson et al., 2020). Teachers can implement fluency interventions in any activity and

increase student success in this area through practice and repetition. Researchers have suggested teachers use strategies such as listening while reading, repeated reading and continuous reading with teacher support are all strategies used to increase oral reading fluency of students who need more targeted instruction (Hudson et al., 2020; Rupley et al., 2020). Hudson et al. (2020) and Mehigan (2020) suggested there is not one intervention strategy that is effective for every student and if students are not responding to one type of fluency intervention, teachers may need to address this concern by either implementing an alternative fluency intervention or implementing an alternate component of the literacy foundations altogether.

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

Phonological or phonemic awareness includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language such as words, syllables, onsets, rhymes, and phonemes. Researchers highlighted phonological awareness and vocabulary as imperative components to a balanced literacy approach (Foorman et al., 2018; Lepola et al., 2016; Savage et al., 2018; Suggate, 2016). According to researchers, providing skills such as phonological awareness and letter identification interventions allow young readers to decode individual words, oral language skills such as vocabulary provide avenues for student success in literacy (Hui Jiang & Logan, 2019; Lepola et al., 2016). According to Foorman et al. (2018) there is a limited number of studies on interventions for students with challenges in phonemic awareness. Interventions for phonemic awareness instead however are often combined with phonics which has shown positive impacts on reading words (Foorman et al., 2018).

Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a multicomponent skill that is influenced by both decoding and language comprehension. Vocabulary skills provide a foundation for reading comprehension. Research has shown that children with difficulties in comprehension benefit from explicit teaching and modeling comprehension strategies (Spear-Swerling, 2016). Spear-Swerling (2016) shared that when students comprehend poorly, more in-depth areas of vocabulary and comprehension to include inferencing, text structure, and background knowledge are needed.

Elements of Effective Early Literacy Intervention Programs

Meissel et al. (2016) focused on professional learning and feedback discussions as being important elements to effectively implement early literacy intervention programs. Additionally, Foorman (2016) focused on quality of delivery and professional development as elements of implementing early literacy intervention programs effectively. Morris (2015) focused on modeling in classrooms as a contribution to teacher trainings as being equally important to effectively implementing early literacy intervention programs. Combining the previously mentioned characteristics of effective ongoing early literacy interventions with elements of effective literacy intervention programs can ultimately establish teaching practices that effectively implement ongoing early literacy interventions (Foorman, 2016; Meissel et al., 2016; Morris, 2015).

Ongoing early literacy interventions are evaluated for their effectiveness, so it is important to identify what elements are required to effectively implement a program. Bingham et al. (2016) found that effective ongoing early reading interventions range

from effective data usage. Snyder et al. (2015) found that evaluating curricula and scheduling time for training and monitoring for fidelity are needed for program effectiveness. When teachers implement interventions effectively, the expectation is that students will ultimately be successful (Wanzek et al., 2018). Identifying the elements of implementing early literacy interventions effectively assists in providing foundational guidance for supporting teachers as well as students.

Data Usage and Evaluation Curricula

Effective data usage and evaluating curricula are components of effective reading interventions because they are the basis in which instruction is driven (Filderman et al., 2018). To determine if interventions need to be intensified or curriculum is to be modified for individual students, data must be viewed systematically and frequently for progress (Harlacher et al., 2015). The importance of assessing data in the general classroom setting is an element that is even supplementary to the data that needs to be assessed for effectiveness.

Scheduling

Foorman (2016) and Foorman et al. (2018) found that scheduling a consistent time to implement early literacy intervention plays an important role in program effectiveness. Educators should focus on establishing the appropriate time within the day to implement the various ongoing early literacy interventions (Foorman, 2016; Foorman et al., 2018). By scheduling the appropriate amount of time needed in the day, as well as the appropriate amount of student groups per intervention, scheduling is equally

admissible as a factor contributing to the effectiveness of the ongoing early interventions (Foorman, 2016; Foorman et al., 2018).

Teacher Preparedness

Johnson (2018) and Meissel et al. (2016) emphasized that it is essential for teachers to be appropriately prepared to offer early literacy intervention programs. Filderman et al. (2018) found that to sustain the effectiveness of various ongoing early literacy interventions, teachers must be prepared through ongoing professional learning to help them establish best practices. Further, research on the effects of advanced degrees in literacy, years of experience, and other elements that would have an impact on their instruction as teachers has been suggested (Chiang et al., 2017; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018; Spear, 2017). It is important to understand how the varying levels of experiences are a vital contribution to the success or lack thereof of students.

Professional Development

Basma and Savage (2018) explored the impact of teacher professional development and found that professional development influences teacher beliefs and practices, and as a result improves student learning. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2018) explored the effectiveness of professional development on reading interventions through a study of one year and found that this support was sufficient to boost struggling readers' literacy scores.

Lohman (2020) suggested the need for professional development due to declines in literacy education related to unforeseen factors such as COVID-19. COVID-19 has had

a tremendous effect on literacy intervention practices. Teachers have changed the way

that they feel about their teaching practices, their abilities to teach effectively, and the

online platforms they have to use with limited training. Basma and Savage (2018) and

Vernon-Feagans et al. (2018) recommended that more research is needed to determine

which professional development avenues work best.

Coaching

An element found in effective early literacy intervention programs is coaching

(Wagner et al., 2017). Researchers believe coaching is equally important for teachers to

implement early literacy practices and early literacy interventions (Wagner et al., 2017).

Wagner et al. (2017), McKenney and Bradley (2016), and Glover (2017) suggested the

idea of utilizing a data-driven coaching method as an element of teacher support to

improve teacher effectiveness in literacy learning. Bratsch-Hines et al. (2020) suggested

that reading interventions may prove to be effective with an ongoing coaching support for

professional development, which would assist teachers in correctly identifying students'

weaknesses and target their instructional needs. Glover suggested further research on

teachers' perspectives about coaching to increase the fidelity of the programs.

Fidelity

Early literacy intervention programs are designed with a specific purpose, and

every component of these programs contributes to the overall success of the struggling

readers in some way. Considering the specific design and purpose of each early literacy

intervention program, in addition to ongoing trainings, the implementation of ongoing

early literacy interventions must be monitored for fidelity (Unrau et al., 2018). The

fidelity with which a program is implemented is questioned when after increasing the

expertise of teachers, some students still show an inadequate response to interventions

(Johnson, 2018; Meissel et al., 2016). Fidelity, the implementation of the intervention in

the way that it was designed without teacher modifications or adaptations that cannot be

justified by research, is an important component to monitor (Snyder et al., 2015; Unrau et

al., 2018). When a program is implemented with fidelity, it decreases the chances of

elements of the teacher's performance and implementation practices as being the root

cause of an ongoing early intervention concern and shifts the focus to the actual ongoing

early literacy intervention itself (Johnson, 2018; Meissel et al., 2016). Understanding and

communicating the necessities of fidelity allows for consistent feedback amongst

teachers.

Perspectives

To bridge the gap in the literature on practice of educator's knowledge of the

ongoing implementation of early literacy programs and student success in literacy, it is

necessary to understand the significance of the perspectives of teachers regarding the

ongoing implementation of various early literacy intervention programs. Piasta et al.

(2017) said some teachers isolate the idea of implementing early literacy interventions to

a specific intervention teacher; however, seeing the classroom teacher as an

interventionist is important to understand best practices for helping struggling readers.

Quantitative research has been conducted that confirmed the importance of the classroom

teacher as an interventionist, where student data was accessed and researchers found that

teachers were successful in their teaching (Piasta et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2017;

Wanzek et al., 2018). Piasta et al. argued that there is a need to understand the perspectives of teachers regarding the validity of program implementation. In addition, Wagner et al. shared the need for further research on teachers' perspectives on students' intervention needs. This section presents information on teacher supports and teacher self-efficacy.

Teacher Supports

Teacher supports refers to tools that teachers find helpful in overcoming barriers to full implementation of programs (Crosby et al., 2015; Leonard et al., 2019). Leonard et al. (2019) described that the effects of unclear expectations in implementing early literacy interventions can cause teachers to feel uncertain and unsupported. Researchers found that teachers are often given general advice to follow intervention programs exactly as written with fidelity; however, teachers are often times unsure about deciding the most important elements of programs to implement (Leonard et al., 2019). In order for systems of support for early literacy interventions to be effective, Coyne et al. (2018) found that these systems must include elements of a clear organizational structure, comprehensive data system, team collaboration, coordinated service delivery, and intense focus on literacy. Hudson et al. (2020) found that parents provide supports in motivating struggling readers. Children who experience literacy-relevant activities at home, view reading more positively, engage in more leisure reading, and have higher motivation for reading (Hudson et al., 2020).

Teacher Self- Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as an individual teacher's beliefs in his or her ability to affect student performance (Varghese et al., 2016). When there is collective teacher efficacy the perceptions of all teachers understand that their efforts as a whole are considered when addressing student success (Epstein & Willhite, 2017; Mosoge et al., 2018). Understanding the significance of self-efficacy in teachers is at the core of a successful learning organization in schools. Clark (2020) suggested the need to understand how teachers perceive their ability to meet the needs of diverse learners is necessary in order to support effective and meaningful instruction. Clark also suggested adding a qualitative component to future studies such as open-ended questions, interviews, and teaching observations would strengthen our understanding of participant experiences and feelings of self-efficacy. Raymond-West and Rangel (2020) measured teachers' "level of self-efficacy in literacy instruction and the extent to which those levels were related to whether teachers were prepared traditionally or alternatively" (p.555). Raymond-West and Rangel rooted their study in the theoretical link between self-efficacy and teacher preparation. Bandura (1997) identified four specific elements that influenced the development of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological arousal. These researchers as well as Butterfield and Kindle (2017) suggested that teachers need to encompass the characteristics of teacher efficacy in order to be motivated (Bandura, 1977; Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Although there is still research needed on the topic of early literacy intervention programs, researchers have conducted studies to assess teacher beliefs and decision

making (McKenney & Bradley, 2016; Wagner et al., 2017). The findings for both suggest that there should be a systematic examination of how and why teachers make decisions that are needed. Researchers mention how it is an efficient practice to consider teachers' belief in their ability to provide the level of content needed for students to be successful in reading when implementing new programs (Chiang et al., 2017; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

The issues raised in Chapter 2 delineate the need for further research of primary grade teachers' perspectives on how they currently view implementation of early literacy intervention programs, what supports they receive, as well as what supports they need to implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. In this chapter, I presented a review of current literature on early literacy intervention programs, Senge's (1990) systems thinking theory, characteristics of effective interventions, current intervention programs being implemented, teacher perspectives, teacher supports and self-efficacy.

I also discussed the literature search strategy that I used for early literacy interventions, based on relevant findings, I established a literature review with elaborating on the conceptual framework, the five disciplines of literacy intervention practices, and related key concepts. Included within the current research on ongoing early literacy interventions are characteristics of effective ongoing early literacy interventions and elements of effective implementation of early literacy interventions. Chapter 3 focuses on defining and discussing the methodology of this study, details about data collection, and analysis of data. This section also discusses trustworthiness, and ethical

procedures. Chapter 4 focuses on a detailed description of the setting, demographics, data analysis and detailed description of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations and implications, and the conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale that I selected to conduct the study. I also discuss the role of the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures for the study. In Chapter 3, I conclude with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The rationale for this basic qualitative study with interviews was based on a need to explore primary grade teachers' perspectives on implementation of early literacy interventions (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Horowitz-Kraus & Finucane, 2016; Wanzek et al., 2018). I followed a basic qualitative study with interviews approach to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

According to Burkholder et al. (2016), qualitative research focuses on gaining meaning and understand through rich descriptions. It can be particularly useful when studying education and the experiences people bring to the field (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Specifically, I chose a basic qualitative design to conduct my research, since the goal of a basic qualitative approach is to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Creswell, 2015;).

When selecting a research design for my study, I considered all the qualitative approaches prior to selecting the basic qualitative approach, but after viewing each approach, the basic approach seems to fit the most with my purpose in my study of exploring the perspectives of primary grade teachers. I did not select a case study approach because my instrumentation would be interviews, and a case study requires data from a variety of sources such as observation, documents, and other data sources (see Creswell, 2015; Halcomb, 2016). Case studies also focus on a specific location for a period, and this was not the purpose of my study. I did not choose ethnography or grounded theory because I am not attempting to focus on various aspects of culture or establish a theory (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Creswell, 2015). Lastly, I did not select phenomenology because I am not focusing on one aspect of human experience by involving focus groups for data collection.

In choosing the basic qualitative design with interviews method, I sought to contribute to the topic of my study so that I may bridge the gap in literature on practice addressing primary grade teachers' perspectives on implementing early literacy interventions, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Additionally, I strived to provide future

researchers with information that may be able to drive their research practices in early literacy intervention.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was that of an interviewer seeking to explore and transcribe the perspectives of primary grade teachers in urban Title I schools. I have been in the field of education for 12 years. I am currently employed as an assistant principal in an elementary school serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade. I have always been reflective of various practices in schools and have a deep passion for understanding the constant concerns about variables that contribute to student success in areas of literacy and reading. This passion prompted my interest in exploring the perspectives of other educators about early literacy intervention. The school sites in which I conducted my research were outside of my own district. When qualitative research studies are conducted, specific ethical guidelines must be acknowledged and followed. During the interview, it is important that the researcher conducts the research in a manner that assures ethical principles and procedures are followed, as well as abide by the basic research standards (Halcomb, 2016). Acknowledging potentials for bias, I kept a reflexive journal to document decisions made about the research, why they were made to be sure those reasons were clear to the reader. It is important that data are collected, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to interpret the data, avoiding bias or preconceived notions about the outcome of the data.

Methodology

Qualitative research studies consist of a small number of participants who share similar perceptions of life experiences (Halcomb, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I reached out to primary grade teachers from three urban Title I schools. By using semistructured interviews with a purposeful sampling method for 13 teachers this was used to establish a balanced representation of the larger population (see Creswell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). The teachers participated in semistructured interviews that align with the following research question:

RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

Participant Selection

Participant selection began upon approval obtained through Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district in which I conducted the research. After receiving approval from the IRB, I emailed the leader responsible for reviewing research studies in the district under study. Upon receiving her approval, I emailed principals in their district at three schools asking if they would instruct their secretaries to forward my approved flyer to their teachers. With a sample size of 13, and use of a purposeful sampling method, I was able to recruit teachers from a pool of volunteers who met the following criteria: (a) primary grade teacher in first through third grade, (b) primary grade teacher with a minimum of 2 years providing literacy instruction. The study was

open to individuals of any gender, ethnic or cultural background, or family configuration.

Volunteer teachers were provided with the consent form that conveys the purpose of the

study, the timeframe the interview would take to complete, the plans for the results, and

the availability of the summary of the report as suggested by researchers (see Creswell,

2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Due to COVID restrictions, all interviews were

conducted via Zoom over a 4-week time frame and at least three to four interviews per

week until saturation was reached. According to Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative

researchers often continue to seek out participants until they reach data saturation, which

may be determined once new data appears like that which has already been collected.

Instrumentation

In research that is qualitative, open-ended questions are asked so that participants

can best voice their experiences without the responses being influenced by the

perspective of the researcher or past findings (Creswell, 2015). The primary data

collection tool for my basic qualitative study was a list of semistructured interview

questions that answered research questions in an in-depth manner. I created an interview

protocol for data collection (see Appendix A). To establish content validity, I reviewed

interview questions with two early childhood education literacy-intervention experts. One

of the early childhood experts is a professor of early childhood education with

specialization in literacy (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and is a teacher

educator and oversees the doctoral programs at a state university. The other expert is a

former doctoral candidate who is an expert in the field of early childhood education. To

create the protocol, I aligned the interview questions with the research questions which

were based on the conceptual framework and supported in the literature review (see Appendix B). Interview questions addressed the five disciplines of Senge's learning organizations and systems theory (see Appendix B). These questions were designed to guide me while proceeding with data collection without making assumptions about the types of experiences that would emerge (see Lodico et al., 2010).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were recruited using a purposeful sampling technique. Before I began recruiting the participants, I acquired approval from the IRB, on March 29, 2021 (approval # 03-29-22-0369637). Second, I gained support from the district within which I conducted the study. Third, I gained informed consent from individual volunteer teachers who met the criteria for this study and planned to participate. I conducted audio-taped interviews that lasted between 30 and 60 minutes during one-on-one Zoom sessions where I and asked probing questions. Halcomb (2016) informed researchers that they should use probes to obtain additional information, when necessary, in a courteous and professional manner during and after the interview, and that they remain ethical when transcribing and summarizing responses and conducting member checking. I followed suggested interview practices for researchers to conduct the interview process accurately, to obtain cooperation of school leaders to recruit and conduct interviews, to collect data needed to address my research problem, to record data with a digital audio device, and to record data in a journal during each interview (see Creswell, 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

I gained primary consent from the district under study after I provided a letter of intent and gained consent from the interviewee to participate in the study. After cooperation was established from the school board of the district, I emailed principals at three different elementary schools in the district under study and asked them for their cooperation in having a recruitment flyer distributed to first through third grade, primary school teachers with more than 2 years of experience teaching in a literacy intervention program via email. The flyer provided teachers, who met criteria for the study, with instructions to email me through my Walden University email to share their interest in volunteering for the study. Once I received their email, I responded by providing potential participants with an informed consent form. Participants who agreed to terms and conditions listed on the consent form were advised to respond to the email confirming their consent to move forward by replying "I consent." Once they emailed their approval of consent, I provided participants with suggested dates and times to conduct the interview. After waiting 2 weeks, I emailed each individual teacher who did not respond by using email addresses listed on the school website. The follow-up email included a flyer with a subject line which had been previously approved by the Walden IRB and offered a $20 gift card opportunity as a result of their participation. The interview process involving all participants spanned a 4-week period. On the day of each interview, the participant was sent a password-protected link to for their interview via Zoom, to ensure security and confidentiality in completing the interview portion of the process. The following interview protocol was followed during the interview (see Appendix A):

- Introduced myself to the participant

- Read the introductory script verbatim

  - o Reminded participant of her digital consent

  - o Thanked the participant

  - o Restated the timeframe of the interview

  - o Asked if he/she had any questions

- Began the audio only recording

- Initiated asking questions beginning with the demographic questions listed.

- During the interview and as needed upon the participant's request, repeated, and rephrased the questions.

- Asked follow-up and probing questions.

- Stated when it was the end of the interview.

- Informed the participant of the next steps in approving the transcripts

- Ended the protocol.

After each interview had been conducted, I transcribed and summarized the interview data and emailed the participant for the member-checking process, so each participant had the opportunity to review their transcript summary for accuracy or make additions. This also allowed me to begin coding data as it was collected. Participants had been informed that they would review the documents and that this member checking step would take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. I asked the participant to respond with any adjustments that they felt that needed to be made to the document and provide me with a physical address to send the gift card. If the participant did not reply within 7 days

with their confirmation, I sent a follow up email with the same requests. Twelve participants responded that their transcript summaries accurately recorded their responses to interview questions and no changes were needed. One participant wanted to add a few points which required me to make minor changes, which were based on the participants' emailed response. I then input interview data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize, sort, and store the data.

Data Analysis Plan

After collecting data from the semistructured, in-depth interviews, with each participant the data were analyzed in an ongoing process. Researchers shared how making sense of the data so that researchers understands the information is a requirement of analyzing qualitative data (Creswell, 2015; Halcomb, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). According to Creswell (2015) there are 6 steps to analyzing qualitative data, as follows: (1) collect data, (2) prepare data for analysis, (3) organize data, (4) transcribe data, (5) code data, and (6) establish themes.

While collecting data, I used the zoom audio only feature to record the participant interviews and took notes in a reflexive journal that included basic elements of the interview like the date, time, interviewee's name, questions, and space for notes. Preparing the data consisted of both the organization and the transcribing of data. After transcribing the data, I contacted the participant to verify accuracy of transcribed and summarized data.

I used Microsoft Excel to be able to sort the information and Microsoft Word to further sort the info into subheadings and was able to establish the themes of the

information. As researchers shared, once data has been organized, coding can then commence to establish broad themes in the data that are characterized by similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation (Clark & Vealé, 2018). The use of themes and coding are ways to analyze data (Halcomb, 2016). After confirmation of accuracy in the member-checking process, I coded data. I maintained credibility by soliciting an expert reviewer to provide feedback based on their expertise in reviewing my findings. The reviewer was a doctoral professor at a state university who specializes in methodological and coding practices.

To code data, I began with immersing myself in the data as it was collected to be certain that I was familiar with the data (Halcomb, 2016). I began with a provisional list of a priori codes which were developed using the five disciplines of a learning organizations to align from the conceptual framework (see Saldaña, 2016). I did not want to automatically condense my information into those categories, so I began 1st cycle coding with both descriptive and conceptual data using elemental methods of coding and was certain to write relevant codes in memos that were relevant to the constructs in the predetermined data. Descriptive coding was used as a 1st step in data analysis in preparation for the second step coding which are more advanced ways of reorganizing and reanalyzing data (see Saldaña, 2011). For the 2nd cycle coding, the goal was to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, and conceptual organization from the 1st set of codes. I began this cycle of coding by identifying patterns and inputting them into an excel sheet organized by question.

The next step was to place all coded data on a Microsoft word document as to begin establishing themes (Saldaña, 2016). I created a summary table that helped me to organize the data by documenting the codes, categories, themes, and excerpts from each participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Lodico et al. (2010) share that Themes are "big ideas" that are a combination of several codes (p.195). To establish the themes, I searched through the established codes and data to form categories and then sought out patterns in the subcategories to categorize them. I then established main themes, subthemes and miscellaneous themes which may be discarded once all themes had been fully established.

I named the themes with a concise name that would allow for the reader to have a clear view of what the theme was about and continued to review the established themes to illuminate the research questions. The final step in my data analysis plan was to summarize the data in a narrative manner (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Discrepant cases were also shared to add credibility to the factors surrounding my analysis. I included samples of quotes from participants as using the participants' own words, builds the reader's confidence that the data shared is an accurate representation of the elements of the story (see Lodico et al., 2010).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness means data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted rigorously and ethically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Flick (2018) suggested that the researcher provide evidence through a variety

of ways: Triangulation, Member checking, peer review, and other sources of auditing. These suggestions provide data sources that increase the probability of trustworthiness.

Credibility

For this study I used triangulation which involves gathering evidence from multiple sources to cross-check data and compare results (Lodico et al., 2010). The sample size that I sought out was 15 participants but only acquired 13 participants, from three different schools and three different grade levels within each school to get various perspectives. I used member checking which consisted of asking participants of the study to review the transcriptions from their interviews. I asked for their feedback and suggestions and/or concerns to ensure accurate information. Lastly, the source of auditing was covered in the use of the "audio only" recording feature via the zoom meetings, where this was used as a digital source that provided evidence of the accuracy of the information.

To ensure credibility of the study, I established a consistent interview process, framed by an interview protocol. Saldaña (2016) suggested a three-step protocol to ensure credibility: (1) initially code while transcribing interview data; (2) maintain a reflective journal of the research project with copious memos; and (3) check interpretations developed with the participants themselves. I ensured accuracy of the data by member checking. I emailed each participant a copy of the interview transcript for accuracy and clarifying or correcting points as needed. The participants were given seven days to read over the transcripts and respond with confirmation of accuracy or suggestions for changes. Saldaña (2016) suggested using multiple sources of data

validates coding and improves the quality of trustworthiness. I also retained an individual

with expertise in research and no connection to the study to serve as a reviewer (see

Saldaña, 2016).

Transferability

Burkholder et al. (2016) explained that researchers' responsibility regarding

transferability is to provide sufficient description and maximum variation; therefore,

transferability was supported by using rich descriptions of the setting, participants,

background, triangulation, and context of the phenomenon being investigated to allow the

reader to have a better understanding of the problem. The results were written in a way

that they may be generalized or transferred into similar situations that may be studied by

ensuring that readers are able to understand the results clearly upon reading the study, to

determine if similar processes will be at work in their communities (see Lodico et al.,

2010).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data and entails a reasonable argument

for how I collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The methods that I used to establish

stability of the data are triangulation and member checking. It also includes notetaking,

and audio recording of the interviews. The interview questions are aligned with the

research questions that are based on the construct of the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree at which the findings of the study are shaped

by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Amankwaa, 2016). To

achieve confirmability, I established an audit trail which includes detailed descriptions of the research process from the data collection to reporting findings, ensuring that the data reported is based on respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. I documented the coding, my thoughts, interpretations of the data, and my rationale for determining themes and patterns. I developed a reflexive journal where I made regular entries during the research process (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Avoiding Bias

Ravitch and Carl (2019) shared that bias existed in all research. Acknowledging biases and assumptions is an ethical responsibility that I sought to address before, during and after research had been conducted. To ensure this study was carried out in the most appropriate manner, I anticipated ethical matters, including those related to bias and confidentiality and addressed them beforehand by establishing and adhering to clear and consistent research procedures. Considering areas such as consent, deception, confidentiality, and the research site which would not have a vested interest in the study.

Informed Consent

As a requirement of this qualitative study, I completed the Web-based training course through the National Institute of Health (NIH) on "Protecting Human Research participants" in 2018 and I received certification number 2678004. Legal issues and ethical practices were some of the topics of this training. Before conducting any research, I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval on March 29, 2021, through their application process. The process consisted of gathering feedback from the IRB to assist

me in addressing all possible ethical issues. As a result of this information, I was aware that I was responsible for protecting the confidentiality of all participants and also adhered to the guidelines of the IRB. I did not interact with any students, with anyone that was under direct my supervision, and interviews were conducted outside of my contracted hours.

I established permission from the selected district, school site, gatekeepers of the various schools, and participants of the study, being sure to share with them the purpose of the study, assuring them that their participation was strictly voluntary and confidential. Teachers' names, school, district, gatekeepers, and any other identifiable information that may represent the participants was replaced with alpha-numeric pseudonyms to assure confidentiality. Emails were saved as a PDF and added to the file on a flash drive and then deleted from my email. All information will be kept for at least 5 years upon completion of the study in a locked file at my place of residence and will then be shredded and discarded.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis is another critical aspect of ethical procedures. I utilized the interview protocol to ensure that the process was consistent across participants and that I did not ask any leading questions. I refrained from negatively reacting to responses as well. Collected data will remain secured in a locked location and identifying information will be stored in a separate location to which only I have access. All data will be destroyed after 5 years from the conclusion of the study, and I will ensure that data are reported anonymously so that participants cannot be identified. Participants

are distinguished in the results with an arbitrary alphanumeric code. At the end of the study, data may be shared with the district if requested, in either written or verbal form, but participants will remain anonymous.

Data analysis presents an opportunity for researcher bias, so it was important to accept all study results, not just those that reflected my beliefs or expectations. With the use of the reflexive journal, I documented extensive notes that include reflections regarding subjectivity.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Using Senge's (1990) learning organization and system's thinking theory, I conducted semistructured interviews on the perspectives of primary grade teachers in urban Title I schools in the southeastern region of the United States. Understanding these perspectives that may influence literacy instruction can provide valuable data to school personnel, potentially enabling them to better accommodate the needs of educators and students. This section of the study provides a detailed explanation of how the data was collected, gathered, analyzed, and interpreted relating to the theme of the study. Chapter 4 includes the data collection, analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness. Chapter 5 includes a synthesis of the results and descriptions of their importance.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Purposeful sampling and semistructured interviews were used to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers in urban Title I schools in the southeastern region of the United States. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

In Chapter 4, I present the results in the following sections: setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary.

Setting

The settings for this basic qualitative study with interviews were three urban Title I schools within one district located in the southeastern region of the United States. I recruited participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the recruitment and interviews, all participants worked as teachers in the participating school district and were able to participate in the interviews via zoom.

The target population was recruited through participants' email addresses within the district under study. The district representative who approved my conduct of the study

forwarded the recruitment flyer directly to the district's elementary principal via email that requested that the school secretary disseminate flyers to staff members. Once each teacher received the flyer that contained pertinent information about the study, teachers who met the criteria listed on the flyer emailed me to share their interest in volunteering for the study. The consent form was then emailed to each qualifying participant, and they were instructed to respond back via email to confirm their consent. I received 16 responses to the flyer. Fifteen responders met the criteria for participation and completed the steps for the informed consent. Fourteen interviews were scheduled; however, one participant did not keep the scheduled interview appointment. The participant did not respond to the email request to reschedule the interview, which concluded the number of participants to be 13.

The 13 participants who were interviewed met the following criteria prior to being interviewed: (a) primary grades teacher (first through third grade), and (b) minimum of 2 years providing literacy instruction. To maintain confidentiality of data, I assigned each participant an alpha numeric code as follows: P1…P13. Table 1 presents the participants by the grade level they teach, and by number of years they have been teaching.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Grade Level	Number of Years Teaching Literacy	Education Attainment
P 1	1st	10	Bachelors
P 2	1st	6	Masters
P 3	1st	3	Bachelors
P 4	1st	11	Masters
P 5	1st	3	Alternative certification program
P 6	2nd	4	Alternative certification Program
P 7	2nd	9	Bachelors
P 8	1st & 2nd	2	Education Specialist
P 9	3rd	6	Bachelors
P 10	3rd	3	Alternative certification program
P 11	3rd	15	Bachelors
P 12	3rd	5	Alternative certification program
P 13	2nd & 3rd	9	Bachelors

The study focused on the perspectives of primary grade teachers from first, second, and third grades. The 13 participants were from diverse backgrounds and self-identified as Black, multiracial, or White. Twelve participants were female, and one participant was male. These participants stated that they had degrees spanning from a bachelor's degree to an education specialist degree. Two of the participants shared that they were finishing their grade level certification process, and eleven of them were already fully certified. The district where participants teach allows for teachers who have a bachelor's degree in any unspecified area to begin teaching prior to acquiring their teaching certification.

Data Collection

The data collection process began once I received approval from Walden University's IRB. The IRB approval number for this study is 03-29-22-0369637. I used

purposeful sampling to recruit and interview 13 participants from three of the schools in the district under study located in the southeastern region of the United States.

I established a partnership with the district under study soon after I received approval from the IRB. The district representative who agreed to cooperate with the conduct of this study agreed for me to email a recruitment flyer to school leaders, who thereafter instructed their secretary to forward the flyer to their teachers. Any person who was interested in participating in the study was directed to email their interest directly to me via the email provided on the flyer. Once participants emailed their interest, they received the consent form to read and reply to my email with their consent if they agreed to the conditions outlined in the document. Any participant who provided consent and met the criteria was contacted via email to schedule a one-on-one recorded interview via Zoom.

Upon receiving the volunteers' interest and consent to participate, I emailed each participant and provided him or her with a password protected link, which was active 10 minutes prior to the scheduled 30–60-minute Zoom, audio-recorded interview. Interviews were scheduled throughout a 4-week period with four to five interviews scheduled each week.

To begin the interview process, I asked each participant to provide verbal consent to the audio-recorded interview. After the verbal consent, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A). All participants were asked the same nine questions, followed by probing questions in the same order to ensure that the same protocol for asking questions was followed for each participant. This resulted in collection of interview data

from participants, which gave me the opportunity to determine if saturation of data had been received from the interview process.

Each interview was audio-recorded via Zoom, and recordings were saved to a flash drive. After each interview, I explained to the participant that I would transcribe the interview and email them a copy of a summary of the transcripts for them to review and respond to confirm their accuracy. I also then transcribed the audio recordings verbatim using Microsoft word dictate tool. I saved the transcriptions on the jump drive for easy retrieval.

Participants were notified at the onset of this process that each participant would be asked to participate in member checking of the data collection process. Each participant was asked to respond within 7 days to return the summary of their findings with any corrections that were needed. Eleven participants responded and said that the transcripts were accurate. Two participants responded with corrections and suggested additions to the transcript.

The laptop that was used for the study had all the emails, interviews, and other study related information on it. I transferred the information to a flash drive and deleted the information from the laptop. All data I collected for this study and data I transferred to the flash drive were locked in a safe at my home. I am the only person who knows the combination to the locked safe. This information will be stored for 5 years before shredding, according to Walden University's protocol.

There was a variation to the plan presented in Chapter 3. To ensure that ethical standards were met, I followed Walden University IRB's feedback and did not ask

principals to email potential participants. I instead asked principals to ask their secretaries

to email potential participants due to the concerns mentioned by the IRB that the flyer

should be sent in a way that does not convey any expectation on the part of the principal

that the teachers participate in the study. Walden IRB reviewed the adjustment to the

recruitment steps and approved the plan.

There were no unusual circumstances that were encountered during data

collection. If any unusual circumstances were encountered during data collection, the

circumstances would have been reported and discussed immediately following its'

occurrence.

Data Analysis

I conducted data analysis in the following steps: Transcribe the interviews and

organize the data, code the data, review data, establish themes, and summarize the data. I

used Excel and Microsoft Word to organize and sort the data two software programs

recommended by researchers (see Creswell, 2015; Halcomb, 2016; Moser & Korstjens,

2018).

The first step was to transcribe the interviews. After each interview, I transcribed

the interview by playing the recording and selecting dictate in Microsoft word. I followed

along by listening and making the edits to reflect the verbatim responses from each

participant. Transcribing each interview word for word allowed me to become familiar

with the data. I reread the transcripts to be sure no identifiable information could be

located. I then established member checking by sending their completed interview

transcript to the specific participant that was interviewed to confirm that the transcripts

were accurate. Once the participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts via email, I

began uploading them line by line, question by question into an excel spreadsheet to

begin organizing the data for coding.

After organizing the transcripts, the next step in the data analysis was to code the

data. I began with a provisional list of a priori codes which were developed using the five

disciplines of a learning organizations to align from the conceptual framework (see

Saldaña, 2016). I began my 1st cycle coding with both descriptive and concept, elemental

methods of coding, being certain to write in memos of any codes that were relevant to the

constructs in the predetermined data. Descriptive coding was used as a first step in data

analysis in preparation for the 2nd step coding which are more advanced ways of

reorganizing and reanalyzing data (Saldaña, 2011). For the 2nd cycle coding, I began this

cycle of coding by identifying patterns and inputting them into an excel sheet organized

by question. As I read through the transcripts, I made notes and wrote questions in the

area designated on the excel spreadsheet. I also highlight keywords or phrases that related

to the constructs of Senge's (1990) five disciplines.

After I went through the cycles of coding, I then began establishing themes for

my data. I used a summative chart (see Appendix C) to make organization easier and the

findings clearer. I established categories, subcategories and then established themes and

meta-themes based off the organized data, prior to explaining the results (see Bloomberg

& Volpe, 2019). The table below shows the meta-analysis of themes that were

established based off the patterns in the themes and subthemes and were used to

summarize the results.

Table 2

Patterns in themes

Meta-Theme: Effectiveness	
Subtheme	Theme Summary
Personal responsibilities to Differentiate Approaches	The experiences of teachers with struggling readers are personal feelings of responsibility to assure student success by differentiating approaches to teaching reading.
Early Literacy intervention Program Purpose	The majority of the district uses I-Ready and Fundations however many use a variety of self or school selected others
	The perception of the purpose and expectations depends on the depth of training or communication provided
Effective Elements to Early Literacy Intervention Programs.	The perspectives on the effectiveness of the early literacy intervention programs depends on the teacher's ability to implement them the way that he/she wants to and the time and consistency in which the program is used.
Meta-Theme: Supports	
Subtheme	Theme Summary
Hands-on Learning Experiences	The sufficient supports that teacher have had are a result of hands-on/collaborative learning experiences
	Trainings that were a resourceful tool for teachers are those that are interactive and on-going
Needed Supports	Teachers suggest that the supports that are needed to implement early literacy interventions with fidelity is in-depth trainings and professional supports

Results

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of primary grade

teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received

to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. I used purposeful sampling and semistructured interviews to collect data from primary grade teachers in urban Title I schools in the southeastern region of the United States. This interview method allowed for me to collect in-depth and detailed responses from the participants. In this section, I discuss the results of the 13 teachers. The results are addressed as an answer to the study's research questions: Theme 1 addressed RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?

Theme 1: Effectiveness

Subtheme 1: Personal Responsibilities to Differentiate Approaches

The 13 participants in this study identified a personal need to differentiate the strategies used to address the needs of struggling readers. They expressed having a wide range of students who were considered struggling readers. They described the fact that teaching reading could not be done in a one-size fits all format and therefore, breaking down the reading by the foundational elements and meeting the students where they were was what they found to work best. P10 stated,

> In third grade, I have students who are reading nine words per minute. That is
> basically a nonreader. With students like that I focus on consonant vowel
> consonant letters, and basic sight words. Some of my other struggling readers,
> they may be reading like 50, to 70 words a minute. With those students, I help
> them build their fluency and their confidence. And then I have some students who

actually can read 100 [to] 110 words per minute, but they struggle with comprehension skills, and recalling what they read. So, with those students, I teach them how to visualize as they read and how to make meaning as they read.

If one strategy did not work for a student, teachers would continue to seek out alternative strategies to meet each student's needs. Teacher participants indicated that the most frustrating part was most often not seeing results that they had hoped for consistently. P2 stated, "That [constant struggle] was the biggest discouragement, because it was just one day, they would know [letter sounds] one day they wouldn't." Participants expressed their personal feelings of needing to do something different to meet the needs of the students, therefore they continued to seek out resources and strategies that would assist students in becoming more fluent readers. Participants knew that students needed help and they were willing to take on the challenge to assure that the help that students needed was provided.

Nine out of 13 participants expressed how students were grade levels behind and how they often felt like some of the expectations that teachers were given were impossible to reach, with the challenges that students had. P6 stated,

> Because I knew these students could not do what I was supposed to ask them to do, I did not know what to do with those feelings -- their frustration, or my frustration. Nobody ever told me what I was supposed to do; I had to figure that out on my own.

Results from data analysis revealed all the participants mentioned small group, and one-on-one strategies to address the struggling reader challenges, P1 stated, "So small group settings, maybe three or four kids at a time, or individually [work best], but also just

using different strategies just for their learning styles." They felt that whatever resources

that they used, needed to encompass those needed by the students. P5 stated, "So

depending on the students, depending on where they are, that's where I use

interventions." Teachers used their own experiences when identifying what the students

needed to guide their practices. Teachers found that it is important to differentiate their

practices when implementing interventions for struggling readers to be sure that they

meet the needs of every child.

Subtheme 2: Early Literacy Intervention Program Purpose

All participants mentioned the use of I-Ready and Fundations as intervention

programs that their schools used to address the struggling readers in their schools. Ten

out of 13 teachers felt that they have a clear understanding of the purpose and

expectations of the program. P3 stated, "Yes, I do. We went through detailed training on

how to implement these programs and how to use the different resources." Although 10

of the 13 teachers expressed having a clear understanding of the purpose and

expectations, they all agreed that training or the lack thereof played a strong role in how

strongly they felt about their understandings. When reflecting on what contributed to

their clear understandings of the purposes and expectations, P8 provided a representative

comment, as follows:

> I would say it is being present in your lesson planning and being present in your
>
> observation. Asking those questions when they [teachers] are doing collaborative
>
> planning. When we go into collaborative planning, you have those things that are
>
> necessary for next weeks' lessons and you are pulling those resources versus

going to [sites] like Teachers Pay Teachers, any other secondary resource, you are

going to the things that have been shown to be effective establishing that routine

with interventions as well.

Although all of the participants shared their use of I-Ready and Fundations as

intervention programs, seven out of 13 participants used alternative programs to pick and

choose which programs that they wanted to use and when. P11 shared her use of a

program called Sadlier. P9 shared her use of Reading Plus. P4 and P5 shared their use of

Benchmark intervention programs. Knowing that teachers participated in various

interventions, it became evident of the challenges that teachers faced that caused for them

to feel as though it was difficult to keep up with the clear purpose and expectations. P5

stated,

It is very new to us. So, we are still getting that. I am not really confident where I

am in it right now. But I am grasping as we go along because it is all a part of

that. Once you start doing it, you become familiar with it, because like I said,

when I first started in 2018, it was benchmark so once I got used to benchmark

rich mechanics, oh, we are going to change it. We are going to do this. And I was

okay with that. But I still use benchmark too.

The participants expressed that they felt more comfortable with understanding the

purpose and expectations of the programs they were using that they were most

comfortable with and had used longer, not necessarily the programs that the district was

expecting them to use. P7 shared,

> We have had that program [IReady] since I have been here. And I have been here
> six years. So that program has stayed and stayed around. But I have a clear
> understanding of how to use it, you know, how to manipulate it for my kids as
> well. Fundations, because it is a new program, is more so us watching videos or
> playing trial and error right now. And we are hoping to get a better grasp of it
> soon.

Teachers recognized that their understanding of the purpose of the early literacy intervention programs was a necessary prerequisite to be able to implement best practices. They also acknowledged that they were more successful when they had a clear understanding of the purpose of the programs.

Subtheme 3: Effective Elements to Early Literacy Intervention Programs

The results revealed the perspectives of teachers on the effectiveness of the early literacy intervention programs depends on the teacher's ability to implement them the way that he or she wants to. P5 stated,

> But just to have like a chance to pull from Benchmark [Intervention], even though
> we are using a curriculum now called Fundations that the district just brought in
> for us in this school, we asked to pull from stuff that I have used previously,
> because simply sometimes it is the easiest way.

Six of the 13 participants expressed that they did not feel that the early literacy intervention programs were effective tools to address the concerns of struggling readers. P6 stated, "To me, they don't have enough structure." P10 expressed, "If we are going to utilize this program and be effective with it, we need to maximize it and use it for each

grade." P13 stated, "I feel like they will be with proper training and with fidelity." Those

that felt that the early literacy interventions were effective, contributed those feelings to

consistency and efficient use of resources. P8 expressed,

> Well, if we're just thinking based on the data, I feel like it has been effective,
>
> we've seen some major gains with our students utilizing our intervention
>
> schedule, and just utilizing those resources efficiently to make sure that we're
>
> putting these resources in front of the teacher so that we're effectively putting it
>
> before the students and we're keeping it like current we don't try to like jump from
>
> program to program.

In addition to whether or not the teachers felt that the interventions were effective, this

theme included teachers' perspectives on implementing the early literacy interventions

effectively. Based on the results, the perception of the efficacy of Early literacy

interventions depends on the time and consistency in which the program is used. P1

explained, "I believe that I could, if given the right amount of time to do it." Likewise,

P12 responded similarly with, "Well, the number one struggle that occurs is that a

program takes time to implement." At least 11 out of 13 teachers mentioned time as the

challenge that prevents them from being able to implement interventions effectively. P10

added to that challenge when she expressed, "It is difficult to implement them effectively

when they're not consistently being utilized."

Theme 2 addressed RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on

supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with

fidelity?

Theme 2: Supports

Subtheme 1: Hands-on Learning Experiences

While training supports for 10 out of 13 participants were limited due to COVID this past year, these participants felt trainings they received, that were most helpful were those that were hands-on and collaborative experiences. P4 expressed, "They watch us as we teach the kids strategies. And once we are done, they give us feedback tells us what we could have done different, how to improve. And that is how I learned the best." P5 described, "Having that peer observation, seeing how they work with it, that really helps too." P6 explained how simply providing resources was not enough, "I think without context, most of that [providing resources] isn't particularly supportive." P12 added to that and stated, "Most support that I get is just a reference to another teacher. Which does not do well, because most teachers are overworked these days." P6 expanded on the challenges,

> Because I think, and I have learned this as a teacher like... that unless there is a goal for everything, like you know, when you know, when it has worked. You kind of know the purpose behind it ... And how are you going to know it is met? Those things [resources] you get handed do not really have that, they are kind of like, here is an activity you can do. Yeah, sometimes it has research behind it. But I mean, I have gotten a lot of things handed to me that are just, I do not know if they are really going to work.

The data provided evidence of the importance of collaborative supports for teachers as well. P11 expressed this importance and shared the need for collaborative time. "Time to

actually go in and talk to other teachers and see how they're implementing it, but also

hear from the actual company to how it's supposed to be implemented." P12 shared her

most memorable experience with trainings and collaborative supports and stated, "It was

hands-on which I'm a hands-on learner, and they were recorded, so I can go back and

view them." Eleven of the 13 participants expressed being in collaborative experiences.

P12 expressed,

> So, once we are looking at data for reading, we come up with different strategies
>
> for grade levels that we can implement, and then within the leadership team, we
>
> go out and we just kind of observe each other, nothing very formal, very informal
>
> observation, just to make sure we are following up so that when we meet again,
>
> we can see an increase in that data.

Nevertheless, the majority of those collaborative experiences are not all focused on the

early literacy interventions. P13 shared,

> Now we meet for collaborative planning two days a week. And it is for 40
>
> minutes. I am not going to say we speak on literacy every day. Because, of
>
> course, we do Science and social studies, and elective one day, and then we do
>
> math and reading one day a week.

Teachers' overall perspectives on their levels of collaboration were limited. They shared

that their collaborative opportunities were not specific to their needs and were not always

on the subject of literacy. Teachers recognized that when they did purposefully

collaborate, the experiences were beneficial, and they were able to provide much more

support to each other as a result of their participation in the planning opportunities.

Subtheme 2: Needed Supports

While teachers participated in collaborative experiences, underwent various training opportunities, and expressed a clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of the early literacy interventions, the 13 teachers all agree that more supports are needed. Teachers suggest that the supports that are needed to implement early literacy interventions with fidelity are in-depth trainings and professional supports. P5 suggested, "Having those professional learning opportunities that allow for you to expand on one segment at a time, so you can really understand what's expected of you. And this would be able to be continually done through each unit to be effective". Likewise, P7 and P8 suggested more trainings. P7 shared, "Offer more training. Most time it is about the training and how it is being done. How the training is being addressed." P8 added, "I would say that the district could do a better job of training the teachers before placing them in the classroom." P9 even stated, "We need more training in the specific struggling areas."

I did not find evidence of discrepant data. If discrepant data had been evident, the data would have been discussed.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

For this study I used triangulation which involves gathering evidence from multiple sources to cross-check data and compare results (see Lodico et al., 2010). I used member checking for the participants to view their initial interview transcripts and to view the summary of my findings. I emailed each participant and asked for feedback to

ensure accurate information. I used the audio-only record feature via the zoom meetings as a digital source that provided evidence of the accuracy of the information (Zoom, 2021). Lastly, I emailed the participants a summary of my findings to assure that the information gathered was accurately described.

Transferability

Burkholder et al. (2016) explained that researchers' responsibility regarding transferability is to provide sufficient description and maximum variation. Transferability was established by using rich descriptions of the setting, participants, background, triangulation, and context of the phenomenon being investigated to allow the reader to have a better understanding of the problem. The results were written in a way that they may be generalized or transferred into similar situations that may be studied by ensuring that readers are able to understand, by reading the study, if similar processes will be at work in their communities (see Lodico et al., 2010).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data and entails a reasonable argument for how I collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The methods that I used to establish stability of the data are triangulation and member checking. The processes I followed also included notetaking in a journal to check for any bias that could emerge during the interview process, and audio recording of the interviews. The interview questions are aligned with the research questions, which were framed by the conceptual framework of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which findings of the study are shaped by respondents and not by researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Amankwaa, 2016). To achieve confirmability, I established an audit trail which includes detailed descriptions of the research process from the data collection to reporting findings, ensuring that the data reported is based on respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. I documented the coding, my thoughts, interpretations of the data, and my rationale for determining themes and patterns. I met with a qualitative methodologies' expert throughout my coding processes to provide guidance to me along the way. I developed a reflexive journal where I made regular entries during the research process (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the setting, data collection, data analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness. In this basic qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The participants' responses to the interviews indicate that primary grade teachers' perspectives are an important contributor to understanding the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs and what teachers need to implement them effectively. Results also validated what current literature states regarding learning organizations.

Based on the data analysis, I generated two themes and five subthemes. The 13 participants identified different factors that contribute to their effectiveness including using differentiated strategies, clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of the early literacy intervention programs, and teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs. All of the participants identified hands-on learning experiences and trainings as the most beneficial supports teachers have and still need.

More than half of the participants addressed the challenge of having a clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of the newer early literacy intervention programs that their school uses. As a result, they often reverted back to the programs that they were more familiar with and in turn did not always have a specific intervention that was consistently used in their schools. More than half of the participants mentioned time as a challenge to their ability to implement the early literacy interventions effectively. Teachers reported that they needed time to consistently implement the programs. They suggested that specified intervention times in their classrooms would help them to be able to utilize the resources that the early literacy intervention programs provided. Chapter 5 provides the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications. It also presents the study's conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The study is significant because of the current challenges faced in schools with the use of early literacy intervention programs being implemented effectively. Researchers have identified a gap in the literature on practice regarding primary grade teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to effectively implement early literacy intervention programs that will result in positive literacy outcomes for students (see Austin et al., 2017; Grøver, 2016; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017; Wanzek et al., 2018).

Interpretation of the Findings

My interpretation of the findings is informed by the conceptual framework and the research literature. The study was based on two research questions: RQ1: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools? RQ2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

Theme 1: Effectiveness

Subtheme 1: Personal Responsibility to Differentiate Approaches

The 13 participants in this study identified a personal responsibility to address the struggling readers with the use of differentiated strategies. The findings are consistent with research by Epstein and Willhite (2017) and Mosoge et al. (2018), who found there was a connection between teacher self-efficacy and student success. As teachers of struggling readers, which is one of the four blocks of literacy, it is important for teachers to understand the significance of working with students to establish successful practices that will enable student achievement. This finding aligns with Senge's (1990) mental model of five disciplines of a learning organization that focuses on how teachers see and understand their own teaching practices. Participants were able to discuss what their own practices were with struggling readers and changes they made to support the students' development of skills.

Participants identified teaching reading could not be done in a one-size fits all format and therefore, breaking down the reading by the foundational elements and meeting the students where they were was what they found to work best. They identified that some students needed more time with elements of literature that had been addressed in grade levels prior to their current grade. Snyder and Golightly (2017) found that a balanced approach where all foundations of literacy are addressed for reading could positively contribute to student growth in reading.

Despite the use of various strategies, some participants still became frustrated, unclear of next steps, and constantly at a place where they were not satisfied with the progress that students had made and were uncertain of what else to do to address the challenges of these students. As in previous studies (Baker et al., 2015; Filderman et al.,

2018; Nagro et al., 2019), this study proved that teachers at times have difficulty identifying modifications to instructional delivery, those strategies that are evidence-based or best practices.

Subtheme 2: Early Literacy Intervention Program Purpose

Participants who had a clear purpose and understanding of the current early literacy intervention programs contributed that they gained knowledge from trainings that had been provided. This finding is consistent with the research in Chapter 2 that identified that early literacy intervention programs provide the foundation to educational success and therefore it is important for teachers to understand what the programs are and how they are successfully implemented (see Auletto & Sableski, 2018; Coyne et al., 2018; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Findings reflected that professional learning and feedback are important elements for teachers to have when implementing early literacy intervention programs, which also aligns with the findings of Meissel et al. (2016). The element of training also aligns with Senge's (1990) five disciplines of a learning organization where personal mastery is acknowledged as teachers begin to understand the early literacy intervention programs, as well as establishing a shared vision when teachers choose to become more knowledgeable and skillful in their practices based on knowledge and skills gained through trainings.

Subtheme 3: Effective Elements to Early Literacy Intervention Programs

Findings indicated that teachers only felt confident in the effectiveness of intervention programs when they were able to implement the interventions that they felt worked the best for their students. Participants faced challenges with lack of consistency

in usage of intervention program strategies due to not having undergone proper training in use of interventions with fidelity. Only when those elements were provided to teachers did they feel as though they could effectively implement the programs successfully and with fidelity. These findings are consistent with research in Chapter 2 that revealed to establish or sustain effectiveness of an intervention, teachers must be prepared through ongoing professional learning and be given consistent time to implement the programs as they were designed to be conducted (see Filderman et al., 2018; Foorman, 2016; Foorman et al., 2018).

Participants found that consistent reviews and analyses of data to assess student progress were efficient ways to determine if the interventions were effective. This practice is consistent with what researchers have shared about effective data usage and evaluating curricula as components of effective reading interventions driving instruction and systematic use to assess progress (see Filderman et al., 2018; Harlacher et al., 2015). I found that participants in this study often dealt with the challenge of early literacy intervention programs changing sometimes yearly and often to the point where they were uncertain of what program they needed to use and often chose the one that they were most comfortable with to fit the needs of their students. This finding identified a lack of fidelity with the implementation of the early literacy intervention programs. Dussling (2018) and Meissel et al. (2016) suggested interventions should be implemented in the way they are designed, without teacher modifications or adaptations to increase the likelihood of effectiveness.

Theme 2: Supports

Subtheme 1: Hands-on Learning Experiences

All participants agreed that the most helpful trainings and other professional learning was those experiences that were hands-on. Participants do not always have opportunities to undergo trainings to understand what the early literacy interventions were, how to implement them, and what to do to adjust their practices. The participants instead are often given the resources and left with understanding them more in-depth on their own. These findings reaffirm research by Coyne et al. (2018) that showed that teachers most often are given general advice to follow intervention programs exactly as written with fidelity. Researchers concluded that supports for teachers must include clear organizational structure, team collaboration, and coordinated service delivery (Hudson et al., 2020).

In addition to hands-on learning experiences for teachers, the findings show that participants felt that collaborative experiences and providing feedback had great effects on their ability to implement the early literacy interventions effectively. This element of effectiveness aligns with Senge's (1990) system's thinking theory in the discipline of team learning where genuine thinking together expands on the shared vision in practices. Research revealed in Chapter 2 that supports that provide effective feedback opportunities can improve teacher effectiveness (see Bratsch-Hines et al., 2020).

Subtheme 2: Needed Supports

While participants shared that they participated in hands-on experiences from time to time as well as participated in various trainings, they all still identified in-depth

trainings and professional learning opportunities as the supports that are still needed to implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. The findings indicated that most often participants would participate in a training, but teachers did not consistently and continuously reevaluate the progress of programs and practices or provide opportunities of clarity or discussion when needed. Snyder et al. (2015), found that scheduling time for continuous training and monitoring for fidelity are needed for program effectiveness. Researchers concluded that modeling in classrooms, quality in delivery of professional development, and feedback discussions all contribute to ongoing effective implementation practices (see Foorman, 2016; Meissel et al., 2016; Morris, 2015). The findings align with Senge's (1990) systems thinking theory in establishing a systematic approach to practices in a successful learning organization.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations for this study were centralized in the study's design. First, participants were limited to 13 primary grades teachers from three campuses in one urban Title I district. That may present some challenges with transferability with other populations of school districts across the country. Most participants were female with one male participant, and this may be a limitation because it narrows the population sample to a specific gender, which may limit the possibility of transferability to other contexts outside of the context of female primary grade teachers. The results indicated that participants had varied levels of preparedness in literacy, as two participants were currently enrolled in alternative certification programs, and two of the participants had

completed the same programs. This is a limitation due to teachers' varied levels of knowledge and preparedness.

In exploring the possibility of biases, I kept a reflexive journal during the research process and the interviews. I provided clear explanations and information of the interview process to the participants prior to beginning the interview. Throughout interviews I balanced establishing a rapport and maintaining a neutral stance in my responses to their questions avoiding imposing my own opinion on their responses. I avoided facial expressions to confirm or deny agreement with participant responses thus limiting bias.

Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. There is a gap in practice of educator's knowledge of the ongoing implementation of early literacy programs and student success in literacy. I found many important factors to consider from the perspectives of primary grade teachers that were provided. The following are recommendations based on the strengths, limitations, and literature review of my current study.

This study took place in the southwestern region of the United States. The first recommendation is for replicating the study in other geographical regions. Having additional data from other geographical regions may provide additional data from other district programs and different populations regarding primary grade teachers perspectives

of the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs, and the supports they feel they need to implement them with fidelity. The second recommendation is for researchers to conduct the study with all educators who provide supports to students in the primary grades: to include instructional coaches, administrators, and other support staff. I found that these individuals were mentioned often by all participants during their interview segments and the additional personnel's perspectives may provide valuable insights which were not gathered in my study. My third recommendation is based on participants' respondents and questions that arose from the findings regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the question, "How much did COVID-19 affect teachers' and schools' abilities to address the challenges in reading and what changes will be made to address the effects of the pandemic?" These questions could be answered using a basic qualitative approach to explore participants' answers to these questions. Finally, my last recommendation is for researchers to conduct a case study where teachers are provided with the supports that were suggested by the participants for effectively implementing early literacy interventions with fidelity. Further research on fidelity and implementation could be conducted as a descriptive mixed-methods study to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data to see the effects of the early literacy intervention programs on student progress as well as the perspectives of the participants.

Implications

Findings indicate implications to positive social change in that school leaders can make informed decisions and provide on-going, in-depth professional learning and support for teacher development to effectively implement literacy intervention programs

for students during their primary grade foundational years. The results indicate that the participants faced challenges despite their use of various strategies to address the literacy needs of struggling readers. Results also indicated that participants needed more in-depth training and continuous hands-on learning opportunities to implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. However, participants were able to find success when those types of training opportunities were provided. Understanding teachers' perspectives and the supports needed to implement early literacy intervention programs with fidelity can inform the professional literature on the topic, improve professional development at the local level and inform future research on the topic, thereby leading to positive social change.

This study was limited to specific criteria for participants, including being a primary grade teacher (1st through 3rd grade) from an urban Title I school in the southeastern United States with a minimum of two years of providing literacy instruction and intervention to students. Although all participants were from one regional area of the United States, research could be expanded to include sample populations from other regions of the United States. Future research that broadens the pool of participants to include educators in different roles who serve students in literacy instruction and intervention could be conducted. Expanding the participant pool to guidance counselors and special education teachers for primary grade students may provide more insight on practices that contribute to deeper understanding of intervention programs conducted with fidelity.

The first recommendation is that administrators and support staff establish a professional learning opportunity focused specifically on early literacy interventions, the purpose of them, how to implement them, and a systematic opportunity to view their progress over time. Communicating with the teachers about their needs and establishing a clear action plan for implementation may reduce the frustration that teachers have with the use of research-based practices that work effectively. Primary grade teachers need to be provided with clear purpose and understanding of the early literacy interventions. Teachers should also undergo in-depth on-going trainings that provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate and be provided with constructive feedback to inform practices on effectively implementing early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

My second recommendation is that once the systematic approach is created, there is a team of advisors that is formed during the implementation of the professional learning communities to provide suggestions for modifications that may need to be made and teacher feedback for effective topics and practices to discuss. In my study I found that teachers often participating in trainings, but the trainings were not always beneficial, they were not always purposeful, and they were not always centered along the lines of their daily practices with the literacy interventions. I also found that often the trainings that teachers desired were hands-on and modeling experiences and those types of opportunities were extremely limited. Having a team of advisors will allow for teachers to have a consistent voice and the opportunity to implement the practices that teachers desire and need.

My final recommendation is that school leaders meet more often with the district to discuss early literacy intervention programs and establish a clear view on what programs to use and establish a plan for fidelity to be shared district wide with the teachers at each school. Participants in this study shared how they cannot often effectively implement programs because they are constantly changing. They also shared that the programs that they felt most comfortable with were the programs they were able to use for some time and able to grasp the purpose of each segment of those programs. Consistent use of programs and time to effectively implement these programs was vital to the fidelity of the programs and effectiveness of the teachers who were implementing them (Foorman, 2016; Foorman et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The perspectives of primary grade teachers on the effectiveness of early literacy interventions and the supports they need for ongoing implementation of these programs with fidelity are critical to understanding how to address the needs of struggling readers. My study aimed to explore the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity. Through the primary grade teachers' lenses, I strived to share their perspectives of the challenges they faced and ways they attempted to overcome those challenges.

The results of my study filled an identified gap in practice regarding primary grade teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to effectively implement early

literacy intervention programs. My research aims to provide insight and understanding to early childhood education teachers, early childhood education leaders, early childhood education organizations locally and across the United States about literacy practices regarding struggling readers. Supporting these educators by providing primary grade teachers' perspectives on effective implementation practices and supports has the potential to provide a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on implementing early literacy intervention programs effectively so that supports teachers may need are received to better serve their students' needs.

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Appendix A: Interview protocol—primary grade teachers

Date of Interview_____
Start time: _____End time: _____

Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher will state:

Script
Welcome and thank you for your participation today in this interview. My name is Whitney Smith, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University, conducting a study about the perspectives of primary grade teachers about early literacy intervention programs. This interview today will take no longer than one hour and will include several questions regarding your experiences as a primary grade teacher of struggling readers. I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you share. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or discontinue the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Withdrawing from the study will not impact your current relationship with the school. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to develop a better understanding of your perspectives about early literacy intervention programs, the supports teachers have received to implement early literacy intervention programs, and additional supports that teachers need for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity.

I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator of the study: Primary grade Teachers' Perspectives on Early Literacy Intervention Programs in Urban Title I Schools. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Interview questions for primary grade teachers:
   Demographic Information:

   • What grade(s) do you currently teach?

   • How many years have you been a teacher?

• What is the demographic make-up of your students?

• What is your educational background (i.e., degrees, content areas, special certifications)?

1.   What experiences do you have working with struggling readers? What are some concrete strategies that you use to support these students?

2.   What are the current early literacy intervention programs that your school uses to address the concerns of struggling readers?

3.   Do you feel as though the current early literacy intervention programs that are being used by your school are effective tools to address any struggling reader concerns?

4.   Do you believe that you have a clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of early literacy intervention programs? And do you feel as though you can implement them effectively?

5. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding your perspective on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs?

6. Please describe what trainings or professional development opportunities you have been a part of regarding struggling readers.

7. Explain your experiences with the various supports that have been received in the area of early literacy interventions.

8. Are you involved in any continual professional development, reflective or collaborative experiences to address the effectiveness of the early literacy intervention programs that you currently use?

9. What would you suggest are needed supports for teachers to effectively

implement early literacy interventions with fidelity?

Potential follow up questions will include variations of the following:
Can you tell me more about …?
What do you mean by…?
Help me understand…
What happened when…
Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B: Research and Interview Questions Alignment

RQ: Research Question: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs in urban Title I schools?
Personal Mastery, Mental Models
IQ. 1: What experiences do you have working with struggling readers? What are some concrete strategies that you use to support these students?
IQ. 2: What are the current early literacy intervention programs that your school uses to address the concerns of struggling readers?
IQ. 3: Do you feel as though the current early literacy intervention programs that are being used by your school are effective tools to address any struggling reader concerns? Explain
IQ. 4: Do you believe that you have a clear understanding of the purpose and expectations of early literacy intervention programs? And do you feel as though you can implement them effectively? Explain
IQ. 5: Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding your perspective on the effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs?
Research Question 2: What are primary grade teachers' perspectives on supports needed for ongoing implementation of early literacy intervention programs with fidelity?

Shared Vision, Team Learning, and Systems Thinking
IQ.6: Please describe what trainings or professional development opportunities you have been a part of regarding struggling readers.
IQ.7: Explain your experiences with the various supports that have been received in the area of early literacy interventions.
IQ.8: Are you involved in any continual professional development, reflective or collaborative experiences to address the effectiveness of the early literacy intervention programs that you currently use? Explain
IQ.9: What would you suggest are needed supports for teachers to effectively implement early literacy interventions with fidelity?
Potential Follow-up Questions I kept visible while interviewing participants
1. Can you tell me more about…?   2.What do you mean by…?   3.Help me understand…?   4.What happened when…?   5.Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: A Priori Codes, Categories, Sub-Categories, Themes, Participant Identifiers,

and Sample of Interview

A Priori Codes	Category	Subcategories	Theme	Participants	Excerpts
Personal Mastery & Mental Models	Experiences of teachers with struggling Readers	Strategies	The experiences of teachers with struggling readers are personal feelings of responsibility to assure student success by differentiating approaches to teaching reading.	P1	just trying to find different strategies to help those kids
		Differentiated		P2	I said, we have got to do something different. I do not know that I am going to go home this summer. And I am going to find out what you do for students who cannot remember their letter sounds?
				P8	We are differentiating the needs of the students in order to make sure that they are making
				P11	the gains.
			The majority of the district uses I-Ready and Fundations however many use a variety of self or school selected others		So maybe I as a teacher need to pull in some resources on the spot
	Early Literacy Interventions	Types I-Ready and Fundations		P1	the only early intervention to that we are that we were using is Iready, um, and then there may be like, I may have been given things

				that kind of been put together from different resources.
			P2	
				We are also doing the fundations program.
			P3	This year, they implemented fundations
			P5	
				Then I-ready of course
Early Literacy Interventions	Perspectives on Effectiveness Effective or not effective	The perspectives on the effectiveness of the early literacy intervention programs depends on the teacher's ability to implement them the way that he/she wants to	P1 P3	So when it comes to the intervention, I know a lot of them have mentioned that they wish there was another piece. And I am just familiar with the fountas and Pinnell because it does focus from like, first grade all the way up to 12th grade that you have that piece of intervention when it comes to, phonics, phonological, awareness, fluency, all those things. And so, when it comes to like third grade and up, I am IReady is missing that piece. I like I do like that we have more than one

			P5	because you can kind of catch if they do not like Iready then they like fundations
				But just to have like class to pull from benchmark, even though we are using a curriculum now called fundations that the district just brought in, for us, you know, what our school or you know, in this school, we asked to pull from stuff that I have used previously, because simple sometimes it is the easiest way
Early Literacy Intervention	Perspectives on Purpose and Expectations	The perception of the purpose and expectations depends on the depth of training or communication provided.	P6	But I am not always sure I know what the goal of my school is, or the goal of even the district is because we have both
	Unclear understanding		P7	No, was about three or four hours once and everything else was kind of like Ask your instructional coach, where she got trained, we got trained, she is learning as well.
	Clear Understanding		P13	I believe I know what we are supposed to have a clear

					expectation. Do I feel like we are all given that? Um, somewhat
Shared Vision, Team Learning & Systems Thinking	Effectiveness of Early Literacy Interventions	Perspective on Implementing Effectively Can Implement Effectively Cannot Implement effectively	The perception of the efficacy of Early literacy interventions depends on the time and consistency in which the program is used	P1	I believe that I could, if given the right amount of time to do it.
				P10	it is difficult to implement them effectively when they are not consistently being utilized
				P12	Well, the number one struggle that occurs is that a program takes time to implement.
				P13	And it is just not enough time. So that is my reason for not being effective. One of the biggest things is time.
	Experience with Supports	Sufficient or Insufficient supports	The sufficient supports that teacher have had are a result of hands-on/collaborative learning experiences.	P2	
				P3	it has been a struggle for us, right to know exactly how to implement the program.
				P4	So, there is so many opportunities for improvement and development, it is almost impossible not to feel supported.
					They watch us as we teach the kids

			P5	strategies. And once we are done, they give us feedback tells us what we could have done different, how to improve. And that is how I learned the best.
			P6	And so having that peer observations, seeing how they work with it, that really helps too, because that gets your mind gives you
			P12	an idea of how you can do the work with your students.
Continual Professional Development, reflective or collaborative experiences	Collaborative Experiences Reflective and Interactive	The collaborative experiences that teachers have participated in are continual and interactive	P2	But I think without context, most of that is not particularly supportive. most, most support that I get is just a reference to another teacher. Which does not do well, because most teachers are overworked these days.
			P3	
			P5	I know that when the RESA representative talks with us. She, you know, we give check ins about how things are going. So, there is a systematic, you know, we can

contact her at any time.

we collaborate all the time. So everyone has so much input, everyone has so much to give to the team

Yes, because we have to know that we are there for the same purpose, to make sure the students achieve what their purpose is achieve their goals and achieve those things

P9 we come up with different strategies for grade levels that we can implement, and then us within the leadership team, go out and we just kind of observe each other, nothing very formal, very informal observation, just to make sure we are following up so that when we meet again, we can see an

P11 increase in that data.

opportunity to do vertical teaming with our other fourth, fifth grade teachers, it makes such a big difference

Trainings	Elements of Training			
	Interactive On-going		P9	So, during these trainings, not only are they facilitating, we also facilitate, which is good, and you are hearing from different teachers across the district
			P11	time to actually go in and talk to other teachers and see how they are implementing it, but also hear from the actual company to how it is supposed to be implemented
			P12	It was hands-on which I am a hands-on learner, and they were recorded, so I can go back and view them.
Suggested Supports for fidelity in implementing early literacy interventions	Professional Learning	Teachers suggest that the supports that are needed to implement early literacy interventions with fidelity is in-depth trainings and professional supports	P4	Lots of professional learning…. also, the feedback is very important, someone in there watching you do it and giving you feedback.
			P5	having those professional learning

P7	opportunities that allow for you to expand on one segment at a time, so you can really understand what is expected of you. And so, this would be able to be continually done through each unit to be effective.
P8	offer more training. Most time is about the training and how it has been done. How the training is being addressed.
P9	I would say that the district could do a better job of training the teachers before placing them in the classroom
	we need more training in the specific struggling areas,